



The tribal emancipation of ndi Igbo from northern domination - part 3

In my last epistle, I made effort to answer the question, 'where do you go from here?' No one can know where to go without first knowing where he is. For when you know where you are then you will know where to go and where you will return. Ndi Igbo are in a political cross road. Igbo's in the North don't know where to go. Christians and merchants in the North don't know where they will return. They know they are in a deep political crisis that requires faith and strong conviction. Songs of faith and endurance have always sustained the spirit of poverty, neglect, injustices and tribalism. In a real sense, the life of any suffering tribe is always expressed in poetry and songs. Slaves sang lullabies during the triangular voyage into the strange land. Hunters whistle in anguish scaring away targets without knowing it. Skilled laborers sang songs of pain to sooth their hearts and to uplift their human spirits. Trained to sing religious spirituals African American women raised their voices to sing protest songs such as 'we shall overcome' 'oh, freedom,' and 'we shall not be moved.' Some songs are rhymed artistically to touch human spirit; some rhymed poetically to quench moral thirst. Some are not artistic but dramatic and melancholic. But the song that touches human spirit are sang when people are jobless or when people are massacred in the wide wind of religious fanaticism. Songs that addresses human pains are sang when people are unemployed. Songs that torches the heart are sang when families bury loved ones who died because they are sick or who cannot be treated, or because they lack money or proper health insurance. They are sung because parents have lost their job and doctors would not treat wife or children without first securing their money. Religious spiritual are sung when people are jailed and imprisoned because they are from a particular tribe. They are sung when there is no rule of law. People sing family spiritual when they leant that a member of their family has been killed in fatal motor accident only because the road is rough and bumpy. Social spirituals are sung during riots or violent confrontations, or when innocent people are arrested or detained without legal justification. They are sung when there is miscarriage of justice. They are sung where there is hatred and sadness. They are sung where ethnicity exists and where a tribe plays second fiddle. They are sung where elections are rigged or where representation is unfair and unequal. Every heart goes out where there are tribal disparities in educational opportunities. It goes out when a particular tribe is forced to work at the lowest paying jobs. Yet your needs for the consolation of these tragedies can never pass without your ability to conceive it. Indeed, the dissonance which they are identified as tragedies functions to revolve



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more insistent instead of diminishing. Perhaps, your passions, your disappointments, and your sufferings remain important to nothing else and they thrust themselves upon you with an urgency which makes it impossible for you to dismiss them as mere trivialities which, so your intellect tells you, they are not.

Prejudice against Ndi Igbo cannot be comprehended by the inaudible language called words. When a young Igbo man graduates from a prestigious university like University of Nigeria Nsukka or University of Ibadan and decides to seek for employment, he is most likely to experience frustrating and even demeaning experience ahead of him. He is even going to lose a job position to a Hausa man who attended a local technical school from the North. Most of the time when an Igbo man walks into an office for an interview, the frustrating question posed to him is 'do you know how to type.' Look at that type of question. We can therefore say that there is a calculated system of prejudice that lies unspoken behind employment query. If we must use rhetoric's, why must Ndi Igbo end up as secretaries, Liberians and technicians? Why is it unacceptable for them to be managers, administrators, doctors, lawyers and members of government cabinet? The unspoken assumption here is that people from the middle belt are better and different than people from Igbo land. The Northern aristocrats for once have never believed that Ndi Igbo have executive ability, orderly minds, administrative stability, and leadership skills. They never believed that Ndi Igbo have the competency or executive ingenuity. And because they have not, realities are over generalized with prejudice to relegate Igbo man to the level of nothingness. Prejudice and injustice are cankerworms that split a nation and its tribal counties. It divides individuals and makes them separate enemies and entities. I must confess that it takes a special kind of person-someone willing to stand out from the crowd to call our attention on these anomalies. It also takes a person who is willing to bear the burden of sacrifice and responsibility that comes with such significant distinction to challenge what is wrong. It takes such courage and endurance to withstand prejudice and injustice. Pioneers who suffered prejudice and injustice have always cleared the path for all who came after them. And when an Igbo man despite all these prejudices, breaks a barrier and ventures into never-before-territory, the significance of his or her action is even more dynamic because of the effort which is required to overcome tribalism and dispel stereotype myths. Notwithstanding, the accomplishment of a tribe like Igbo tribe holds out a shining ray of hope for all to see-a beacon to the path of self-realization and meaningful existence.

