Lecture: Citizenship In Nigeria & Igbo Quest For Survival & Prosperity

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As a notable researcher, investigator and human rights and democracy campaigner since 1995; I can boldly inform that the Igbo Nation and her People are the first citizens and settlers in Nigeria. They settled long years before the Bini/Agbon People settled around 900 BC and the Nok People settled around 500AD in present Plateau State and Southern part of Kaduna State. The remnants of the Nok People are presently found in Southern Kaduna and among the Berom Ethnic Nationality in Plateau State, North Central Nigeria. On the other hand, the Igbo Nation and her people are terrestrially found to have settled here around 1450BC and founded her first or premier throne (Eze Nri Throne) around 13th Century BC or 1230BC. The Eze Ora Throne of Agulueri was founded in 1087 BC. My deep research concerning these is not hinged on celestial viewpoint but on terrestrial point of view.

By available research statistics, therefore, Igbo People have lasted or settled in Nigeria for about 3,470 years or since 1450BC, followed by the Igala People (the mainstream Igala is an offshoot of Igbo Nation) who settled here around 1350 BC or 3,370 years. Third in the rank of the oldest Ethnic Nationalities in Nigeria are the Bini/Agbon People, who settled around 900 BC or 2,920 years; followed by Nok/Berom and their offshoots in Southern Kaduna who settled around 500 AD or 1,520 years. Others are the Kanem-Bornu (Kanuri) People who settled around same 500 AD or 1,520 years, the Ijo (Ijaw) People who settled around 650 AD or 1,370 years, followed by the Hausa People who settled around 800 AD or 1,220 years; with Kano founded around 999 AD. The Yoruba People settled around 1000 AD or 1,020 years, the Ibibio/Efik Peoples settled around 1000 AD or 1,020 years and lastly the Fulani People settled around 1790 AD or 230 years.

Igbo People As The Most Threatened & Endangered In Nigeria

By available statistics, the People of Igbo Nation have lost no fewer than 3.5m of their defenseless brothers and sisters and over $50b worth of properties to their violent neighbors since 1937 and 1945. The Judeo-Christian dominated Ethnic Nationality is also home to largest Christian population in Nigeria with second largest Catholic faithful in Africa lesser only than those in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The killings commonly referred as anti Igbo pogroms or Igbo massacres in Nigeria had started way back in 1937 in Katsina, now in Katsina State; called ‘Katsina Railway anti Igbo riot of 1937’.


There are also the 2011 post Presidential Poll riot leading to death of dozens of Igbo citizens including 10 Igbo graduate-corpers serving in Northern Nigeria; the Damaturu (Yobe) Igbo Church bombing of 2011 (with death of 25 Igbo worshippers), the Mubi killings of Jan 2012 (with death of 20 Igbo citizens) as well as the Yola Igbo Church massacre of 2012 (with death of 43 Igbo worshippers). Anti Igbo killings also took place in 2002, 2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009 in Northern Nigeria including Miss World riots of 2002 in Kaduna and other parts of Northern Nigeria claiming up to 200 mainly Igbo lives. The rest are those of 2005 (i.e. APO 6) and 2006 (i.e. anti Prophet Mohammed cartoon riots in Northern Nigeria claiming dozens of Igbo lives) and the ‘Boko Haram uprising’ of 2009 in Maiduguri, Bauchi, Kano, Katsina, Zamfara; leading to death of multiple dozens of Igbo citizens.
The killings which mostly occurred in Northern Nigeria had claimed tens of thousands of Igbo lives. Between Jan 2011 and Jan 2012, for instance, no fewer than 510 Igbo lives were lost in various bombings carried out in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram terror group. Today, out of now not less than 39,000 lives lost to Boko Haram/ISWAP terror group since 2009 or between 2009 and 2020; and now over 23,000 cases of disappearances, the Igbo Nation is likely to have lost over 6000 most of who resided in Northern Nigeria. The Igbo Nation has also since August 2015 lost about 600 defenseless and unarmed citizens to grossly sectionalized Nigerian Army and Police and over 650 others who were shot at close range and deadly injured. The Igbo Nation also lost at least 400 Christians in Igbo territories to Jihadist Fulani Herdsmen between 2016 and 2020.

