

Bloomberg Perspective on the three frontline Presidential Candidates in 2023 Election



In a Nigeria where the curriculum vitae of some presidential aspirant is as opaque as the sky, birth details shawled in translucent towel, real name a subject of needless controversy, birth and parenthood a curious pouch fallen from space on an island nobody wants to touch, schooling history smelling like a miasma and wrapped up in a shroud, Peter Obi, the presidential candidate of the Labour Party, was born Peter Gregory Obi on July 19, 1961 in Onitsha, Anambra State. The most outstanding and worthy narrative about Obi are the records he left in public office. Obi is a refreshing breeze in governance space, leaving an unbeatable governmental footpath of prudence, probity and empathetic governance towards the people he administered as governor from 2006 to 2014. He was not loved by Anambra political vermin who could not stand his accountable governance and obsession for prioritising the welfare of the citizens of the state. Obi disdains waste, whether at the personal or governmental level. Wealthy by any standard but, unlike the typical Nigerian politician who is enveloped in vanity, Obi lives a frugal life that shows that wealth is nothing except targeted at developing humanity. He abhors pretence and vain flaunting of wealth. When agents of the maggots-wriggling political order that has limited Nigeria's growth for decades criticise Obi for allegedly flaunting inaccurate statistics, ask them when last did any of the senescent candidates they willingly offer themselves as their lackeys, ever attempt to bandy any figure, extempore? Of all the characters who strut round like turtle doves, pregnant with illicit ambitions to enter the office of the Nigerian president, none demonstrates or possesses Obi's piety, grasp and depth. When you scrutinise those aspiring to preside over the destiny of over 200 million Nigerians, they have no destiny of worth aside their unaccountable wealth. On the moral scores above, it will be a crying shame that Nigeria ever allowed them attempt to square up with Obi for an office which, if we get it right, can forever change our dialogue with poverty and underdevelopment.

In records of fidelity to the public space where they all have all been at one point or the other, none of the duo of APC and PDP presidential candidates has Obi's baffling records of abidance with the oath of governmental purity, virtue, goodness, decency, morality, decorum, modesty and wholesomeness. This is what public officers swear to uphold.

Isn't it a huge disappointment that the narrative of Obi's investment of Anambra money is what engages these jobless political parasites and not the moral pedigree of those who totally filched investments in their care in office and who, God forbid, are poised to rule and ruin them?

When some Nigerians with ulterior motives now seek to justify the illusion of the Hobson's choice before them by claiming that morality should play second fiddle in who becomes the Nigerian president in 2023, they must be saying this in their acute naivety of the cusp of Golgotha that immorality has taken Nigeria. For a country which ranked an all-time low position of 154th out of 180 countries on Transparency International's 2021 Corruption Perceptions Index, we must not allow those who want to rule us in 2023 wriggle out of making corruption an issue at the ballot.

But Bloomberg, a media company headquartered in Midtown Manhattan, New York City, in a piece published on June 22, 2022, said the candidates dare not campaign that they want to eradicate corruption. Except Obi. According to this publication, just three decades ago, one of the presidential candidates "fought a lawsuit in which the US government accused him of laundering the proceeds of heroin trafficking and eventually reached a settlement." Bloomberg also claimed that "In July 1993, when (the candidate) briefly served as a Nigerian senator, the US government filed a forfeiture lawsuit in Chicago against bank accounts in his name, claiming there was 'probable cause' to believe they held the proceeds of heroin dealing. The case followed a probe by the Internal Revenue Service and other agencies into a trafficking network involving Nigerian suppliers."

On the PDP candidate, said Bloomberg, he "brought tens of millions of dollars of 'suspect funds' into the US when he was Nigeria's vice president in the 2000s, according to a US Senate report, and was implicated in a bribery case that resulted in the imprisonment of an American congressman. Neither episode resulted in charges against the man who is now the PDP presidential candidate." The report also said that a report published in 2010 by the US Senate's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations claimed that Jennifer, one of (his) wives, was complicit in helping her husband, who was then the VP, bring in over \$40 million of 'suspect funds' into the US, 'including at least \$1.7 million in bribes paid by

Siemens AG." As we speak, none of the two candidates has put up a rebuttal of Bloomberg claims.

In all that has been written against Obi, none has been able to link him with dubiety in public service. A few put up are so laughable and effete efforts at placing him side by side his disreputable allies in the race. Indeed, Nigeria needs a capable leadership that can tackle insecurity, restore public confidence in leadership, bring Nigeria from its consumerist to production economy, lift up the people's sagging morale and all that, but the mere realisation that an Ali-Baba-And-The-Forty-Thieves President inhabits Aso Rock will do incalculable harm to the image of Nigeria, thereby pushing the issue of resolution of the Nigerian graft conundrum far down the abyss. That is why corruption should be more urgent in resolution than, I dare say, restoring Nigeria's economy to its shape. Western countries which have profited the APC and PDP candidates as robbers of public till will most likely hold back in entrusting international funds in their care.