Many sons from the EAST-name withheld have overcome heavy odds on their way to history. Each of them represents a tremendous accomplishment, whether we examine the superlative



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intellectual achievement of professorship or the steady and determined military rise and fall like Ikemba Ojukwu. Each of these heroes depicts a person of decision and action. Each had a vision, goal and a purpose. As you strive to open new doors of opportunities and plow new field and frontiers, homage should be paid to those who came before you, and recognition bestowed for the tremendous prices they paid. The more reason why you must pay homage to these heroes is because they cleared the path in which you must walk in the future. As you acknowledge them for their effort, you must declare that you don't want Northerners in their unruly control because they are accustomed to working by a straight-laced jacket. They are straight because they would not like to bend or to give up or lend you a helping hand. In that case, Ndi Igbo need community workers to do what they expected other tribes to do for them. These people must understand our people, our history and our geography. They must understand the path that will lead this nation to unity. Nobody can do this but you. Ndi Igbo want nothing but better schools and better education. They want their children to learn enough about their political rights. The schools however would create not just voters but community builders who would take on many roles in your villages and communities. In the process some would become teachers, bankers by founding credit unions for private entrepreneurs. Others would become health professionals like doctors, pharmacists, physical therapists, nurses etc. Many would transform into construction workers who would start low-income housing projects. Schools would train a new generation of civil right activists who will follow the towering footsteps of Gani Fawehmi and Wole Soyinka. Political education of Ndi Igbo would grant them opportunity to learn about the political situation in the county and within their social and economic neighborhood. The reason is because political education/consciousness forms the grassroots basis of new statewide political emancipation.

Every single day in Nigeria and everyday in your tribal life, something negative happens to suppress peoples hope, ambition and aspirations. While hopes are dashed, and ambition crushed, the north continues to make tribalism and prejudice manifest in people's lives. They make people from other tribes feel different. They make you feel as if you no longer belong to Nigeria. Every time this happens, existentialist thinkers among you and those who rationalize about poverty, prejudice, and injustice begins to wonder how they are going to live their lives as tribal people. Tribalism and prejudice steals a teaspoon of self-esteem each day in the life of a people. While I continue to challenge tribalism, while I continue to persuade for an alternative to prejudice and injustice, I elect to speak once more on what I call 'faith connection' in relation to political belief, national justice and equal treatment before the law. It doesn't matter what tribe



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I come from, my faith connection is my mainstay. My faith connection has been with me in all that I've ever done, whether it was in the community at large, in my church for faith; whether it was in the social or cultural arena. I think people who are involved in political arena who do not have a spiritual base are the people who want to build bigger jails, spend more and more money on OIC, and get people off pension allowances; put them back to suffering even at their old age. The lack of spiritual base on which this country functions is just so destructive as opposed to those who have gone before you.

Nigeria as a nation is a Northern country. It is a Hausa nation if I may explain or if may rationalize. When I say this I am logically saying that Nigeria has been founded by it, conquered by it, while nobody has the effrontery to blame them if they want to keep her membership in the OIC. I am not vexed about Hausa man from the north. I am not vexed of Muslims from the West. I never built any streets, or railways in Nigeria. But the North built them for their own convenience and if the South and East don't want to ride where the north is willing to let them ride, then they do better walk. It is as simple as that. What is simple is to challenge our people to build their own roads and infrastructures. It is not simple to inform Ndi Igbo to take heart and rebuild their houses without losing hope. Scripture said, we are created not to hate our enemies, but to love them. The same scripture said that we are created to lift up ourselves, and to demand respect of all humanity. Men from the East, let me tell you that a greater future is in stock for you. You have no cause to feel despaired or lose hope in the present, or become faint-hearted. You will have a free country, a flag, a government, second to none. I say this because if you look at the atrocities taking place in the north; if you look at what befalls Ndi Igbo in the north-beating, brutalizing, killing, burning of their bibles and houses; imprisonment and scorning, you will call a tribe to heart because these evils will come back to your perpetrators one day. Get organized and say no to sabotage and the world will bear witness to your sufferings and accomplishments. Say no to jealously and "put down" among fellow brothers and sisters and you will compel the world to respect you. If you dis-agree to agree and then get - organized, I promise you can shake the pillars of the universe and bring down creation, even as Sampson brought down the temple upon his own head and the heads of the Philistines.

