

## **Cultural values and the fight against corruption in Nigeria**

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### ***Abstract***

*Corruption is a universal phenomenon but no doubt one of the most intractable problems that hinder development in Nigeria. This paper examines the issue of corruption, and affirms that it has reached an extra-ordinary level in the Nigerian society. It explores some reasons why the country has degenerated so deeply into corruption, and argues that the level of corruption correlates to the level of underdevelopment and thus that the most corrupt countries of the world are also the most underdeveloped. Using hermeneutics it delves into the meaning of culture, its values and its influence in the human society and suggests that given the habituation of the Nigerian polity with corruption in its many ramifications, the best way to fight corruption is to attempt a trans-valuation of Nigerian values; build strong institution not strong men, create honest and efficient public officers and encourage creative rather than acquisitive impulses.*

### **Introduction**

The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 58/4 set out the 9<sup>th</sup> day of December as International Anti-Corruption Day in 2003. As a UNO day, it is no doubt intended to be a worldwide affair. This special day is aimed at encouraging anti-corruption advocates to engage the general public to effectively fight against corruption and fraud in communities. But this day should be of greater significance to Nigeria and other nations overwhelmed by the burden of corruption. The issue of corruption in Nigeria requires serious hermeneutics, or interpretation. It requires a

contextualization in the form of an inquiry into how we are negatively affected by this monstrous phenomenon; and how we have been relentlessly drawn into this quagmire from which we appear unable to extricate ourselves as a nation. It means that the issue of corruption, and thus an anti-corruption day should be of more interest to us than most other nations of the world. We could say *res ipsa agitur* (this matter is of importance to us!). We should at least make this day a special day of reflection more specifically on how we have fallen from grace to grass; how this house has fallen to borrow Chinua Achebe's description (Karl Maier, 2000), and of course how to rebuild it if possible. This paper dwells on the issue of corruption; culture and its values and their import in our actual life; and finally on what we should do to improve our dismal condition of corruption in public domain.

### **The ravage of corruption in Nigeria**

Corruption is a universal phenomenon and is a concept with very wide application. It can be defined as attempt to gain favour for oneself or group; favour not due to one in a just and honest situation. It includes attempt to use public position to gain unfair advantages for oneself, for friends, relatives, benefactors, etc. It is most often used in relation to embezzlement of public funds or goods by public servants, but it obviously goes well beyond this. In this sense every country in the world has its share of corruption. This can be clearly seen from the rating of Transparency International. In its now famous Corruption Perception Index started in 1994, no country ever scored 100% (cf. [www.transparency.org/research](http://www.transparency.org/research), 28/4/2016). In spite of this, it is the perceived level of corruption that really matters. The level of corruption and the seriousness each country exhibits in

fighting it is a very reliable indication of the country's level of development and advancement.

Let us make example of how corruption is perceived in a few countries with specific and real examples. China is a developing country and also very corrupt. But the present government of Xi Jinping declared an anti-corruption campaign. Since then at least 3 top military Generals and about 45 highly placed Communist Party officials have been disciplined or are under investigation. At the last count about 74,000 public officials have been disciplined. Their offenses range from serious embezzlement of public funds to personal use of public vehicles, (Anti-Corruption Campaign under Xi Jinping, [www.en.m.wikipedia.org](http://www.en.m.wikipedia.org), 28/4/2016). The important point is that in China though corruption thrives both in public and private sectors there is obviously serious attempt to fight it, even by way of example.

Public perception of corruption is of even greater importance in any country. In some countries, it is a big shame to be viewed as corrupt. If a politician has such public image, it becomes a big disadvantage for his party to field him for an elective position. Such a reputation is sometimes viewed with such repugnance that some accused official prefer to commit suicide than face the odium of being perceived as corrupt. A onetime Prime Minister of France Pierre Beregovoy borrowed money, interest free, from his friend and a friend of the then President of France Francois Mitterrand. The loan was legally registered by a notary and used to buy a house in Paris. Later this loan was discussed in the French press with some journalists questioning Beregovoy's integrity. The French politician could not endure the shame of being discussed in public as corrupt. He committed suicide by shooting himself on first May, 1999. (Suicide de Pierre

Beregovoy, vingt an déjà, [www.mhuffpost.com/fr/entry/3186286](http://www.mhuffpost.com/fr/entry/3186286), 28/4/2016).

