



Towards a tribal emancipation of Ndi-igbo from northern domination-part 4

In our last reflection, we identified how environmental adaptation can provide moral steam for tribal survival. We called on all and sundry to cast down so that society can move forward in the event where progressive spirit of adaptation has departed.

We moved further to identify challenges that a country would face when leaders and citizens fail to “cast down” both in economic crisis, in educational fallback, in tribe alienation and above all in depleting social infrastructures. While we continue to write these reflections, so many devotees of Islamic faith continues to say that Christian worshippers would never be satisfied at anything admirable of human worth. And when Igbo man say he needs equal opportunities in the military and in the workforce, some Islamic fundamentalists argue he will still never be happy. He will still yawn at full stomach and at any human condition. They say Eastern folks would never be joyful at their present condition; they agitate that even when an Igbo-man is thrown into banana plantation, Igbo-man will still be craving for more bananas. These devotees argue that even when an Igbo-man swims and bath in ocean and fountain of spring waters, he will still remain thirsty and look dry and drab like arid nomads. And then we ask again and again! Why must Ndi Igbo be joyful when the bank of justice is dry? Why would Ogoni people be happy when their land sweltering with oil and gas is taken away from them at the middle of the night? Let it be known to every dick and Harry in Nigeria that Christians will never be satisfied when their churches are blazed down in the middle of the night. No devotee to a particular faith would be satisfied when what seems the oasis of their faith is brought down under ruthless attack. Yes, Ndi Igbo will continue to crave for more opportunities until tribalism is eliminated. They will continue to express displeasure until free-education is re-instated in every state in Nigeria. They will continue to show arrogance, and remain unsatisfied until every street in the East is light up in energy connectivity. Ndi Igbo would continue to express unhappiness until the mountain of Islamic pride is brought down; until Igbo economic downturn is revamped again; until quota system is squarely addressed; until Igbo epileptic electricity is made stable by NEPA.

Ndi Igbo cannot afford to do something right when things have gone wrong already. They cannot and they affirm strongly they will not. They say they will not collaborate with the North in forming political alliances. Instead of forming tribal alliances, Eastern politicians must draw their political strength from the practical application of internal energy, or “chi”, making it perfect for Igbo man to fit into Nigeria politics. I say all these because Igbo folks stand at the bottom of a nation’s social and economic scale where their conditions as a tribe are at the mercy of Northern officials. This situation makes Nigerian nation to have what political pundits call a curious mixture of freedom and constrain. I believe that by expressing these feelings about



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tribalism and injustices and also by sharing stories behind it, I am becoming part of a solution and not part of the problem. I pray I will not be part of a problem of a nation or part of a problem of a family or an individual. People whom much is given have always found themselves becoming part of a solution. But few of these people fail to join the wagon because of the fear of their lives or because the political terrain is musky or turbulent. I believe when one become part of the solution, one is participating in those events that touches human spirit; those pains that needed to be shared; those wrongs that need to make right even when one cool off or be silent about it. How can an Igbo man continue to cool off or be silent when the swamp of injustice continues to rise above the tide of equality? How can he be happy when the blood of the innocent continues to fill the ditches of Nigerian subways? An Igbo man would never be happy until ritualism and human abandonment is addressed. He will never be happy until a solution is found for human kidnapping for ransom. Ndi Igbo can never be happy until they join the North to drink from the stream of economic prosperity. Happiness and prosperity is what an Igbo man wants. An Igbo woman want to be happy and she wants her sons and daughters to be happy too. For a very long time now, an Igbo man has desired to walk freely in the streets of Nigeria nation unabashed without fear of being kidnapped for ritual or for a big ransom. Of note, is that some liberal Muslims and some conservative North say that an Igbo man is very ungrateful and fastidious. And here I am asking these noble questions. How can an Igbo man be grateful when he finds that he is in exile in his own country of citizens? How can an Igbo man be grateful when he cannot drink fresh good water? How can he be grateful when his backyard similar to those of the Niger Delta overflowing with oil and bitumen yet he and his children are begging for food and sustenance on the road side of Rumokwuta? How would you feel when the nations Kanji Dam is within your courtyard yet you always remain dry and thirsty without regular shower for a bath? Can an Igbo-man be grateful when he cannot put food on table for his family or pay his bill on time? An Igbo-man will continue to be fastidious until he is guaranteed a place in commerce and industries; until he is launched into his rightful place in Nigerian economy; until he sets feet into the political terrain made turbulent by tribalism but needs to calm down by the over-powering spirit of love and unity; until the oasis of unity overflows it bank for Christian benefit and Muslim endurance; until the proceeds from oil benefit the South-East and South-South. Ndi Igbo has for a very long time been called to cast down. They have endured beyond their human spirits. Beyond human endurance, there is this need to get the attention of Nigerian leaders to address these human concerns.