As I continue to persuade and as I continue to explore the topics injustice, prejudice and cultural stab through the lense of Nigerian politics, let me add three fundamental ingredients to our ongoing reflection. As we continue to listen to panels and read from numerous chronicles, there is one constant issue to bear in mind- the ingredient of tribalism which separates us from becoming a united nation. Many pundits have suggested ways they feel could help build what



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writers and reformers have suggested. Many idealists of our age have propounded plans for the future of Nigeria that would shame Northern critics who view Eastern survival plans as illusionary. Nigeria may very well be in a position as a titan who once said "When I was little my father took me for a ride on a train before he disappeared into the wild wind. I'll have to take my own child for a ride on a river" The major challenge to Nigerian economy is how to manage its resources better and effectively so that it would benefit the next generation. Simply put, there is no better way to do this than have the interest of women and children at heart. Any economic policy should reflect where you are now and where you will head from here. A major challenge would be to improve the new nation's finances without emptying the vast national treasury. Another financial option is to reduce borrowing so that the bank of resources will not run bankrupt. In a country of vast oil reserve, the bank of resource should not be quick to run dry. Ndi Igbo will not believe that the oasis of bitumen has dried out. My conjecture is that the fountain and dam of prosperity will not dry that easy. Listen whatever they tell you 'believe them not'. That gasoline is still dripping because nature got your back. Therefore, a sublime effort requires Leaders and citizens to limit their borrowing instinct as debtor nation. To solve Nigerian financial problems, Nigerian leaders must pursue several meaningful economic options. One of these options would be to cut down wasteful spending. Another option would be to find new resources other than oil that would generate abundant income that would benefit each tribe. Citizens should be made to pay taxes while big corporations and companies should be made to pay company and property taxes. Government should impose taxes on imported goods and services. Government should advocate for a system of public education that would benefit all tribes. Concerning education, government should provide permanent schools. Despite these provisions, government must order the construction of good roads and transportation that stretched from East to the North and from North to the south. Government must ensure that available infrastructures must generate revenue and provide forms of fund to the country. Above all, government must find a way to erase Nigerian debts. Also trades should be expanded to support commerce and industries. These are the challenges Nigeria must face if she want to become a great nation. Besides erasing Nigerian debts tribalism is still alive and spreading in nearly every department in Nigeria. This single incident should spark fire to the Nigerian justice department to probe Islamic brutality in all major cities in the North. For many Christians, the above is simply a tip of the Iceberg of police brutality, with a double standard of justice-One for Muslims, one for Christians, one for the North, and one for the south-east.

There is tribalism in the hiring practice in Nigeria. People have identified this and people believe

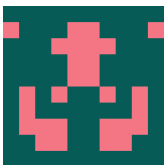


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that every facet of Nigerian department reflects that same old Hausa where Ndi Igbo and other minorities were second class citizens. Nothing is very painful than being a second class citizen in ones country of citizenships. Also, nothing in history has caused a national sensation and uproar like the lynching and burning of Christian Bible and businesses. One can admit that nothing has created a spiteful image than dragging an Igbo man from his car by senseless mobile police men and beaten mercilessly with baton and Koboko, with over fifty blows, thus inflicting pain upon pain on him as he lay helpless on the ground, offering no physical resistance. Even as other police men simply stood aside and watched as the victim's skull was broken in pieces, nothing was done in that regard. The Northern police men would do nothing about this kind of incident and life would continue as usual. But if this kind of incident took place in front court-yard of Aguiyi Ironsi, a bystander will record the atrocity with a Camcorder and call down Lucifer for revenge. And his videotape would be aired on the National Television to millions of Muslims both in Nigeria and around the Arab world. To the amazement and outrage of millions who watched such videotape, and such brutality, a Northern grand jury and the Caliphates and the public would do nothing and remain unperturbed. A popular outcry would ensure to cause the police chief to resign. He will be forced to resign even when his tenure is not labeled stormy or marked with any allegation of tribal sentiment. We have observed that in the deadliest riot that have taken place in the North, Ndi Igbo have always watched similar drama on the national television.

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