

These goats called men

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By Okey Ndibe

There's a good chance that Nigeria is run by goats posing as men.

Let me confess: This idea is not originally mine. Two weeks ago, I commented on the bizarre case of a goat arrested by the Kwara Police Command as a suspect in a failed car heist. A police spokesman had told bewildered reporters that, as members of a vigilante gave chase to two men attempting to steal a car, one of the fleeing suspects suddenly transformed into a goat.

One of my online readers then offered an intriguing response. He wrote that, if Nigerian officialdom believes that humans can turn into goats, it might be because many of our so-called leaders are goats turned into men and women.

For a moment, I suspended my disbelief; such was the strange power and appeal of this reader's thought-provoking joke. The more I thought about it, the more it struck me that Nigeria operates like a goatdom - a space governed by goats who treat Nigerians as if they were goats as well.

All you need do is to reflect on the inanities that happen in the circles of the nation's misgoverning classes.

Last year, a panel of the House of Representatives uncovered an egregious scandal that took place in the power sector during the suzerainty of the

mischievous emperor called Olusegun Obasanjo. In summary, the panel discovered that billions of dollars (the exact amount remains at issue) were handed out to indigenous and foreign contractors to execute a variety of power projects. Not in one single instance did the legislative panel find that contractors had done work commensurate with the lavish sums they collected.

In a community of sane humans, Obasanjo as well as his coterie of ministers and contractors implicated in this squandermania would have been arrested and brought to face multiple charges. Well, the rules are different in a goatdom. When the legislators asked that Obasanjo appear before them to explain his role, he suddenly remembered that he had a fever. Even so, he was not too sick to sit down and pen a lengthy, rambling letter to the probe panel.

In the letter, he lectured the panel on etiquette. He quibbled about the protocol for summoning an ex-emperor to appear before a lowly house whose members he used to order about in the days of his inglorious reign. Then he detoured into diversionary rhetoric about the multiple stages and complexities of power projects.

Instead of regular power supply, Nigerians are now used to persistent outages and the unceasing drone of power generators. Yet nobody has

mustered the outrage to compel Obasanjo and his power ministers to answer for all the wasted billions. Obasanjo, strutting about with the shamelessness of a morally bereft man, has asked distraught Nigerians to appeal to God to send them electric power. Before our very eyes, Liyel Imoke, one of the ex-ministers criticized by the power probe panel, was hastily re-installed in the governor's seat in Cross River to give him the protective umbrella called immunity. Only in a goatdom would such criminal protection be extended to a man who has serious questions to answer.

In the U.S., a governor accused of criminal conduct has no immunity from arrest or prosecution. Last December 10, agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) carried out a morning raid on the official residence of then Governor Rod Blagojevich of Illinois. FBI investigators accused Blagojevich of multiple counts of abuse of office. They alleged that he tried to sell the Senate seat formerly held by President Barack Hussein Obama.

Were Blagojevich a Nigerian governor, he would still be basking in office today. Instead of arresting him, the police would have continued to sound the siren for him and to salute him. They would have argued that, owing to his gubernatorial immunity, they can't possibly pick him up. In a goatdom highly placed crooks are shielded from arrest and trial.

The FBI was not detained for a second by the fact of Blagojevich's office. If anything, the fact that he was a governor made them to move with alacrity. They handcuffed the then governor and hauled him before a judge where the charges were read and his plea taken. Two weeks

ago, the Illinois Senate voted to impeach Blagojevich. The senators did not receive calls from an Adedibu-style godfather or the White House instructing them to give Blagojevich "a soft landing." Only in a goatdom are accused (as well as convicted) money launderers warmly welcomed at the nation's seat of power. Only in a land run by goats - disguised as men - are ex-governors with questionable track records rewarded with ministerial posts.

Finally, only in a goatdom would a failed electoral umpire like Maurice Iwu be allowed to give Nigerians nightmares by declaring preparations for the next round of (rigged) elections in 2011.

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About Okey Ndibe



Okey Ndibe is a Nigerian novelist, poet, and political commentator. He is the author of the critically praised novel, *Arrows of Rain*. Ndibe relocated to the United States in 1988 to be the founding editor of the *African Commentary*, an award-winning and widely acclaimed magazine published by the novelist Chinua Achebe. He currently teaches fiction and African literature at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. He is finishing work on a novel titled *foreign gods, incorporated*.

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