In the 29th May 1966 to Dec 1967 state and non state actor organized anti Igbo massacres that swept the length and breadth of Northern Nigeria and other parts of the country, perpetrated by Northern Muslim security and political actors and other organized Muslim fanatics, no fewer than 50,000 Igbo traders, civil servants, students, and some non-Igbo citizens were massacred; with over 1.6m mostly Igbo IDPs generated and forced to leave their Northern Nigerian locations. Scores of Igbo military and police officers serving in Northern Nigeria were also tracked down and massacred. According to a book: the Massacre of Ndigbo in 1966: Report of the Justice G.C.M. Onyiuke Tribunal (Tollbrook Limited, Ikeja, Lagos)"...between 45,000 and 50,000 civilians of former Eastern Nigeria were killed in Northern Nigeria and other parts of Nigeria from 29th May 1966 to December 1967 and not less than 1,627,743 Easterners fled back to Eastern Nigeria as a result of the 1966 pogrom”.

Igbo Nation & Her Shrinking Land Space:
The five core Igbo States of Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo presently occupy the least length and width of the Nigeria’s total landmass of 923,952km2 than any other Region in the country. It must also be pointed out that 78% of the Nigerian landmass or 731,085km2 are in the hands of the North. This is out of the country’s total of 923,952km2. Painfully, the entire Southern Nigeria is allocated with only 192,867km2.

Northern Nigeria Controls 731,085km2 or 78% Land Allocations
In Nigeria and by its geopolitical zonal landmass, Northeast has the largest landmass of 272,595km2 involving: Borno-70,898km2, Taraba-54,473km2, Bauchi-45,837km2, Yobe-45,502km2, Adamawa-36,917km2 and Gombe-18,768km2. Northeast is followed by North-Central with a total of 235,110km2 involving: Niger State-76,363km2, Kwara-36,825km2, Benue-34,059km2, Plateau-30,913km2, Kogi-29,833km2 and Nasawara-27,117. North-Central is followed by Northwest with a total of 218,271km2 involving: Kaduna-46,053km2, Zamfara-39,762km2, Kebbi-36,800km2, Sokoto-25,973km2, Katsina-24,192km2, Jigawa-23,154km2 and Kano-20,131km2. The FCT (Abuja) is allocated with 7,315km2; all totaling 731,085km2 for the North.

South Shares Only 192,067km2 or 22% Lands In Nigeria
In the Southern part of Nigeria, the entire seventeen States of the Region are allocated with only 192,867km2; with the largest being the South-south with 84,587km2 involving: Cross River-20,156km2, Edo-17,802km2, Delta-17,698km2, Rivers-11,077km2, Bayelsa-10,773km2 and Akwa Ibom-7,081km2. South-south is followed by Southwest with a total of 79,755km2 involving: Oyo-28,454km2, Ogun-16,762km2, Ondo-15,500km2, Osun-9,251, Ekiti-6,353km2 and Lagos-3,355km2. Southwest is followed by the Southeast with a total of 29,525km2 involving: Enugu-7,161km2, Abia-6,320km2, Ebonyi-5,670km2, Imo-5,530km2 and Anambra-4,844km2; totaling 192,867km2.

Six States With Largest Landmass: Niger, Borno, Taraba, Kaduna, Bauchi & Yobe
We have also in the course of the analysis above found Niger, Borno, Taraba, Kaduna, Bauchi and Yobe States in the Northeast, Northwest and North-Central Nigeria to be the six States with largest landmass in Nigeria. While Niger State has the highest landmass of 76,363km2, Borno is second with 70,898km2, Taraba is third with 54,473km2, Kaduna 46,053km2, Bauchi 45,837km2 and Yobe sixth 45,502km2.
29, 525km² Landmass Too Shrinking For 44m Igbo Homeland Citizens

