

A (free) speech for Yar' Adua

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By Okey Ndibe

My fellow countrymen and women: I feel it is proper, after nearly a year and a half of serving as your servant-leader, to address you this morning.

First of all, we need to clear up the whole business of my status as servant-leader. It no longer works for me. Let me therefore warn you all, those who voted to give me a landslide victory in an election that never held as well as disgruntled elements who were prevented from voting against me, that I henceforth wish to be known and addressed as a master-ruler. Even though I had genuinely intended to play the role of servant-leader for four years, I have since learned that Nigerians are too insolent towards anybody who is a servant, even one who doubles up as a leader.

At any rate, even when I still wished to be addressed as a servant-leader, many of you, including traditional rulers from east, west, north and south, legislators, governors, contractors, praise singers and job seekers kept bending themselves into an "r" shape whenever they approached me. They called me Baba, Daddy, Oga, even Oba - or a combination of these flattery names. It soon dawned on me that the whole nation called Nigeria is filled with servile and spineless men and women who can't fathom a leader as a servant. You all are desperate to be servants yourselves, so I abdicate the role to you.

As a divine entity, I cannot lie to you, countrymen and women. So I confess: power is sweet! I mean, it enables you to decide who gets an oil block and who loses one; who becomes a minister and who doesn't; who gets arrested at the airport and who gets escorted into town by a retinue of whip-wielding mobile police officers.

A number of Nigerians have asked if I believe that all power come from god? I know the answer, but I have to break it down slowly so that mere mortals may comprehend.

As I said above, the election from which I gained a landslide never really held. But months before the date of the supposed election, a god invited me to Aso Rock for consultation. I had never seen a god in a more dour mood. He told me, this god, that since some of his nefarious subjects had banded together to thwart his divine plan to ruin - sorry, I meant to say, run - their affairs for another term of four years (and then perhaps another four), he had decided to peacefully retire to his divine farm in Otta. Despite his rage, he assured me that there was no bitterness in his decision to return to a farm that used to loose money but had miraculously begun to earn a profit of \$250,000 per month.

At one point, this god of Aso Rock, who was on the cusp of relocating to Otta, exclaimed my name three times. When I answered three times, he called me his

political son in whom he was well pleased. And then he revealed that, since the business of power was decided not by voters but by gods, he had the pleasure to inform me that he, a veritable god, had chosen me to govern Nigeria. Okay, make that rule.

Of course, the whole idea of being a servant-leader came from my human side – before I myself knew what it meant to become a god. My predecessor gods have since scolded me for degrading divinity by reducing myself to the status of a mere servant. Henceforth, I want it known that I am, in fact, nothing less than a god. Anybody who appears in my presence must take note that I am now to be addressed, not as “Your Excellency and Commander-in-Chief,” but as “Your Divine Entity and Commander of the Winged and Celestial Brigade.”

In keeping with my new divine identity, I wish to announce that it is henceforth illegal (actually change that to sinful) for any mortal to blaspheme against me, my wife, or children, or to mention our names in vain.

In keeping with the new dispensation, I have issued marching orders to the State Security Services to arrest all and any dissident elements who run, or contribute to, websites that disparage, impugn or cast aspersions on my infallible divine person. It is with pride that I report that the SSS has been up and doing. In the last four weeks, it has arrested and detained no less than three operators of websites that had the (human) temerity to put my divine self or even members of my extended family in unflattering light. Let me reiterate our determination to redouble our vigilance to ensure that the chaps who run

www.saharareporters.com, the gravest offender, are apprehended the moment they step into our divinely guarded airspace. Imagine their cheek in carrying pictures of my son – god’s son, mark! – as he enjoyed a divinely-approved good time with wands of naira notes as well as guns.

Like the god before me that left his Rock post for a farm, I must state here and now that I don’t read newspapers. They are just too filled with seditious material. Even so, my divine attention has been drawn now and again to the fact that some newspapers have coined the name of Baba Go Slow for me. They have accused me of not commissioning a single project since coming into divine office. On reading such news reports, I marvel in amazement. Don’t these flimsy critics reckon that gods commission lots of projects everyday – but in the realm of the spirit? I have built and commissioned thousands of kilometers of spiritual roads. I have commissioned numerous spiritual hospitals that those who have had the privilege of receiving treatment in them are reduced to ecstasy when they speak about their miraculous healing. Must I, a god, commission human projects before they know that I have totally transformed Nigeria?

I have even heard it stated that I retire to bed as early as 8 p.m. This, by the way, is a case of human wisdom failing to measure up to divine foolishness. I don’t retire to bed at 8 p.m.; I do so at 6 p.m! It’s only mere mortals who don’t know that gods do their best work when they’re deep in sleep. Or even snoring.

There’s another form of human stupidity that I wish to address today. One of my special advisers – it must be Ume

Ezeoke's son if my divine memory serves me right - told me a few days ago that some troublemakers are writing columns to the effect that it took me five months or more to shuffle my cabinet. And then they are stating that I bungled the job by retaining a man like Michael Aondoakaa who has devalued his office. I laughed when I heard this one. First of all, it took me six, not five, months to change my cabinet. And every millisecond of that time was divinely calculated.

Fellow Nigerians, you may not know it, being mere mortals, but it is my duty to inform you. In taking such a long time to decide who should remain in my (divine) cabinet and who should be shucked off, I was following a carefully laid out plan. It is my divine pleasure to inform you that the record keepers from the Guinness Book of World Records contacted me yesterday with two pieces of good news. First, they told me that I had broken the world record in the longest time it took to change a cabinet. They also informed me that I now hold the record for sustaining a man in the office of attorney general who is a proven square peg in a round hole. Would I have earned these twin honors for our dear nation if I had changed my cabinet at the speed with which bachelors change bed sheets or had asked Aondoakaa to go?

As I share the two world records with every patriotic Nigerian, I wish to implore you all to abandon your negative attitudes and begin to treasure what you have. Take Aondoakaa, for example, a man dear to my divine heart. Speaking with the insight of a god, I can tell you that, had our beloved Michael been born in America, Barack Obama would not have been qualified to untie his shoe laces. The man I call Michael the law

wears only the most expensive shoes to be found in designer shops in America. Now, next time you see a full picture of Obama, take a good look at his ordinary shoes and tell me if there's any grounds for comparison.

Countrymen and women, let me end by making a divine revelation: it is not true that all power comes from god. The fact of the matter is that all who hold power in Nigeria are gods.

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

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