Even when Nigerian leaders fail to endure or cast down, the United Kingdom in 1976 ratified a



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convention that imposed a general obligation to prohibit civil and political discrimination. In Article 26 of the International convention rights provides: "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social, origin, property, or other status." Therefore, Nigerian legislatures must therefore pass a bill prohibiting discrimination in relation to employment and in relation to people worshipping the God of their understanding even beyond their own state, tribe or geography. People cannot be refused employment on the ground of faith or tribe. People should not be refused job because they pray the rosary or because they belong to Jehovah witnesses. The following incidences can be compared to the Rastafarian who had been refused a job as a Van driver because he refused to cut his hair. Therefore, laws should be passed to prohibit discrimination on grounds of tribe, religion or external appearance. The same bill should never challenge the role and dignity of women. The reason is because the "sex discrimination Act" forbids a person to discriminate against a woman if he treats her less favorably than he treats or would treat a man. I know this too well because I have experienced it myself. Sometimes, people deny you your rights because of pre-existing condition that you come from poor or enlightened background. This misconception has not done people any good. It has not do religion any good. It has not employment well either. The misconception has not done an Igbo man any good.

The division of Nigeria into tribal fraction is without economic, social and political challenges. These division challenges the ultimate goal and ambition of unity and change that is appropriate to a constitutional government. Challenges of these natures confront the ambition of a nation towards unity, peace and political governance. Some tribal states name withheld have always found themselves at a better side of a national economy and recreational development. And some have found themselves at the struggling side of human worth. Based on this level of inequality, there are questions that needed to be posed here? What are the consequences of tribal decisions to stay on this road, on the edge of the fence, on the dark side of economic advancement, on this pit of human neglect, on the back sit of financial regression? Are these problems really a national tragedy or an Igbo tribal misfortune? Does Igbo tribe have enough information to make good political decisions? If so, do they lack political judgment and wisdom to provoke emancipation and tribal affirmation? The staggering condition in the highest sit of power in Nigeria is now an eloquent testimony to these candid questions. The Northern



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Caliphates believes that the Vice president lack the administrative wisdom and political skill to rule even when the president has become a weakler.

Students of West African history (Mali, Ghana, Do homey, Songhai, and Benin Kingdom) are all informed about the rise and fall of these great nations. They are aware how these ancient rulers governed and how the weaklers among them are replaced without consulting political doomsayers. One might be looking at these political tragedies objectively or deceptively, but to respond to them squarely, choices must be made. And to make right choices is not what matters but making objective choices that will produce results or endures forever. Right choices will unite tribes and push the nation forward to ivory tower. People should ask themselves if what they have now is what matters? They should ask if what they have now is sufficient for them and their families. They should ask if the little they have now is what they really want. They should probe if their feelings and what they are doing now is what they want for themselves and members of their families? Children from the South-South and children from the South-Eastern states must learn to grow cognitively to make history while they are still alive. They struggle hard, grow and become somebody in their own country of citizenship. The reason is because the farmland in the East and the grassland of the south-east is where many great men of valor were born. These farmlands are where your past patriots began that journey of hope and survival. Unfortunately, many of these men did not have the luxury you have today to make enduring national contribution. Many did not have a happy childhood or prosperous adulthood. Many were abandoned by their parents when they were tender leaving them to be raised by their mothers and distant uncles. Many were left homeless or forced to live with relatives who provided them with half baked parental dyad. By living with long distant relatives, many were unable to learn and absorb values of self determination and perseverance. These values along with informal education in commerce and industry, law, civic and religion served them well after they came into political spotlight. But the self-determination and discipline they received helped them to believe in their own self-worth. Many of these men were smart and intelligent children of the community who learn to read and write by the time they were young and tender. As Christians, they were taught that all people are created equal, regardless of faith, tribe, gender, belief and socio-economic upbringing. They cherished these convictions even when they lack the same belief as most people of their time. These convictions boosted their ego and brought success they could not imagine. It was the same success as politicians and lawyers that transformed Azikwe and Awolowo to become heroes of political process. Infect, success as a lawyer and politician led Thomas Jefferson's selection to write the declaration of independence as a member



