

“Andy” Uba Goes to War (1)

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By Okey Ndibe

The curious phenomenon known as “Andy” Uba, but whose real name is Emmanuel Nnamdi Uba, seems to have me firmly in his sights. Within the last month, Uba has made several formal and informal overtures to me. First, in a recent telephone conversation, a longtime acquaintance resident in California told me bluntly: “Uba is my man.” He then made a brave attempt to convince me that Nnamdi Uba is not a bad person, portraying the man’s younger brother, Chris, as the rotten egg who’s given the candidate an unenviable image. After some vigorous exchanges, my interlocutor then broached an idea. Uba, he said, knew it was simply impossible to induce me to become one of his paid hagiographers. Even so, Uba’s camp was wondering if there was a way to persuade me to be silent. My retort was unambiguous: No! For I believe that silence in the face of evil is as contemptible as active promotion of an iniquitous man or cause.



"ANDY"

Last weekend, a variant of the “silence” proposal was mooted once more, this time in a call to my youngest brother. The caller was a cousin of mine whom I have not spoken to in close to eight years. After telling my brother that he knew I would never suborn myself, this cousin nevertheless suggested that he receive hush cash from the Uba camp and then pass the cash to my brother. It would then fall to my brother to inform me that he’d been paid off by Uba and to entreat me to (and this is a good translation of my cousin’s words) “put my pen aside.” Outraged by this besotted proposal, my brother promptly called to tell me about it. Thank God that he and I as well as my other siblings received the most astute moral formation from our parents.

Uba, who lived in America for many years before hitching himself to President Olusegun Obasanjo, ought to know that the record of these conversations exist—should the case arise.

Apparently frustrated at his inability to buy me as a praise singer or silent

bystander, Uba must have decided to step into the ring and, as Americans would

say, mix it up with me. Last week, his campaign organization published a paid advertorial in several Nigerian newspapers. Titled "Bad Losers, INEC, and Guber Grumblers in Anambra State," the first such statement appeared in the Vanguard of Wednesday, March 21. Its opening sentence read:

"Some candidates in the gubernatorial race in Anambra state, notably from the ANPP, the AC and the APGA, who were recently disqualified by the Independent National Electoral Commission, INEC, seem to have found solace in spreading false rumours, blaming PDP's popular candidate, Dr. Andy Uba, for their fate and problems with INEC." Uba's advertisement boasted that his opponents' "false allegation manifests their internal acceptance of the reality that Dr. Andy Uba is cruising home to a comfortable win in the gubernatorial elections, come April 2007, whether they run or not."

In a mocking, cynical statement, Uba's campaign reserved some of the scurrilous language for me. It is pertinent to reproduce the entirety of the campaign's reference to me in a paragraph titled, "Okey Ndibe's Hatchet Job":

"The hatchet job by writer, Okey Ndibe (The Sun, 13th March) doubting the educational qualifications of INEC Chairman, Prof. Iwu, and those of Dr. Andy Uba sounded more like Amos Tutuola's 'The Palmwine Drunkard') [sic]. This acerbic writer easily personifies the republican nature of the Igboman, who claims that he has no king or leader, and would readily want to destroy any formidable person or institution, such as INEC. Two caustic articles against one subject, in three outings as a columnist in

'The Sun' clearly suggest that the writer has an old score to settle with Andy Uba. However, we hold no brief for INEC's Public Affairs Manager and one of Nigeria's impressionistic writers, Andy Ike Ezeani who would surely describe as laughable, these cocktail of lies that question Prof. Iwu's credentials."

Andy Uba, as the Nigerian parlance goes, is loaded, meaning that he wields stupendous cash. Such inexplicable wealth enthalls some people, but not this writer. Uba does not impress me one bit. I rate people according to their possession of moral capital, and I have long concluded that Uba is morally bankrupt. A man possessed of moral stature would not have so many question marks hovering over him. Who, exactly, is Emmanuel Nnamdi Uba?

This is a question, I suspect, that scares Uba to hell. Unfortunately for him, a man who offers himself for public office must, at minimum, come clean about his identity. If I have been insistent in my criticism of Uba, it is precisely because the facts simply don't match who he wants the public to believe he is. What do we know about Uba?

Let's begin with what's not in dispute. This man was for seven plus years the president's senior special assistant on domestic issues. In that role, according to Obasanjo himself, Uba assumed the most domestic of tasks: he put the president to sleep and woke him up. That is as concise a summation of his public experience as it is possible to articulate. Uba's vision as a would-be public official rests, by his own admission, on lessons he learned from the president. He has said on several occasions that, if elected governor, he intends to bring his experience as the

president's boy to bear. "Andy" Uba is threatening to do in Anambra what his boss, Obasanjo, did in Nigeria. We'll presently return to this spectral prospect.

For now, let us return to the question of Uba's identity. In interviews and on his campaign website, Uba has claimed that he holds bachelor's, masters and doctoral degrees from Canada, the United States and the UK respectively. But the verifiable facts pooh pooh his claims. Not one of his so-called universities has confirmed that Uba completed a first degree much less advanced degrees. According to wikipedia, Buxton "University," which Uba claims as the source of his PhD, is "an unaccredited institution, which claims existence in London, England but has its address in Portugal." It has been called "a diploma mill," meaning that its degrees are conferred on anybody able to pay requisite fees.

Instead of beating about (Amos Tutuola's) bush, Uba should do something simpler: authenticate any of his so-called degrees. Let him provide proof that he completed a course of study at any accredited university and earned a degree. Some of his apologists have contended that a governorship candidate need have only a secondary school certificate. Yes, indeed. But Uba continues to refer to himself as "Doctor." At any rate, when a candidate who holds a school certificate opts to pose as a PhD, then his fraudulence indicts him. Uba and his handlers continue to boast that he earned the degrees he claims, but they've been reluctant to provide one shred of evidence. Here's my offer to Uba: should he prove that he earned any degrees at all, I offer to include an apology to him in

each of my columns leading up to the elections.

What's the substance of Uba's campaign for governor? It can be categorized as a brazen (and doubtless illegal) effort to bribe the electorate. It is an open secret that his campaign crowds are rented. At each stop, he openly announces the distribution of motorcycles and foodstuff to members of the audience. A man without shame, he often invokes the names of Drs. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Michael Okpara. The mediocrity that he is, he hardly recognizes how offensive it is to bracket his puniness with true greatness.

How did Uba make all the money he's splashing about? Uba's handlers have claimed that he made a stupendous fortune in the U.S. prior to his appointment as an aide of the president. However, those who have investigated Uba's past, especially the dogged investigator Sowore Omoyele of www.saharareporters.com, have found a different picture: that Uba was a struggling businessman at best. Fortunately for us, there is an easy and undeniable way to ascertain one's level of wealth in the United States. By releasing his tax returns for the last three years he lived in California, Uba can demonstrate how much he was worth in America. Is Uba man enough to take up the challenge?

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Okey Ndibe is a novelist, poet, political activist from Yola, Nigeria. He is the author of *Arrows of Rain*, a critically reviewed novel published in 2000. Ndibe relocated to the United States in 1988, where he founded *African Commentary*, a magazine described as "award-winning and widely acclaimed." Ndibe is also a published poet, and a former associate professor of English at Bard College at Simon's Rock. He currently teaches fiction and African literature at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Okey Ndibe is finishing his second novel titled *Foreign gods, incorporated*.

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