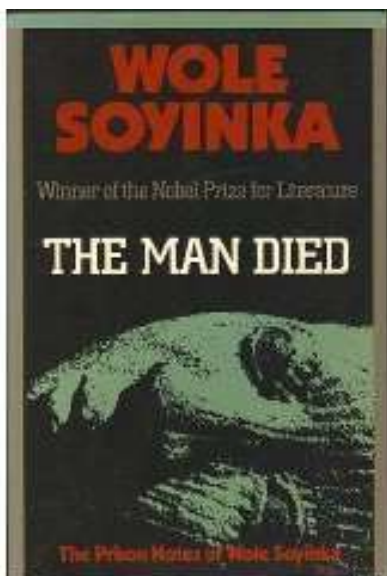


Soyinka:

The man dies in him who keeps silent when it matters most

By Malcolm Emokiniowo Omirhobo

I have painstakingly listened to Prof. Wole Soyinka's interviews on the Nigerian 2023 elections and I make bold to say that "The man dies in him who keeps silent when it matters most." I dare say further that It is most unfair and unholy of Prof. Wole Soyinka to come out of the blues to apportion blames. Prof. kept silent when INEC deliberately refused to upload the presidential election results electronically. He kept silent when INEC breached the Electoral Act and it's own rules and regulations in the conduct of elections. He kept silent when Igbos and those suspected to be Igbos were being threatened by their Yoruba host. He was silent when the Oro rite was performed during elections throughout Lagos State to disenfranchise non-natives and women. He was silent when Igbos and their look-alikes were being attacked by some Yorubas on election day. He kept silent when xenophobic and inflammatory statements were made on Igbos by Bayo Onanuga, Festus Keyamo, Femi Fani-Kayode and many others. He kept silent when APC was using the Nigerian police and other state operatus to suppress Nigerians during elections. He kept silent when elections were massively rigged and democracy made a mess of. In all these if Prof had spoken a word or two it would have made a world of difference because his voice mattered then not his silence.



Prof. Wole Soyinka's outburst on television and assessment of the state of things and frontal attack on Yusuf Datti Baba-Ahmed is most unfair and unbalanced. Prof's position tends to give imprimatur to the stolen mandate of the Nigerian people by an evil and devilish regime. Prof's silence at this point in time would have been golden than his voice whereas he failed to speak when it mattered most.

Scared of the impact of Chimamanda Adichie's letter to Joe Biden and the implications of the narrative she has seized and turned against them, 'they' have found a quick distraction by publishing a new letter of abuse by Prof Wole Soyinka against the Obidient movement and Ahmed Datti. The old man is asking Senator Ahmed Datti to debate with him. On what? Why would Datti debate with Soyinka? Is Soyinka running for President or is he part of the Tinubu campaign? (which it seems he might be from the unveiling of his carefully crafted responses so far!)

I think there is something Prof and his friends don't yet know about what has happened in Nigeria in the past one year of the Obidient movement. For every time anyone from the establishment or an ally to the establishment try to denigrate or speak down on Obi and the Obidients, the movement gets stronger. You can't burn it down with words, you can't destroy them with blood. One drops and a thousand rise. It's an ideological movement and while it might have both the docile protests and the vehement vocalists, it's also a new phenomenon which is vocalizing the frustrations of the youths and the average Nigerian against bad governance and corruption in the system.

Prof should take a chill pill. He's losing the last relevance he has in the political space by (again I use the phrase) trying to be clever by

half. If he's using selective criticism to push a narrative, he's lost the crowd which took him serious at one time. This is a Gen Z and a reinvigorated Millennial generation, angry at the putrid system and holding the leaders accountable for the infractions in the polity all through their growing years.

'Respect is reciprocal' sings Burna Boy and that should be drummed to Prof. These youths will rub his nose to the ground and pull it without any hesitation. It's not about if they are in the Obidient movement or the Labour Party or not.

It's THEIR generational movement which these old people are yet to understand. It's an intellectual rebellion and a technological coterie. In the virtual space, everyone is a leveler. The anger of the youths at the older generation, which Prof is a symbol of somewhat, grows and mutates. If Yakubu had carried out the election with the transparency needed, even if Obi had not won, everyone would have gone back to the drawing board and plan for the next four years. But asking these youths, many of whom voted for the first time, to accept the brazen infractions like we used to do in the past, is destroying their lives. They have accepted to go to court and have accepted to be law abiding and await the court's judgements. They are not destroying any property or rioting. They just want a true healing process which some measure of Justice can give.

