

## The Role Of Anambra State In Election Midwifery In Nigeria

### From Invention Of Staggered Electoral Calendar To Vote Buying & Scientific Rigging

**(Chima Ubani Center, Onitsha: 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2018)**-With the outcome of Anambra State Governorship Election of 18<sup>th</sup> November 2017 characterized by large scale vote buying and scientific rigging, vicariously invented and exported by the Obiano Government of the State, the State has not only introduced a dark era into Nigeria's election midwifery, but also crumbled and crashed back to its 1999-2006 electoral infamy when it got bastardized and notoriously earned local, national and international pariah status including going with a scornful name of "Home for All (vices)". The despicable concept of vote buying and scientific rigging was massively repeated and applied in the recent Ekiti and Osun State Governorship polls; where the electoral wishes of their people were violently and scientifically subverted with INEC leading the way.

In other words, Anambra State is back to "home for all vices" especially by its recent invention of vote buying and scientific rigging and their widespread introduction into Nigeria's electoral midwifery or management. The State is also crashing back to negative standardization in all major public governance measurements. From 1999 up to 2007, Anambra State was negatively the talk of town in all major public discourse at national and international levels. Legacy feats the State recorded between 2007 and end of 2014 including formidable and credible democratic structures are also endangered and crashing.

The State was massively invaded and taken over by renegades between 1999 and 2006 to the extent that a sitting governor, who was later in August 2005 and March 2006 declared by the Electoral Tribunal (electoral High Court) and the Court of Appeal as a "meddlesome interloper governor"; was abducted and asked to resign for breaking an evil political agreement reached with his traducers before a malevolent shrine. The late literary icon, Prof Chinua Achebe had also in 2004 turned down a national award from the then Federal Government of Nigeria; citing the role of same in the political riots and brigandage that enveloped his home State of Anambra. The State was then turned into "a state of nature" making the lives of the citizens short, endangered, nasty brutish.

**Journey to Anambra Legacy Feats:** Way back in the April Governorship Election of 2003, Mr. Peter Obi of then APGA had convincingly won the poll with 235, 000 *live votes*, but was brutally rigged out with one million *dead votes* credited to his opponent who was roguishly returned and inaugurated as the "Governor". Obi filed a petition and beckoned on then vibrant rights and pro democracy CSOs (i.e. CODEGG, CLO, etc) and other social bodies including the Church to rally round him to reclaim his mandate on behalf of the Anambra People.

With no time frame or limits provided for election petition matters in the then 2002 Electoral Act, Obi's petition filed in April 2003 was opened for hearing in early September, five months after it was filed. The matter dragged on before Justice G.M. Nabaruma led Anambra State Governorship Election Petition Tribunal and lasted till August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2005, a period of two years and five months or between April 2003 when it was filed and August 2005 when the first verdict was given returning Obi as validly elected governor of Anambra State.

Also on account of the court-declared interloper governor's right of appeal, the matter proceeded on appeal at the Enugu Division of the Court of Appeal and lasted for another seven months (August 12<sup>th</sup> 2005 to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2006) under Hon Justice Rabiuh Mohammed before the decision of the lower court or tribunal was affirmed leading to the swearing in of Mr. Obi as the duly elected Governor of Anambra State on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2006. Setbacks including abandonments, compromises, betrayal of trust, back biting and social ostracism, etc experienced by Obi and other apostles of democracy in the course of reclaiming his electoral mandate are inexhaustible if discussed here.

**Origin of Scientific Rigging in Anambra:** The State was also home to scientific rigging in the 2000s by having its version of the National Register of Voters flooded or filled with over 1.4m fake names, objects and symbols as “registered voters” with which elections in the State then were massively rigged with impunity. **Intersociety** and other democratic forces had prior to the February 2010 staggered governorship election in the State made a shocking discovery of how the State’s voters’ register was flooded or filled with human skulls and skeletons, wooden windows, blank spaces, trees, books and other symbols and objects including photos of non State residents and dead citizens all packed in the State’s voters’ register as “registered voters in Anambra State”.

We had in December 2009, for instance, spotted the photos of late Gani Fawehinmi, Pro Wole Soyinka, Olisa Agbakoba, Jim Nwobodo, American Malcolm X and other notable living and dead figures in Nigeria and abroad as “registered voters in Anambra State”. Apart from filing a suit before the Awka Division of the Federal High Court, challenging the authenticity of the tainted voters’ register and its planned use for the February 2010 poll, **Intersociety** also projected that out of 2.1m names contained in same as “total registered voters” for the State, about 600,000 were *living registered voters* while the remaining 1.5m names never existed or existed as *dead registered voters*.