In neighboring Germany, a former minister Jurgen Mulemann was suspected of committing suicide in June, 2003 because he was fingered in an illegal arms deal, and suspected of evading tax from profit made from the deal. Before this incident, he had resigned as Bundes (Federal) minister because he used his official letterhead to project the business idea of a relative. His contemporary, Rudolf Sharping as Defense Minister used official jet to visit his girl friend in Frankfurt. He had to resign his ministerial position when this matter came up in the press, ([www.biography.yourdictionary.com/rudolf-scharping](http://www.biography.yourdictionary.com/rudolf-scharping)). In February 2012, the President of Germany had to resign because he took a house loan with low interest from the wife of a friend. Asked by journalists if he had any business relations with this friend Mr. Geerken, he answered in the negative without mentioning the loan he took from Mrs. Geerken. When this incident came up in the German press, the President resigned. (German President Wulf Quits over Scandal, [www.mthestar.com](http://www.mthestar.com).) Wulf did not believe he acted illegally but announced that he was “stepping back from office from service to our people.” In a statement he said: “the development of the past few days and weeks have shown that (the German people’s) trust and thus my effectiveness have been seriously damaged. For this reason it is no longer possible for me to exercise the office of president at home and abroad as required.” Mr. Wulf who was also the former Governor of the State of Niedersachsen was also accused of receiving free holidays from business executives. For these reasons, prosecutors asked parliament to lift his immunity from prosecution as President of the country.

In India, P V Narasimha Rao who was Prime Minister from 1991 to 1996 was charged with corruption and bribery for involvement in a vote-buying scheme. He was tried and found guilty in the year 2000, but his conviction was later overturned by a higher court.

These cases are no doubt tips of the iceberg but they are enough examples to contrast how deeply corruption has infested Nigeria. Former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo once complained about corruption and cited how people who come to office as Governors for four years become multi-millionaires thereafter for life. However what is more important is that too few of these have been seriously questioned in Nigeria about the source of their wealth by the Nigerian Economic and Financial Crime Commission or the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission. In serious countries, former Presidents and Ministers borrow money or contract book projects to raise money for their homes. Bill Clinton and Collin Powell are two recent examples from the United States of America. In Nigeria what is in question is the amount of wealth one has gathered after occupying such high positions. Within the past few weeks, a Nigerian army general, who retired in 2015, was reported to have returned 2.3 billion Nigeria of stolen money on account of General Buhari's anti-corruption moves. That such theft is possible is an indication of the free of all looting that Nigeria's public service had become in the past few years.

But the increasing level and widespread of corruption point to how negatively it has impacted on the progress of our country. What is more important however is not that so many office holders are corrupt, what is significant is that our anti-corruption organs are virtually ineffective if not dead until as recently as a

year ago. One obvious example is that of James Ibori the only governor in prison for corruption since the history of the country. He is also the one who had before becoming governor been convicted 3 times for fraud. After he left office as governor, he could not be convicted by the Nigerian judicial system and it was left for an English court to put him behind bars. (James Ibori, [www.wikipedia.org/JamesIbori](http://www.wikipedia.org/JamesIbori), 2/5/2016). If he were not extradited to England he would be one of our stakeholders, calling the shots in Nigeria and determining the fate of other Nigerian lesser mortals. Late Diepriye Alamiesigha received presidential pardon, and was part of the last national conference aimed at redirecting the country. Salisu Buhari, former Speaker of the House of Assembly, guilty of multiple forgeries was recently appointed a member of the Governing Council of one of our Federal Universities. Today Fabian Osuji former minister of education disgraced out of office on charges of corruption is still in charge of a government institution in Imo State. The then Senate President, Adolphus Nwabara and other senators, including Chris Adighije who openly confessed a bribery scandal in the Senate are still very free human beings in the Nigerian polity. Nigerian Mr. Integrity, Farouk Lawan who was captured on hidden camera stacking hundreds of thousands of bribery dollars in his pocket did not even deem it fit to resign his seat in the House of Assembly after the matter was splashed in the media.