Yet someone calls them unprintable names and believes it will stick or be accepted. **Prof, just chill.**

Making Peter Obi the Issue

By Emeka Alex Duru

The reasons why the Labour Party presidential candidate in the February 25 election, Peter Obi, cried out the other day, that he was under intense pressure to leave the country are becoming clearer. He is really under huge stress and in the battle of his life. You will only understand the magnitude of the odds stacked against him to appreciate what he is going through. He deserves the prayers of every well-meaning Nigerian. Obi had in line with the tenets of democracy, raised his voice against the charade that passed for the presidential election and insisted that the candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC), Bola Tinubu, was not validly elected, contrary to the declaration by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). He consequently approached the Presidential Election Petitions Panel, arguing that Tinubu did not earn the votes allocated to him by INEC, did not meet the constitutional stipulations to be declared president-elect and was not even qualified to stand for the election.

Going to court is a globally acclaimed method of expressing dissent in a democracy. Here in Nigeria, many state governors have had their mandates restored by the courts. They include the former governors of Edo, Adams Oshiomhole; Osun, Rauf Aregbesola; Rivers, Rotimi Amaechi; Ondo, Olusegun Mimiko and even Obi in Anambra. The present Bayelsa state governor, Douye Diri, got back his mandate through the court. Some have not succeeded in the exercise and have taken it so.

Apart from Obi, the presidential candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Atiku Abubakar, the All Peoples Movement (APM), the Action Peoples Party (APP) are equally in court, challenging the declaration of Tinubu as president-elect.

In the Second Republic, the presidential candidate of the then Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), had pursued his case against the declaration of Shehu Shagari of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) as president, up to the Supreme Court, without success. Between 2003 and 2011 when he repeatedly contested for the presidency, Muhammadu Buhari instituted cases against President Olusegun Obasanjo, Umaru Yar'Adua and Goodluck Jonathan, alleging that the elections that brought them to office were rigged. He lost in all the instances. None of them was ridiculed or framed for doing so.

Going to court may not translate to instant victory for the aggrieved but gives him a sense of belonging, a feeling of satisfaction that he has been allowed to vent his grievances when he feels that he has been wronged. That is the noble path that Obi has taken and not resorting to self-help. That, ordinarily, should have earned him plaudits. But the APC as a political party, its henchmen and the APC-led government, which, incidentally, snatched Osun under Aregbesola and Edo under Oshiomhole from the PDP through the courts, do not see the current situation in that light. For them, Peter Obi has committed a mortal sin by challenging the flawed election. He should, therefore, be cut to size.

It is clear that neither the APC nor its candidate in the election, Tinubu, has any answer to the posers raised by Obi in his petitions. Thus, the only strategy to overwhelm him is to leave the issue at hand and focus on his person. They have, in this regard, flooded the internet super highway and other social media networks with hired hands, whose briefs are to attack and bruise the image of Obi. There is nothing being spared in the exercise, including Obi's family and his private life. They go to the extent of creating fictitious accounts on social media, cloning the identities of Obi's supporters and making frivolous assertions to mislead the public into believing that such unruly outings are from him.

There is, in fact, an ongoing case of a man who caused a stir in an aircraft, by selling the impression of being an Obi supporter and pretending to be kicking against the inauguration of Tinubu, with the intention of painting the LP candidate as supporting terror or plane hijack. Later developments however indicated that he was actually an APC chieftain. A recent conversation involving Obi and founder of

Living Faith Church Worldwide, Bishop David Oyedepo, was tapped and doctored out of context. Obi has dismissed the tape as fake and the reporter that misrepresented the discussion was suspended by his employers. Yet, the federal Government is making a mounting out of it. The audio affair has been the propaganda object that engaged the Information Minister in his tour abroad. He had earlier accused Obi and his running mate, Yusuf Datti-Ahmed of treason for insisting that justice be done to their case at the tribunal. As if these were not enough, retired academics who had left the country for some time, have been recalibrated and mobilised to talk down on Obi and his supporters – the "Obidients". From Kaduna, an amorphous



group that described itself as the Coalition of Arewa Leaders was propped to accuse Obi and Datti of making comments capable of causing tension in the land. In London, an impersonator was planted in his name and causes him embarrassment, which included his brief detention at the airport by British Immigration officials. These are distractions from the task ahead. Obi understands these antics and the agenda but has moved on, drawing from the wisdom of the ex-American First Lady, Michelle Obama, that when his attackers go low, he goes higher and when they serve hate, he shows love. From his days as Anambra State Governor, Obi was not known for the habit of attacking people or building lies against others. The more critical point at this moment is the challenge that the declaration of Tinubu as president-elect poses to the integrity of the country and its future. These are matters that border on the leadership recruitment process, transparency in our elections and the corporate existence of the country. Making Peter Obi the issue is not the way to go. Doing so completely misses the point. Democracy is about openness and is akin to marketplace transactions. It thrives on the superiority of facts and ideas. Obi has taken his case to the tribunal. He should be allowed to be. He is an equal stakeholder in the Nigeria Project. There is no wisdom in intimidating or pressurising him to leave the country. That will be counterproductive to the growth and development of democracy in the