

# My vote for Andy Uba

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*By Okey Ndibe*

There's something compelling about desperate ambition. Since Emmanuel Nnamdi Uba (better known as Andy Uba) appears desperate to be my governor, I hereby announce my readiness to vote for him. Yes, you heard right: I can't wait for Mr. Andy Uba to become the governor of Anambra. My only demand is that the man step forward to reconcile the discrepancies in his personal record.

For the record, Anambra is home to such intellectual luminaries as Professor Chinua Achebe, Mr. Emeka Odumegwu-Ojukwu, Francis Cardinal Arinze, Sir Jerome Udoji, Mr. Emeka Anyaoku, Dr. Alex Ekwueme, Mrs. Oyibo Odinamadu, Professor Emmanuel Obiechina, Mr. Chukwuemeka Ike, Professor Obiora Udechukwu, Mrs. Lily Ada Ulasi, Mrs. Felicia Ayalogu, Dr. Chu Okongwu, Professor Helen Chukwuma, Professor Ben Obumelu, Mrs. Oby Ezekwesili, Dr. Chike Obi, Professor Sam Okoye, Dr. Dora Akunyili, Dr. A.B.C. Nwosu, and Dr. Charles Soludo. In its pantheon of deceased juggernauts are such distinguished people as Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, Dr. Okechukwu Ikejiani, Mr. Mokwugo Okoye, Dr. Kenneth Onwuka Dike, Dr. Mbanugo, the Menakayas, Mrs. Janet Mokelu, Mr. Ben Enwonwu, Mr. P.K. Nwokedi, Sir Louis Mbanefo, Dr. Nwafor Orizu, and Professor J.B.C. Okala.

Even Uba would agree that a state with such extraordinary moral capital and harvest of enlightened minds deserves to be led by a man of moral substance and a measure of intellectual insight. Would Mr. Andy Uba please stand up to dispel lingering doubts about his credentials!

A man who seeks the exalted public trust of governor cannot afford to be a retailer of ruses and lies. And yet, this is precisely the kind of bind in which Uba has been trapped since December 2006. For those who have forgotten, let's offer a quick rehash.

Last December, *The News*, one of Nigeria's top weekly magazines, carried a cover story titled "Andy Uba: The Face of a Fraud." The gist of the report was that Uba, who has been passing himself off as a doctorate degree holder, does not even have an earned bachelor degree.

I spoke with one of the magazine's editors after the story was published. He confirmed that they gave Uba several opportunities to substantiate his credentials. Uba was far from forthcoming. Instead, according to the editor, Uba was more interested in persuading them to squelch the investigative story. But since the editors had independently verified the report's factual basis, they went ahead with publication.

It was a devastating report. It began by posing a pointed question: “Who is Andy Uba, the man campaigning to be governor of Anambra State?” Then it followed up with the assertion: “New revelations show that the favored boy of President Olusegun Obasanjo has been living a deceptive life, fooling the President and parading a chain of academic degrees he does not have.” The story portrayed Uba as a man who has been “parading titles and credentials he does not have.”

Something mysterious happened with that edition of the magazine. On its publication date, not a single vendor had copies of it to sell. Apparently, somebody had bought up the magazine’s print run. The goal? To ensure that readers, especially those in Anambra, did not read about this poseur of a gubernatorial candidate. Miffed by their magazine’s disappearance from newsstands, the editors issued a press release that accused Uba’s agents. My information was that they planned to reprint that edition until each of their regular and occasional readers could get a copy. But—thanks to veiled threats delivered over the telephone—the courageous editors were forced to let matters lie.

I have asked around, but nobody remembers Andy Uba ever producing proof about the authenticity of his certificates. Even so, some lazy reporters in Nigeria have continued to address him in the borrowed prefix of Dr. A friend of mine who now lives in Houston, Texas, but who used to work in Abuja, told me that he was once under the impression that Uba was a medical doctor. “Whenever I met him, I would call him doc, and he answered,” this friend said.

I’d like to champion Uba’s desperate quest to “capture” the governorship of Anambra, but I’d like to be sure that the man is who he claims to be. Could Uba then put his traducers and nemeses to shame by naming the universities he attended, the degrees he earned, and the dates he earned them? If his curriculum vitae check out, then Uba would have exposed the base malice of his league of doubters, this writer included.

In the past, Uba’s apologists had countered that he doesn’t need a doctorate in order to be a governor. They pointed to the constitution that spells out a secondary school certificate as the minimum educational attainment for any gubernatorial aspirant. That defence, in Uba’s case, is misconceived. If the man had presented himself as the holder of the minimum qualification, he would have been well within his rights to contest—even though some would then have asked whether a state as intellectually endowed as Anambra ought to settle for such a meager talent.

Those who resort to the canard of constitutional prescription to defend Uba seek to obscure the salient issue of trust. If a man who wishes to govern a state is given to false claims and self-inflation, then he raises disturbing questions about his moral mettle. If Uba has deceived Nigerians for eight years about the nature of his academic credentials, then on what grounds would citizens be asked to repose faith in him as their leader?