These cases mirror a deep seated attitude of official tolerance for corruption. They point to a very wide understanding that one can embezzle money; one is in fact even expected to embezzle money if he is in position to do so. The important caveat is that one must not be caught. If one is caught, powerful friends and

political allies must be around to help; or he must have enough money to engage the best lawyers who must be connected enough to bribe the judges. We must add that lack of serious and well coordinated anti-corruption activism has conspired to worsen the situation, and also ensured that every level of the Nigerian society is neck-deep in corrupt practices. Consistent people like late Gani Fawehinmi are too few and far between in a society that prides itself as the giant of Africa counting well over 150 million people.

Why Nigeria has become so endemically corrupt is a difficult question. A correct answer must be multi-factorial, and must first return to our origins as Nigerians. We are a people living the history of forced amalgamation and lack of serious efforts to build the diverse people towards cohesiveness. We are a people constantly asking about states and local governments of *origin* and in the process sowing disunity in our deepest psyche. Nigeria becomes effectively like a terrain where those who are able try to scramble for what they can acquire without thinking of whether this is ethical or unethical (Karl Maier, 2000). We must not blame colonialists for all our problems. But the fact of forced amalgamation and divide and rule politics raised the canker worm of ethnicity, bad and incompetent leadership especially in areas that matter most. In general David Lamb (1984) was correct to write, that African leaders “have done very little to convince their people that nationhood offers more benefits than ethnicity.” Their people in turn are too irrational to understand that, at the end, a bad and corrupt environment purveys no benefit to the weak no matter which side of the divide he comes from.

Ethnicity is the readiness to trample on justice against people who happen not to be from one’s tribe, town, state, language

group etc. It is the readiness to be unjust to a person because he is not from my ethnic group. It is the readiness to trample on justice for temporary benefit. But then justice is the foundation of all socio-political structures and as St. Augustine (1958) says: “in the absence of justice, what is sovereignty but organized brigandage?” Corruption in Nigeria has festered unchallenged mainly because Nigeria as a country has been schooled in trampling on justice. A few examples will be sufficient here.

After the Nigerian civil war many Igbo people who were living in other non-Igbo sections of the then Eastern Region were deprived of the property they left behind to run for dear life. When the war ended, the queer terminology of “abandoned property” was invented to deprive them of all they had left behind, both movable and immovable belongings. With hindsight it was an incomprehensible situation. In places like Calabar, Igbo people who stayed back at the advance of Federal troupes were killed by Efik people. An Igbo person who abandoned his house in Kano or Lagos could claim it after the civil war. But one who did the same at Calabar or Port Harcourt, both situated within his former region could not because it was “abandoned property.” Their properties were claimed and occupied by those who in the Nigerian parlance were indigenous to these towns with the support of the States and Federal Governments. (The Issue of Abandoned Property is not yet settled, [www.nairaland.com](http://www.nairaland.com), 2/5/2016). It meant that they could occupy and acquire houses belonging to fellow Nigerians without cost simply because they were *indigenes*. Some of the State Governments handed out some pittance to the starved Igbo owners of the houses in the name of compensation and later the David Mark commission did something similar, especially in Rivers State. Nigeria aided and

abetted such theft with brazen immorality and injustice. An Igbo saying has it that when an abomination is allowed to fester for one whole year, it becomes a custom. Today theft, injustice, and corruption are customs in Nigeria if we want to be honest to ourselves.

