

Tinubu's Clemency Charms: A Mockery Of Justice And Morality.

By Aare Amerijoye DOT.B

There comes a time in the life of a nation when its conscience must scream louder than its politics. Nigeria has reached that threshold, the moment when silence becomes complicity and neutrality turns into moral suicide. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's decision to grant presidential pardon and clemency to a parade of convicted drug traffickers, fraudsters, and corrupt officials is not just a travesty of justice, it is a calculated desecration of the very soul of our nation.

Here is a man whose own past drips with the odour of narcotics, a man who, according to United States court records, forfeited \$460,000 to the U.S. government in a case involving heroin trafficking. That same man, now cloaked in the authority of the presidency, dares to sit in judgment over the fate of convicted drug criminals, and in an obscene twist of irony, he becomes their liberator. The hypocrisy is so pungent it can choke the moral lungs of the nation.

This so-called act of compassion, this grotesque theatre of benevolence, includes names such as Nweke Francis Chibueze, serving life imprisonment for cocaine trafficking, and Kelvin Christopher Smith, convicted for importing cocaine in 2023. Others like Azubuike Jeremiah, Adesanya Olufemi, and Akinrinnade Akinwande, all drug offenders, have now been pardoned under Tinubu's watch. This is not mercy; this is moral decay institutionalized. The list of pardoned convicts reads like a gallery of national embarrassment, fraudsters such as Dr Nwogu Peters and Mrs Anastasia Nwaoba, and bribe-takers like Ayinla Saadu Alanamu, all embraced under the arm of presidential forgiveness. A government that once promised to fight corruption now raises the flag of exoneration for those who fed fat on the carcass of public trust. If justice were a person, it would weep. If morality were a monument, it would crumble under the weight of this hypocrisy.

Yes, the Nigerian Constitution under Section 175 (1) grants the President the prerogative of mercy, but this power, like all discretionary powers, must be exercised in the interest of justice, rehabilitation, and national conscience, not as a political deodorant to mask personal odour. A President tainted by a U.S. court-certified forfeiture of \$460,000 linked to heroin trafficking in Chicago, 1993, has no moral standing to absolve others convicted of similar crimes. The very foundation of justice demands clean hands, Tinubu's hands are anything but.

What he calls clemency reeks of self-projection and moral laundering, an attempt to normalize what once condemned him in the eyes of the world. The pardon of drug offenders by a man once connected to a drug-related forfeiture is a self-serving attempt at moral redemption, a rewriting of personal history masquerading as national mercy.

Philosophically, a pardon must heal the conscience of the nation, not wound it further. It should symbolize mercy rooted in remorse and reform. Yet, Tinubu's list reads like an index of infamy, cocaine traffickers, heroin importers, fraudsters, and corrupt officials all walking into freedom under his smile of indulgence. Why them, and why now? Because by forgiving them, he indirectly forgives himself. He aligns with those who mirror his own stains. He turns clemency into a political sanctuary for kindred wrongdoers. In the words of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "He who pardons the unrepentant becomes the accomplice of their guilt."

The very essence of justice is mocked when the President's mercy becomes a mirror of his moral infirmities. Clemency should be redemptive, not reflexive, an instrument of grace, not guilt.

A man whose regime has unleashed economic brutality on the poor, subsidy removal without safety nets, inflation without relief, taxation without justice, cannot claim moral compassion while extending state mercy to drug traffickers. This is not governance, it is an orchestration of moral inversion, where the wicked are pardoned and the righteous are punished by policy. The very notion of rehabilitation collapses when the pardoned represent the elite circle of financial and moral corruption. Immanuel Kant taught that morality is doing what is right, not what is convenient. Tinubu's pardons were convenient, politically, psychologically, and personally, but never right.

Tinubu's clemency desecrates Nigeria's ongoing anti-drug struggle. While young Nigerians rot in Kirikiri for mere possession of cannabis, their supposed reformer-in-chief has opened the gate of redemption for those convicted of importing cocaine. How can the commander of moral authority be the same man who once forfeited drug proceeds to a foreign government? It is like Pontius Pilate presiding over the Eucharist, washing his hands in public while baptizing corruption in private. The law may grant him the power to pardon, but the moral law, that which binds the conscience of leaders, strips him of legitimacy. The Constitution permits mercy, conscience forbids hypocrisy. The letter of the law cannot cleanse the stain of moral corruption. As Hannah Arendt once wrote, "The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil." Tinubu's regime floats in that moral limbo, neither good nor evil, but shamelessly expedient. The symbolism of Tinubu's pardon mirrors the rot of his administration, where empathy is replaced with entitlement, where justice bows before power, and where truth is traded for propaganda. In truth, this pardon is not about mercy, it is about memory. Tinubu seeks to rewrite his own stained narrative by surrounding himself with kindred spirits of scandal. The man who once forfeited drug-tainted funds now extends his clemency to those who shared his moral geography. It is an unholy communion of the corrupt and the condemned, baptized in the waters of political survival.

If Karl Marx once said history repeats itself, first as tragedy then as farce, Winston Churchill offered a better truth, "The price of greatness is responsibility." Tinubu wants greatness without responsibility, power without conscience, and pardon without justice. His presidency has turned mercy into mockery, and governance into self-absolution. There is no ethical justification, no spiritual defense, no historical legitimacy to Tinubu's pardon. It is a political sermon delivered by a preacher without a soul. Tinubu's clemency is neither an act of mercy nor reform, it is a confession in disguise, an unconscious admission that the nation's moral compass is broken and its captain has lost direction. If Socrates were alive, he would have told Tinubu that justice is not what benefits the ruler but what sustains the soul of the state. If Mandela were watching, he would have reminded him that true leadership is not about freeing your reflection but redeeming your people. Chief Obafemi Awolowo would have thundered that no nation can rise higher than the moral quality of its leadership. Dr Nnamdi Azikiwe would have lamented that Nigeria's moral renaissance is being strangled by those who should lead it. Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa would have spoken softly but firmly, that the honour of leadership is measured not by the power to forgive the guilty but by the courage to defend the innocent. Sir Ahmadu Bello would have said that a leader who excuses the corrupt erodes the very fabric of the nation's character. Mallam Aminu Kano would have wept for the ordinary man whose hope dies each time the powerful mock justice. And Gani Fawehinmi, that unbending moral crusader, would have roared that no man who once forfeited drug money has the right to play God with the destinies of the just and unjust alike.

Tinubu's pardon is not leadership, it is legitimized hypocrisy, institutionalized injustice, and a moral catastrophe cloaked in constitutional power. Nigeria deserves better than a ruler who launders criminals into saints while the poor rot in silence. Nigeria deserves a leader whose conscience is not for sale, whose compassion is not political, and whose morality is not a parody. Let it be known, this presidential pardon will go down in history as the most cynical desecration of justice in modern Nigeria. It is a moral scandal that will haunt Tinubu's legacy long after his government collapses under the weight of its own contradictions.

To borrow from John Locke, "Wherever law ends, tyranny begins." Under Bola Ahmed Tinubu, law has not only ended, it has been buried under the debris of deceit, and tyranny now wears the smiling mask of clemency. History will not be kind to those who pardoned drug lords while punishing the innocent. For every convict freed under this travesty, justice itself remains imprisoned.