There’s also the vexed question about the source of Uba’s stupendous wealth. His gubernatorial campaign was an obscene exercise in the pricing and buying of people. He distributed cars and cash. He dispensed motorcycles. He sustained a

horde of jobless hangers-on in hotels. A man desperate for acceptance, he had little going for him in terms of administrative experience or salutary political record. The people of Anambra held him and his former master, Olusegun Obasanjo, responsible for sponsoring the 2004 widespread torching of public property in the state. Thugs protected by police officers had combed through the state in a burn-and-slash campaign. The nefarious plan was to engender the breakdown of law and order to give Obasanjo an excuse to declare a state of emergency. And to impose an administrator who would willingly herald Uba as governor in 2007.

That perfidy tainted Uba forever in the eyes of the people of Anambra. Were he a measured fellow, Uba might have recognized that his ambition to govern a people he helped batter and ruin would be futile. Instead, he placed supreme confidence in his seemingly inexhaustible cash. He spent tons of cash to garner some semblance of political love. He was the portrait of determination, a political Sisyphus bent on buying his way to the Governor's Lodge in Awka. He also felt, no doubt, that with Obasanjo as decider-in-chief and Maurice Iwu set to conduct shameful polls, there was no stopping his gravy train. His credible opponents were declared ineligible. Even after several courts ordered the electoral commission to reverse the disqualifications, Iwu stuck out his tongue at the judiciary. Uba had to win, and by all crooked means.

After a farcical exercise that was misnamed elections, Uba was predictably declared the winner, and by a predictably huge landslide. Ghosts too must have voted for this extraordinary man, for

Uba's first vote tally exceeded the number of registered voters!

In "victory," Uba proved that there was a perverse quality to his person and politics. Just as he's carried on as a doctor without a proven certificate, Uba's "election" produced a bizarre syndrome. Having "voted" for Uba, the Anambra electorate then slipped into a collective depression. There was in the state a palpable sense of mourning, a pall of grief. The cloud lifted only on June 14 when a seven-member panel of the Supreme Court, in unanimity, declared Uba an impostor and ordered his immediate vacation from office. Throughout Anambra, nay Nigeria, people took to the streets in a fiesta of laughter and celebration. All over the country, there was a huge sigh of relief. An iniquity had been trounced, an imposition banished.

But it has turned out that we celebrated too soon. Uba has just found a senior lawyer with the gumption to ask the Supreme Court to lick its spittle. Uba must not have witnessed the nation-wide elation that welcomed the high court's verdict of June 14. Either that or Uba believes that his own private cheer is worth the collective anguish of the people of Anambra and millions of other Nigerians.

On a weird level, Uba's desperation is alluring. A man who seeks this desperately deserves pity or sympathy. To qualify for sympathy, Uba must explain the source of the legendary wealth that has bought him many luxuries, including palatial mansions, a fleet of cars—and, by some account, a private jet. The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission ought to be

interested in evidence of what Uba was worth in 1999 when Obasanjo hired him as a domestic aide. He ought to explain how he came by that \$170,000 dollars that he illegally ferried into the U.S. on Obasanjo's presidential jet. Saminu Turaki, the embattled former governor of Jigawa, has told the EFCC that he gave Uba and Obasanjo N10 billion naira for use in the doomed third term project. Has the EFCC probed Uba's connection to the Turaki slush?

Here are two tasks, then, for this irrepressible seeker. Show us evidence of your educational achievement. Then establish that you made your money by legitimate means, not through illicit deals during the Obasanjo years. If you can't, then stop affronting decent men and women with your cash-fueled hubris. If you want for work, consider rejoining your old master as a governor of Temperance Farm.

## Readers' Favorites

1. Nigeria's savaged children
2. The war we ordered is here
3. What I saw in Nigeria
4. Murder Incorporated
5. No Longer at Ease
6. My Vote for Andy Uba
7. Achebe, Soyinka, and the Nigerian Mess
8. My Biafran Eyes
9. My Father's English Friend
10. A female speaker's manly vices
11. The education of Umar Yar'Adua
12. The triumph of barbarism
13. Achebe's apt censure
14. Andy Uba Goes to War (1)
15. Andy Uba Goes to War (11): What OBJ taught Uba
16. Why I Take It Personally
17. Andy Uba's highest bid
18. The folly of the Nigerian elite
19. Fraud Incorporated
20. Etiaba's father, not mine
21. Our laughing president
22. Fayose and God's response
23. My 419 Call
24. A feud of three bulls
25. More reasons to ignore Soyinka
26. Who does Obasanjo work for?

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### About Okey Ndibe



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*.

### Speaking Engagements

To discuss a speaking engagement, please contact Okey Ndibe by e-mail ([okey@okeyndibe.com](mailto:okey@okeyndibe.com)) or by phone (860.306.7843).

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