Another factor that has gradually aided and abated the festering of corruption is ethnicity and its continuing mutation. Ethnicity also includes the over-emphasis on one's ethnic origin in public affairs. It comes to the fore in public affairs, especially when there is perceived advantage for the parties. Ethnicity comes to play in competitive politics; in employment into public jobs and whenever there is a limited advantage to share. In brief, ethnicity attempts to use the appurtenance of the ones who are subjects of advantage to favor them over and above others who are not from the particular ethnic group. It is most evident when individuals of low qualification and competence are employed in organizations and better qualified and more competent people are neglected. Chinua Achebe pointed out that this not only creates bitterness in the minds of the disadvantaged, it also ensures that the nation loses by poor performance and by fostering the cult of mediocrity, (1983: 19ff). But in addition, ethnicity aids corruption in many ways. The same sentiment of favoritism that was at play in hiring of the incompetent ensures that he is not held to account in the performance of his duty and in maintaining discipline.

Ethnicity in Nigerian politics and public life started when the different ethnic groups started flocking to new urban areas, mostly created by colonialists. In these new urban areas the sentiment of conflict between major ethnic groups was rife. Over time there has been gradual devolution of ethnic sentiment into smaller sectional sentiment. As one goes down to states, there are

divisions into local governments; senatorial zones; towns and villages, each of which is used at each level for the benefit of public office holders.

It is basically the same attitude of active support for questionable and unethical acts or simply sweeping them under the carpet or just doing nothing that has over time generated what has been described as the culture of corruption. (Daniel Jordan Smith, 2007). Nigeria has for the past 15 years of its return to multi-party democracy seen the most brazen challenge to the sovereignty of the people in the form of brazen rigging of elections. There have been relatively few instances where elections were openly rigged and the result overturned by law courts. I am not aware that any single human being, not a politician, not an INEC official has ever been punished for rigging an election in Nigeria. In a similar manner, we have had several inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts in different parts of the country. It is very remarkable that hardly any perpetrator has ever been punished or even prosecuted for these conflicts that have led in the past to the loss of many lives. Today the Boko Haram insurgency appears to be new. But such phenomenon, like the Maitasine massacre and other violent uprising of fundamentalist Moslems have had a long history in the Northern parts of our country without anybody being brought to book. The only person that was ever tried for inter-religious conflict in the history of Nigeria was General Zamani Lekwot, a *Christian* from Zangon Kataf Local Government, under the government of General Ibrahim Babangida.

Lack of seriousness in prosecuting cases of conflict is replicated on the issue of corruption. It is true that the former minister of health Mrs. Grange had to quit for alleged corruption.

Also the former minister of aviation Stella Odua, and a few police chiefs in the past had to step down from their exulted positions on account of corruption. But what of the allegation bedeviling the Nigerian National Petroleum Cooperation? How about all the talks about the milking of the Nigerian cow by our Nation Assembly? What Nigeria was building were temples of impunity which assure the corrupt that they can go without being punished, and assure their successors that they can even outdo their predecessors. For Chinua Achebe “The gap between the highest and the lowest paid public servants in Nigeria is one of the widest in the whole world,” and that when the allowance of these are calculated in “there would be no word in the dictionary adequate to describe the institutionalized robbery of the common people of Nigeria by their public “servants””(1983: 23). Since the current Nigerian Federal Government of Mohammed Buhari came into office, there have been some efforts to hold allegedly corrupt public officers to book. Given the massive corruption that has been taking place in our public life, one would expect that many culprits will face the brunt of the law. But it must not be forgotten that it was the level of corruption and incompetence in our judicial system that made it unable to nail the former Governor of Delta State, Mr. Ibori. It is the same judiciary that is at work under Mohammed Buhari.

### **Corruption and development**

It is in this context of corruption that one must consider the economic development of Nigeria. Development in its entire ramifications is a desideratum of the entire Nigerian populace. But how can the country realize its potentials under the situation of endemic corruption? It is quite easy to perceive the link

between corruption and underdevelopment. First the countries rated the most corrupt in the world are also the least developed. There seems to be a strong correlation between the treatment of corruption in a country and its actual state and potentialities of development in the near future. The most corrupt countries of the world in the published Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of the Transparency International in 2014 include:

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| Somalia:     | 174 |
| North Korea: | 174 |
| Sudan:       | 173 |
| Afghanistan: | 172 |
| South Sudan: | 171 |
| Iraq:        | 170 |

Nigeria scored 136 sharing the same position with five other countries including Cameroon, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon and Russia. With the 31th position, Botswana is the least corrupt country in Africa. But it is also the country with the highest per capita income as well as one of the best countries in Africa to live in.