Attempts by vultures of the social media to demonise Peter Obi can be likened to a pithy saying in Yoruba which is expressed as a short anecdote of a sick man who apparently wishes those who tender him on the sick bed to be sick like him. When asked what he would have for dinner, the sick man demanded a green snake-made pepper soup and amala. Who does not know that killing a green snake is fraught with danger? This is expressed as, *da bi mo se da baba olokunrun, to ni omi tooro abirusoro lo wu ohun je oka*. The gambit is that, Obi must be brought to their inveterate level by all means. He must also have his own Alpha Beta where he collects 10% from the Anambra State government. His total existence must symptomize fakery. Some of these vultures even go to the absurd level of abusing him for leaving money behind in Anambra coffers, saying he was not elected to save money, unlike their own god who was apparently elected to plunge his state into eternal debts.

To be fair to those fascinated by, in the words of Oscar Wilde, the gutters and everything that is in it, an Obi presidency has the potential of signaling a *nunc dimittis* to public corruption in Nigeria. Going the other route with the progenies of corruption can only lead to infamy. In Obi is a leader whose life will be a mirror that the led will pattern their lives towards and there will be sanity in public service. Recruits of the Operation Pull Peter Down don't just get it or are too naïve to connect with it. While no one is saying Peter Obi is a saint, the two candidates of APC and PDP are moral midgets beside an integrity colossus like Peter.

On the superficial, voting Obi looks like a waste of franchise. How can someone professing a disruptive leadership that will wipe clean wastage, corruption and elite gang-up hope to win a Nigerian presidency that is teleguided by people who Dele Momodu classically referred to as Owners of Nigeria and who are maggots that only thrive in a sewage? However, it is in the interest of the Nigerian political class to redeem themselves by, for once, stepping down from queuing behind same rotten characters who have kept Nigeria down and with whom there is no hope of redemption for the country.

Unfortunately, the so-called owners of Nigeria, the power demons, must favour one of these characters to be on the ballot. This is the time that the international community must openly support a quest for a better Nigeria which Obi personifies. On a personal note, my frustration about Nigeria being, head or tail, in a cul-de-sac of a Robin Hood-led presidency almost pushed me into despondency. It was reason why, last week, I had to seek a consolation in the APC, PDP candidates' probable redemptive presidency.

However, the infectious awareness and mobilisation campaigns of the Nigerian youth, most of whose future has been rendered opaque by these same characters who collaboratively destroyed their tomorrow since 1999, has lifted my spirit. These same youths spoke in October, 2020 at the Lekki Toll Gate and in many parts of Nigeria where they were mowed down by agents of selfsame persons now asking for their votes. With a movement being coordinated by youths like Debo Adedayo Mr. Macaroni; Folarin Falana, Falz and others, optimism was born in me anew. In any case, whether Obi wins or not isn't at issue. What is at issue is our collective antagonism against a decadent order. In any case, who says the ancient Latin maxim, *Vox Populi, Vox Dei* has lost its savour?

The attacks against Peter Obi are ostensibly from rabid supporters of both the PDP and APC presidential candidates. Bloomberg called these candidates "the two wealthy septuagenarians." There doesn't seem to be anyone who does not know that the two political principalities however transcend the baggage of their ages into exemplifying a rotten order of Nigerian politics.

If you listen to narratives by hunters who go into the heart of the forest in search of dangerous animals for venison, you will have a window into and explanation of our world. Hunters tell us, for instance, that when you hear the chirping noise of a squirrel, a snake is loitering by. Squirrels' chirps are alarm signals given both to warn off a predator and to warn other squirrels of danger. When squirrels give out this noise repeatedly, the hunter's gun must be at the ready. A viper, boa constrictor or rattlesnake is poised for a strike.

On the road leading to the 2023 election, Peter Obi seems to have cloned Rosa Parks. Like Parks who refused to accept the intimidation of the white establishment and accept racial evil as *fait accompli*, Obi is biting the bullet for us and our children yet unborn. He is daring these demons and maggots of power. Our children in universities are five months at home, idling their future away. Diesel is almost a thousand Naira. Nigerians are foraging debris containers for daily bread. Terrorists rip off our bellies at their whims. Our country has become alien to us. The almost 8 years of leadership tragedy that Muhammadu Buhari presides over is busy drinking cold fura and nunu. Peter Obi, on our behalf, is saying that our feet are tired. Nigerians should refuse to give up their votes to those who took us down this dungeon of hopelessness, damn the consequences by voting for who will reshape our lives.