Lack of vision for territorial expansionism using legitimate processes remains one of the major minuses of the ancient and modern Igbo leaders. This is to the extent that by current realities, the present 29,525km² of landmass for the Southeast, which is almost three times lesser than the landmass of Niger State alone, is acutely too small for her 44m sedentary and pastoral natives and is most likely to pose a major stumbling block in their development strides or drives. Land and space remain a fundamental factor in the present and future growth and development of any aspiring nation-state. The People of Igbo Nation ancestrally occupy five States in Nigeria, namely: Anambra, Enugu, Imo, Abia and Ebonyi with combined land mass of 29, 525 square kilometers involving: (a) Enugu-7,161km², (b) Abia-6,320km², (c) Ebonyi-5,670km², (d) Imo-5,630km² and (e) Anambra-4,844km². These five core Igbo States have combined sedentary population of not less than 28m and are located in old Eastern Nigeria, now called “Southeast Nigeria”.

Igbo People Of Delta & Rivers States

In Rivers State, dominated by outpost Igbo, the Igbo People own or occupy not less than 60% of its land, waterways and creeks. The People of Ekpeye, Igwe-Ocha (Port Harcourt), Etche, Ndoni, Ikwere, Obigbo, Elele, Opobo, Rumuokoro (Umuokoro), Rumuora (Umuora), Ogba and Omoku, etc are all Igbo People. Major Igbo cities in the State include Igwe-Ocha, Obigbo, Elele, Isiokpo, Omoku, Ahaoda, Rumuora (Umuora), Rumuokoro (Umuokoro) etc. As at 1800 AD, the Igbo-Aro Nwoji, Aro Apara and other Igbo clans including Nri offshoots had already migrated and settled in the State. They also rose to the position of the ruling and rich classes. Before the Biafra-Nigeria Civil War of 1967-70, most properties and real estate in Rivers State particularly Port Harcourt (Igwe-Ocha) were all owned by Igbo People. Which was why after the war, the Federal Military Government of Nigeria passed a military law declaring them as “abandoned (Igbo) properties”; leading to their taking over by the Government and its favored individuals and groups. It was also at this point in time that Igbo cities like Rumuokoro and Umuora and so on, had “R” added in their names for purpose of creating identity crisis and getting their Igbo natives into denouncing their Igbo origin. Some were either brainwashed or forced to drop their Igbo names. In old Bendel, now Edo State, for instance, an illustrious son of Igbo Akiri, Brig Gen Samuel Chinenu Ogbodiya (Ogbomudia) was forced to drop ‘Chinedu’ in his name; likewise igbo Akiri where he came from which was changed to ‘Igbbanke’. The ‘Ogbodiya’ name as the native name of the Brig Gen expressly indicates that ‘he was named by his mother after her husband’s best friend. “Ogbodiya” in Igbo means “my husband’s best friend”.

The Total Igbo Population Now Estimated At 60m

By dependable and independent estimates, the total Igbo indigenous Population is 60m, out of which about 54m are resident in Nigeria, comprising not less than 28m in the Southeast (sedentary population) and 16 million others living outside the Southeast but within Nigeria, totaling 44m Southeast Igbos. There are also about 4m ‘Niger Delta’ Igbos in Rivers (60%) and 2.5m or 40% in Delta State. The number of Southeast dominated Igbos resident outside the Region but within Nigeria is about 20m. They include about 12m in the North including some 1.5m indigenous Igbos presently found in Benue and Kogi States.

The estimated 12m Igbos in the North are largely found in the FCT, Kano, Plateau, Kaduna, Niger and Benue States. Owing to incessant insurgency attacks and radical Islamism, a good number of them living in Borno, Taraba and, Adamawa have relocated to safer places including overseas and other parts of the country. Southwest particularly Lagos State is home to about 8m Igbos. It must also be pointed out that successive governing authorities in Nigeria have for decades maintained and still maintain a policy of ‘depopulation’ of Igbo People or suppression of their population especially during national census and voters’ registration exercises.