Another important point is the correlation between the level of corruption and the rating of what was called the “Best Countries of the World Research.” In August 2010, *Newsweek Magazine* published a study of 100 countries of the world. The lead research question was “if you were born today, which country would provide you the best opportunity to live a healthy, safe, reasonably prosperous, and upwardly mobile life?” The study concentrated on five categories of national well-being including education, health, quality of life, economic

competitiveness, and political environment. Let us compare the results of some of the countries with the Corruption Perception Index of the same year 2010.

Country: World Best Country, 2010    CPI Ranking, 2010:

|              |    |     |
|--------------|----|-----|
| Finland:     | 1  | 4   |
| Switzerland: | 2  | 8   |
| Sweden:      | 3  | 4   |
| Canada:      | 7  | 6   |
| Israel:      | 23 | 30  |
| Chile:       | 31 | 21  |
| Costa Rica:  | 36 | 41  |
| Cameroon:    | 98 | 146 |
| Nigeria:     | 99 | 134 |

The result is clear. Even though the survey of the world's best countries picked only 100 countries while the CPI survey for the same year researched 175 countries, the proximity of the result is still highly interesting. One can safely say that the result would be closer if the *Newsweek Magazine* also surveyed the same number of countries as Transparency International or vice versa. There is no highly developed country, sciento-technologically speaking, that is perceived to be very corrupt. The reverse is also true: there is no very poorly developed nation that records high level of integrity in its public service.

When we think of development, we must not forget the effect of foreign investment and how corruption damages such investment in corrupt countries. Countries that are well run; where man power is adequate and well trained technologically and where wages and the cost of doing business is relatively low

attract huge foreign investments. These have very positive effect on the general economic well being of the country, creating jobs for the young and sources of taxation and enrichment for the government. This is one huge advantage which the so-called Asian Tigers have enjoyed in recent years. With technically educated population, relatively lower wages, lower rent and in general lower cost of doing business, many European and American companies relocate their factories to some of these countries, and then import their products back into Europe, America and Japan. This ensures that the cost of certain category of products remain low and affordable. Since the high wages in Europe and America make it unaffordable for anyone to manufacture things like ventilators; electric irons; laptops and cell phones, these are mostly manufactured by multinationals located in advanced countries in their outposts in lower wage countries. This practice which is called outsourcing generates raucous debates in the politics of some technologically advanced countries, especially the United States of America, but what is obvious is that it aids development of poorer nations in no uncertain manner.

Where corruption is endemic the advantage that less developed countries should gain from outsourcing is stifled because the cost of investment is raised by marginal costs. A Harvard study has determined the rate at which such costs reduce foreign investment. Peter Eigen, Chairman of Transparency International concluded in 1997 that “a measure of lost development opportunities as an empirical link has now been established between the level of corruption and foreign direct investment.” A percentage point increase in marginal cost through corruption generates a 5% reduction in direct investment.

It means that a very corrupt country attracts in the long run less and less foreign investments, thus increasing unemployment and misery especially at the lower economic cadre. It is part of the reason why most of foreign direct investments in Nigeria are in the oil sector and why we have concentrated too much on the sale of oil as foreign income; being unable or unwilling to seriously develop many other sources of foreign exchange.