That further explained why out of the projected or living registered voters of about 600,000, only 302,000 voted in the said 6<sup>th</sup> February 2010 staggered governorship poll with Obi winning the poll or returned with only 93,000 votes which is the smallest winning voting figure secured by any governorship candidate in the history of Nigeria till date. The Anambra bogus and tainted voters’ register was substantially cleaned up in subsequent voters’ registration and revalidation exercises under Prof Attahiru Jega led INEC.

The above was the informal beginning of invention of staggered election calendar in Nigeria courtesy of former Governor Peter Obi, which formally began with his suit in 2007 seeking for proper or judicial interpretation of Section 180 (2) (a) (b) of the Constitution of Nigeria 1999 (now amended). The suit by Obi followed the constitutional section’s blurred provision that the four years tenure of an elected governor in Nigeria starts from the day he or she is administered with oaths of office and allegiance; leading to arguments and counter arguments on its elementary meaning or interpretation and court litigations that followed.

Obi had on account of the INEC’s unlawful conduct of the 2007 Governorship Election in Anambra State which the Supreme Court later said was not vacant; stepped aside for seventeen days as Anambra Governor. This was after INEC declared another person winner after crediting him with over “1m votes” leading to his inauguration as the second interloper governor for seventeen days. The over 1m “votes” manufactured by INEC for Mr. Emmanuel Nnamdi Ubah remains the highest gubernatorial allocated votes in the history of democracy in Nigeria.

In the landmark judgment of the Supreme Court of Nigeria (S.C. 123/2007): *Obi v INEC & ors*, delivered on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007, Hon Justice Aloysius Iyorgyer Katsina-Alu, the lead-Justice, answered Obi’s prayers and ordered for his immediate return to the gubernatorial seat of Anambra State. The landmark judgment not only invented *staggered governorship election calendar* in Nigeria’s poll midwifery but also changed the governorship poll schedules till date in the seven Nigerian States of Anambra, Edo, Ondo, Osun, Ekiti, Bayelsa and Kogi.

It saddens our heart, therefore, that this enviable feat recorded by the State per Peter Obi was in November 2017 tainted and stained with vicarious invention by the Obiano Government of Anambra State of vote buying and scientific rigging. It is *vote buying and money electioneering* when funds meant for public good or good governance are lavished and shared among members of socio-political class (i.e. church leaders, traditional rulers, town union and market leaders, commercial transport union leaders, etc) by the incumbent seeking for a reelection; all for purpose of influencing them to vote against their will or conscience during elections.

It is part of *scientific rigging* when registered voters with PVCs are traced to their homes or work places and bribed or influenced to surrender before the election their PVCs or photocopies or code numbers of same. Such fraudulently obtained PVCs or their code numbers are compiled and fraudulently transferred to criminal syndicates working at INEC ICT departments. They are captured with their PUs and uploaded on Election Day in the INEC voting data as valid votes or validly cast votes evading card readers and manual accreditation and voting.

For purpose of post election litigation and electoral fraud perfection, commensurate ballot papers are distributed close to Election Day or on the day of same to hired thumb printers usually quartered in hotel rooms and other secretly designated places to thump print and rap them up with the number of PVCs so uploaded. Such was exactly the case with Anambra Governorship Poll, where time, possibly, ran out for hired thumb printers leading to announcement and deduction without valid excuses by INEC of “8,540 accredited voters who never voted”. This was in spite of the Commission’s policy of “accredit and vote at once” applied in the said poll. The above simply means that the hired thumb printers were unable to conclude thumb printing of the number of ballot papers provided before they were choked by time.

We are therefore not surprised if the 2019 General Elections are marred or characterized by the Anambra invented vote buying and scientific rigging as were brazenly the case in the recent Ekiti and Osun Governorship Polls. We had in late November 2017, after the Anambra Governorship Poll, wrote INEC and ors, making far reaching recommendations on how best to correct the blunders and mistakes thrown up by the Anambra staggered Governorship Poll; as a guide towards getting it right in the forthcoming 2019 General Polls.

The far reaching recommendations included call for introduction of electronic voting alongside existing manual voting, balanced registration of voters and issuance of PVCs to eligible citizens not minding their tribe and religion and regular monitoring of the activities and conducts of INEC’s ICT departments and their personnel. Not only that all the recommendations were never considered by INEC till date, the Commission also demonstrated and still demonstrates body language showing its brazen collusion, if not masterminding the vote buying and scientific rigging massively deployed recently in Ekiti and Osun Governorship Polls to subvert the sacred electoral wishes of their voting populations.

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