About 6m Igbo natives or more are living outside Nigeria and can be found in not less than 80 foreign countries and they exclude the lost Igbo Populations across the world or those lost to the Atlantic Slave Trade between 1700AD and 1900AD and the 1967-70 Biafra-Nigeria Civil War. Recent researchers have also found that out of every ten among the 60% of the Black or African American Population, there is a citizen of Igbo descent, particularly in the States of Maryland and Virginia in the United States of America.
Of 32.4m Eligible Igbo Population, Only 3m Voted In The 2019 General Elections

Substantial numbers of eligible Igbo voting population have in the past ten years been consistently denied right to be registered as voters in Nigeria; a discriminatory policy maintained by INEC and the country’s political leaders using designed stringent voter registration and artificial scarcity of the Permanent Voters’ Cards (PVCs) for those Igbo citizens who were abysmally captured as registered voters.

Conversely, in the North, not only that 98% of the eligible Northern Muslim voters are captured or registered, but also hundreds of thousands, if not millions of their under-age children or those between 9 and 15 years are captured as “registered voters” and allowed to vote on Election Day. These they do in addition to allowing influx of hundreds of thousands of aliens from neighboring Muslim countries especially Chad, Niger and Muslim Cameroonians to be issued with PVCs and allowed to vote on Election Day. Strengths of the Igbo voting population are further shrunk on Election Day using voter intimidation and violence as well as electronic manipulations including ‘failure of Card Readers’ and deliberate delays in the commencement of voting and use of hired thugs and compromised security agents to chase away Igbo voters for purpose of seizing and destroying ballot papers of those already voting or voted.

In the 2019 General Elections especially the Presidential Poll, Igbo People were visited with unspeakable violence and vote manipulations. Political figures in Lagos openly and boldly threatened Igbos if they vote otherwise and went ahead to organize unspeakable violent attacks on their properties and persons leading to scores of Igbo deaths and burning of their business locations, polling units and other properties. Similar level of violence was also the case against Igbos in Taraba, Plateau and Kano States and so on. These were in addition to deliberate allocation of shrinking number of polling units in areas where they are dominant such as in some parts of the Southwest and Northern Nigeria (i.e. Sabon Gari in Kano State).

It is on statistical record that out of the projected Igbo population of 54m resident in Nigeria, only 18m or about 32% were captured as ‘registered voters’ during the voters’ registration ahead of the 2019 General Polls. This is out of the country’s 84.04m registered voters. The 18m Igbo registered voters then included 10m in the Southeast, Rivers and Delta 3m and North, Southwest and others 5m; out of which only about 8.5m were issued with PVCs in the Southeast and 6.5m in Rivers, Delta, Lagos and Northern Nigeria; totaling 15m Igbo PVC holders. Shockingly, in the Presidential Election of Feb 23, 2019, only 3m Igbo citizens validly voted across the country; involving 1.6m in the Southeast and about 1.4m from the rest of the country.

The total registered voters in Nigeria registered to vote in the 2019 General Elections was 84.04m, out of which, 72.7m were issued with PVCs or Permanent Voters Cards, with only 15m Igbos bearing PVCs and minutely 3m allowed to vote in the Presidential Poll. In other words, 29.4m eligible Igbo voting population were disenfranchised or denied voting rights and participation in the 2019 General Elections. It is projected that out of 54m Igbos resident in Nigeria, about 40% or 21.6m can be classified as ‘ineligible’ or ‘under-age voters’, having been between the age bracket of a day old to 17 years ahead of the 2019 Polls. On the other hand, 60% or 32.4m are classified as ‘eligible voters’ or those from 18 years and above; out of which only 18m were registered, 15m issued with PVCs-and minutely 3m voted.

Igbo Problems Compounded By Govt. Hate Policy & Political Exclusion

These have become Igbo’s three hydra headed monsters which must be tackled by a committee of experts drawn and engineered by Igbo Middle Class Intellectuals. It is no longer news that citizens of Igbo Nation are facing threats of extinction in the present Nigerian Armed Forces, the Police and Intelligence Agencies. The present Government of Nigeria has also heightened and escalated its policy of segregation and exclusion against Igbos; in addition to discriminatory policing and soldiering targeted at the citizens of the Ethnic Nationality. Apart from need for solutions to these to be urgently found, it must also be noted here that Igbos can never progress meaningfully, collectively and individually without being actively involved in political, democratic and public governance processes.
Adult Illiteracy Remains A Virus Retarding Igbo Growth & Development

Intellectual solution must be found concerning *money culture* and *adult illiteracy* among the current male dominated Igbo adult population. Education remains the cornerstone of every nation, society and class. Unfortunately in present Igbo Land, the post Civil War inherited mass illiteracy especially among the male population is still much around and has remained unaddressed till date. Opportunities abound for this to be frontally corrected but most of the affected population prefers *cash culture and worship of same* in place of education.