### **Culture, cultural values and the fight against corruption**

That we have hinted on how attitudinal corruption is in our society indicates that it has become a cultural phenomenon. In 2007 an American Scholar Daniel Jordan Smith titled his anthropological research on Nigeria as follows: *A Culture of Corruption: Everyday Deception and Popular Discontent in Nigeria*. Smith's book touched on so many aspects of the Nigerian life: e-mail scams, favoritism, 419, development scams including NGOs; Obasanjo's "Fair Play Even among Robbers"; corruption in politics and democracy; electoral malpractice; fraud in the police force and vigilante groups like the Bakassi Boys; born again Christians; diabolical rituals; corrupt university structures in the form of supplementary admissions, monetized grades and concessionary admissions; fake drugs; bogus diagnosis; kleptocracy by contract, etc. It is the most comprehensive study of corruption in Nigeria dubbing it a culture.

Culture is defined in many ways but the clearest definition is that it is the way of life of a people, or their complete design for living. Culture is also very often defined in reference to the past or tradition as "the complex whole of man's acquisition of knowledge, morals, belief, art, custom, technology, tradition and

skills etc which are shared and transmitted from generation to generation.” This reference to tradition and its transmission should not confuse the fact that our culture is not the way our ancestors lived. It is rather the way we are living. Surely aspects of the way our ancestors lived are transmitted to us, and these can be called traditional culture. In this sense traditional culture often contrasts with actual way of life. In this regard one also speaks of real culture and ideal culture. Ideal culture represents virtues or principles that a culture is taken to uphold. Real culture is how in fact such principles actually impinge on the life of human beings. We can take hospitality as one of the ideals of a culture, but real culture is concerned with how in fact the members of a particular culture are welcoming to strangers.

Two points are important for our purpose in respect of culture. The first is that actual culture always influences the life of its members very deeply. Henri Bergson in his book *Les deux sources de la moral et de la religion*, emphasizes how much the human being is almost tailor-made by his culture. For Bergson there are overwhelming aspects of our life in which we behave simply and unconsciously in obedience to our culture. *Il faut parce qu'il faut* (It must be so because it must be so!), precluding the direct engagement of rational reflection. (1988: 15ff). Bergson sees this force which we see as the force of culture as obligation, and emphasizes its automatism in the human society. In a way it is like useful habit, such that if we in fact lack its automatism it would be impossible to perform most of the actions we perform in the society. If we must rationally reflect on all our duties, we will not be able to perform our obligations in the society. It is culture that ingrains automatism of action in the human life, thus pointing to its influence.

A second point about culture is its dynamism. Culture is constantly in the process of change. This refers to all aspects of culture, including language which is best described as the vehicle of culture. A changing culture has what is called its kernel, its essence and its gab, or its essence and its accidental and non-necessary features. Here we must raise Kwasi Wiredu's Paradox of Culture Change. Change in the kernel of culture does not constitute real change in culture. In brief this is because the kernel of culture is about truth. When a culture changes in its non-essential aspects, then the culture has changed fundamentally: "since it is not rational to give up such components in preference to foreign substitutes, to do so is a sure sign of the loss or diminution of cultural self-identity." Thus the actual paradox entails that "the contingent becomes the necessary" (Kwasi Wiredu, 1985: 218). The implication of this paradox is that what we usually call Igbo culture; Yoruba culture; Idoma culture and so on, which have almost all been engaged in changing their gab have been changing for good. We can even say that so many of our African cultures have died. Still it is not sudden death, it is not biological but social death which is usually slow, imperceptible and mutative. It usually creates a *mélange* from the past and the present, giving rise to a new reality. In terms of Nigerian cultures, what we are living now is a new reality, since most of our cultures have changed so many aspects of their gab.

It is this reality that we must look at in thinking of cultural values. The concept of value is "an elusive term but in general value is regarded as something good, as desirable, as worthwhile, a cause worthy of pursuit, worth living for and dying for. Value provides the motivation for deliberate human action." (T. Okere,

quoted in John Ekei, 2001: 61). Values are very relative terms. One man's meat is another man's poison, but there are certain elements that can be said to be universally desirable. In our traditional cultures certain values like honesty, hard work, respect for elders; hospitality, family-hood, brotherly love, communalism etc are always unassailable.

But we must be realistic and accept that some of these values are changing or have been changed definitively. In their place there are other attitudes that are more in consonance with our way of life, our real culture as Nigerians in today's world. Let us just mention a few: growing individualism, survival, pragmatism, adaptability. The value of honesty and also to some extent hard work pales before these growing attitudes in contemporary Nigeria.