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of the continental congress in 1776. Jefferson went on to become the Governor of Virginia, minister to France, Secretary of states, Vice president and finally the third president of the United States. But it was his foresight, wisdom, and knowledge and his hunger for new ideas that resulted in the words that became the foundation for a country, a system of government and a way of life. Openness to new ideas that he learned as a boy played a major part in his life as an adult, including his selection to write a document that changed the cause of history. I believe that many among you have the same compelling ideas that can change your present condition.

The important lesson here is that a compelling future is awaiting your sons and daughters in the years ahead. This compelling future would only create a dynamic sense of growth and empowerment. Without these growth and development, without reassurance and empowerment, you will only be left half dead and half alive. A compelling future I speak here is not an accessory but a necessity. These necessities of life in which you want will allow you to achieve and partake in those adventures that would usher growth; that would gives life and meaning and brought change because where there is no life and vision in political participation, people always end up perishing. Igbo folks have perished because of some circumstances that are maternal and temporal. They have perished because for so long they have remained absent in politics, in commerce and industry. Many have perished right after their retirement. We know that there are outstanding members of Igbo folks who die within three years of retiring from public office which proves to us that if people lose the will and the reward of their services in an oil nation after their pension rights are cut off, they will lack the cause to hang on with their lives. Infect, studies have shown that elderly or ill people in Igbo land who are close to their death pang often struggle to hang on until after a New yam festival. As long as they have one or two chieftaincy titles and Christmas celebrations to attend, they will continue to hang on to life. As long as they have traditional wedding ceremony to attend, they had a reason to live, and after these festive moments are gone, they have no compelling future in a nation rich with crude oil. This phenomenon happens not only for people from Igbo land. The same experience is common to people from other cultures of the world. For example in Japan, china and many Asian countries, the death rate drops off right before and during major festivals, and picks up again as soon as the festivals are over (Robbins, 1992). It does not matter if you are Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo or Tiv . Each tribe needs another to keep the national resources reach everyone. Igbo man needs democracy to feel inclusive in an Islamic nation. Hausa man needs an Igbo man to form democratic alliance and coalition in a Christian hemisphere. To neglect an Igbo man and control



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the oil found in his backyard would call to mind hatred, negligence, a compelling anger, militancy and mutiny. Therefore, the political and economic inspiration Igbo minorities seek is always found within, waiting to be called upon by an unforeseen challenges or inspired request. Any request of this nature inspires the spirit and call to mind the lessons of human rights.

Article 9 of the human rights convention provides that: “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom either alone or in community with others and in public or private life, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching practice or observation.” This human right declaration is one that flourishes in advanced nations, and as I say this Nigerian nation has not acknowledged it. In the western world, everyone is free to follow his or her own religion. Therefore, the different Christian domination can build their own churches; Jews can build synagogue; Hindus build their own temples and Muslims their own mosques, of which the mosque here is a magnificent examples, and which of these is free to practice his own faith whether resident in the North or on transition to the South-East. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. Therefore, the right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference (Article 10 of the human Rights Convention). Despite these rights, the principles of Sharia prohibit the earning or paying of interest. This means that a conventional mortgage offends the principles of Islamic faith. It is clear that there is a widespread misunderstanding in Nigeria as to the nature of Sharia law. Sharia therefore consists of a set of principles governing the way one should live one’s life in accordance to the will of Allah. These principles are based on the Qur’an as revealed to the prophet Mohammed and interpreted by Islamic scholars.

Islam, a monotheistic religion emerged in the Arabian Peninsula in the 600s. The Qur’an (can be spelled with a K) is the major religious text of the Muslim which includes some stories from the Jewish (Abraham and Noah) and the Christian (Jesus is considered a prophet) tradition. Most of the Qur’an deals with the revelations of the prophet Mohammed. The foundation of Islam is the five pillars of Faith, and these include:

1. The declaration of faith
2. Praying five times a day, facing Mecca
3. Fasting during the month of Ramadan (day light hours only).
4. Alms giving (charity)
5. Hajji- Pilgrimage to Mecca at least one time in each Muslim’s life (If he/she is healthy and can financially afford it).