In a random sampling research conducted at Ezinifite in Aguata LGA, last year (Dec 2019), it was found that most adult illiterates wish to be appointed into plum public positions (elective and appointive) without reference to formal education requirements or tertiary education qualifications. This is the case especially when they are *materially rich*. They also despise the educated ones as “big grammar speakers” and hate with passion being counseled or advised to return to the classroom. The study also found that the adult illiterates under study are fond of ignorantly equating educational skills with material wealth or personal richness and any educated citizen not richly employed or involved in white collar crimes, is deemed a failure and his or education considered useless.

It has also been found that the available *Work & Learn* or *part time universities and other tertiary institutions* in Igbo Land and beyond and their pre university preparatory lesson centers have the combined capacities to graduate and produce hundreds of thousands of *drop-out traders and artisans* every five years. Therefore, there is critical need for Igbo Middle Class inspired re-orientation among the target population to make them realize that ‘it is not possessing cash wealth that matters but what it is used for’ including using same for educational transformation and building of industries for huge profit making and gainful employment of the teeming unemployed Igbo citizens—both skilled and unskilled.

Good Leaders & Governance Needed To Drive Igbo Growth & Dev Quest

Finally, it has been found through research that Igbo’s growth and development quest can only advance meaningfully where good leaders and governance are in place. Sadly, as it stands today, Igbo Nation is dotted with bad leaders and leaderships. To address this, there must be a strong movement for dethronement of bad leaders and leaderships in Igbo Land using legitimate conventional and traditional processes. Granted that Igbos are in control of 60% of Nigeria’s trade economy, but lack of visionary political leadership has made them ‘slavish and subsistent trade economic giants’. The Chinese rise as a major world economic giant was made possible by the combined forces of: *visionary political leadership, robust int’l trade diplomacy* and *citizens’ entrepreneurial ingenuity*.

Therefore, Igbos must discard the ‘cash wealth bearing and worship’ orientation and move to the cradle of education and ICT powered industrial captainship, bearing in mind land and space availability and ability to put in place visionary political leadership; capable of providing and entrenching good and service delivery governance (i.e. provision of key public infrastructures like steady and multi sourced power supplies; roads, rails, air and seaports) and robust and sustainable Public-Private-Partnership and friendly trade policies such as legitimate taxation and other industrial support incentives.

Thank You

(The above was a Lecture: *Citizenship In Nigeria & Igbo Quest For Survival & Prosperity*, delivered by Nze-na-Ozo, Chukwuemeka Umeagbalasi (Nze Ezikwu Welu Onodo, Asi Eri Mombo Oso), Board Chair, Int’l Society for Civil Liberties & Rule of Law (Intersociety). The Lecture was delivered at the Maiden Igbo Entrepreneurship Conference (IEC): Iru Afia Bu Iru Oru, held on Friday, 4th December 2020 at Oma Event Center, beside Ekwueme Square, Aroma, Anambra State, Nigeria. The “Ikeuba”, organizers of the Maiden IEC 2020; an idea of the ADF policy on “Aku Luo Uno”, is led by Chukwuemeka Obinwugo (Convener), Engr. Ndubuisi Chiadi, Chijioke Ngobili, Barr Chigzie Amakeze, Ugonna Obineli, Dr. Chukwugbo Chukwuma and Ujunwa Anyaoha)

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Photos: Prof Uzodimma Nwala, President, ADF, Ambassador Uche-Ajulu Okeke, former Envoy to South Africa, Adjunct Prof Jerry Chukwuokoro, a University Don and Chieftain of ADF, Chief Denis Ezeokoli, a rights activist and Emeka Umeagbalasi, Chair, *Intersociety Board*, at the event.