Of course in terms of fighting corruption, the cultural value of honesty and hard work are always indispensable. But in the real life some of what we may regard as values increase the possibility of corruption. We have mentioned ethnicity as a negative factor in national life. But in most cases such "ethnic behaviours" are taken as help for one's kin, one's brother, relative, etc. They are understood in terms of family-hood even when they impinge on the rights of others. Our sense of justice does not extend to the level that we grant to each person equal rights to the goods of the society; and so, that your "brother" or "sister" is in position to give you a job even where you are the least qualified is fundamentally unjust. It means that a lot of what we take to be "cultural values" are in fact contributory to the entrenchment of corruption and injustice in the society, (cf. J. Obi Oguejiofor, 2001).

## **Conclusion**

The implication of all the above is that to be effective, the fight against corruption must come down to the more fundamental aspects of the life of Nigerians. To effectively fight corruption we cannot depend on the inefficient EFCC and the ICPC. It is clear that after more than ten years in existence, these organs have witnessed phenomenal increment of the corruption level in Nigeria. In fact it seems to have become so bad that fighting corruption has become big business where anti-corruption agents quickly get interested in corruption issues, not in order to prosecute cases but in order to get their own share of what has been looted. The new enthusiasm in Buhari era belies the fact that these anti-corruption organs are really playing to the gallery. To fight corruption effectively we must at least do some of the following:

1) Trans-valuation of our national values: As a nation we need to change the focus of our values. Who are the people we foist as our heroes? Where do they stand in terms of corruption? Most nations consciously project their heroes to serve as sources of inspiration to the young. In Nigeria our heroes are those who either have acquired large wealth regardless of the means or those who succeeded in occupying important positions. A look at the naming of streets in Abuja is a revelation. The streets of our capital city are named mostly after politicians who are not necessarily free from corruption including Obasanjo, Babangida and even Sani Abacha. Our public institutions, all our universities with proper names are named after politicians among who are discredited and are the most corrupt group of Nigerians. Do we speak of those on whom we confer national honors, including the

highest national honor? While today we speak of Abacha's loots, we easily forget that he held the highest national honor of our beloved country. Serious efforts at fighting corruption must start with such matters that are too public to ignore. We deceive ourselves if we think that they do not matter.

2) Strong Structures not Strong Men: President Barrack Obama asserted that what Africa needs is strong institutions and socio-political structures not strong men. We have seen over time the worthlessness of strong, powerful rulers praised to the sky while presiding over rotten structures. The fact that such option is of little value to the society should make the Nigerian society to look elsewhere. Erecting strong men is a recipe for corruption. They, by and large, make the national coffers their birthright and encourage debilitating corruption among their supporters.

3) Another important way of fighting corruption is to make possible the emergence of non-corrupt and efficient human beings who are willing and suitable to fight corruption. It has become very difficult to rise in the political cadre in Nigeria without bribery, without kickbacks and without Godfathers. This is a reality that makes our public life more and more corrupt. The more we take such situation for granted, the more are we losing the fight against corruption.

4) Finally to fight corruption, we must work on the impulses we create in our young ones. Bertrand Russell distinguished two types of impulses, creative and possessive impulses. Possessive impulses "aim at acquiring or retaining private goods that cannot be shared; these centre in the impulse of property ... creative and constructive impulses, ... aim at bringing into the world or making available for use the kind of good in which there is no privacy and possession." Possessive impulses lead to

“competition, envy, domination, cruelty, and almost all the moral evils that infest the world,” (Bertrand Russell, 1977: 11 – 13). It is the preponderance of possessive impulse that leads to inordinate and stupid acquisitiveness that is the most fundamental cause of corruption.

Our culture is one that is very dynamic and whose values are therefore not as influential as they should be. But the thrust of our fight against corruption should be on changing the value system; introducing and desiring positive values and fundamentally encouraging creative rather than possessive impulse.

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