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Against these backdrops, many people wonder why devotees of Islamic faith love political power and crave to fight and engage in continued aggression, dispute and war. Studies conducted by Mentze (2008) reveal that at one time Mohammed assembled an army and invaded areas that had expelled him from his religious beliefs. This dastard experience began a long series of conquests throughout the Arabian Peninsula (modern day Saudi Arabia). After this, conquest upon conquest continued throughout most of Middle East and Asia Minor. After Mohammed died, the tradition of the religious leader being political ruler continued till date. Islam remained united until a dispute over rightful successor led to Islam dividing into two major sects: Sunni and Shiite. These sects still are in conflict today. The Turks (from Asia Minor) soon conquered the Arabs and became the primary force in the Islamic world. While the Sunni and Shiite were bleeding each other with leaches, the Muslims in the North is developing religious arsenal to rule everywhere they set foot. Nigeria as a nation is not free from these religious drama and political influence. They are as I may say and will continue to say victim of this politico-religious principles.

The principles have much in common with those of other religions. These principles do not include forced marriage or the repression of women. Therefore, compliance with these principles requires a high level of personal conduct, including abstinence from alcohol. Part of the misconception about Sharian law is the belief that Sharia is the only way mandating sanctions such as flogging, stoning, cutting off of hands, or death of those who fail to comply with the law. Therefore, we think candidly how Sharia principles are carried out in Nigeria, how modern Nigerian man and woman exercise the tremendous degree of autonomy in the face of sharia precepts. So many Christians would find that they do not actually live in the present at all just because they have mortgaged their future and these future fads away like illusion in a country of plenty. If we do not live in the present, it means that we are not free and we cannot achieve in chains. Even though man is in chains, man can still be free. This ideology contradicts the philosophical assumption that “man is born free but everywhere in chains.” Religious intolerance is a chain for Christians in the North. Economic marginalization is a chain for Easterners in the North. But nothing short of human worth has been identified as chains for the North. Since human beings love freedom therefore “living in bondage” contradicts the lessons of change and freedom that is called to mind by a tribe.

Jed Rubenfeld is among researchers who reflected on freedom and time. Much of his introspective reflections rested on the profundity of human existence; on the deforming picture concerning the wary relationship that exists between freedom and time. Instead of engaging in



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human sabotage, on aggressive attitude to his fellow human being, Rubinfeld suggested human freedom; where human being itself-necessarily extends into past, present and the future. Rubinfeld further noted that self-government consists of giving our lives meaning and purpose over time. Igbo man is searching for meaning and purpose for his life and members of his family. He is searching for meaning in tragedies of religious pluralism. Because he has not found this purpose, he challenges the meaning of his moral and political life.

As I continue to persuade you to challenge government authorities to invest on you, I will not fail to say that my persuasion should not in any way force Igbo folks to do stuffs that are not worthy of human dignity. As I do this, I equally call on you to focus your attention to do something of human worth and political governance. This should not force any Igbo folk to focus attention on anything besides enjoying human cohabitation. I say this because this has been the major concept that has influenced the world ever since the Middle Ages. During the middle Ages, religion was the center of everything. But the Italian Renaissance gave the world the radical permission to focus on something besides cohabitation, brotherhood and getting your ass into heaven. So many people have question my rationale for engaging in calling to mind what is right; what is just; and what is worthy of tribal endurance. They have been asking me why I have decided to challenge tribalism and its outcomes. Many wonder what my primary motivation is. Indeed my primary motivation is not those flashy materials and acquisition that comes as a result of Igbo- folk's long road from history to the contemporary world and under compelling and unforeseen circumstances. My gut feeling tells me that the years ahead will open up surprising events that would shape the history of the Eastern region. And when this time comes, Igbo folks would fit into the National agenda and be part of those "Lords of the rings" who share the resources of this nation. And after Igbo folks fit in, they will learn to preserve knowledge of their achievements. They will grow to preserve their knowledge, heritage and spread their understanding and dignity to prosperity.

Gerald Ogbuja

[Author](#)

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