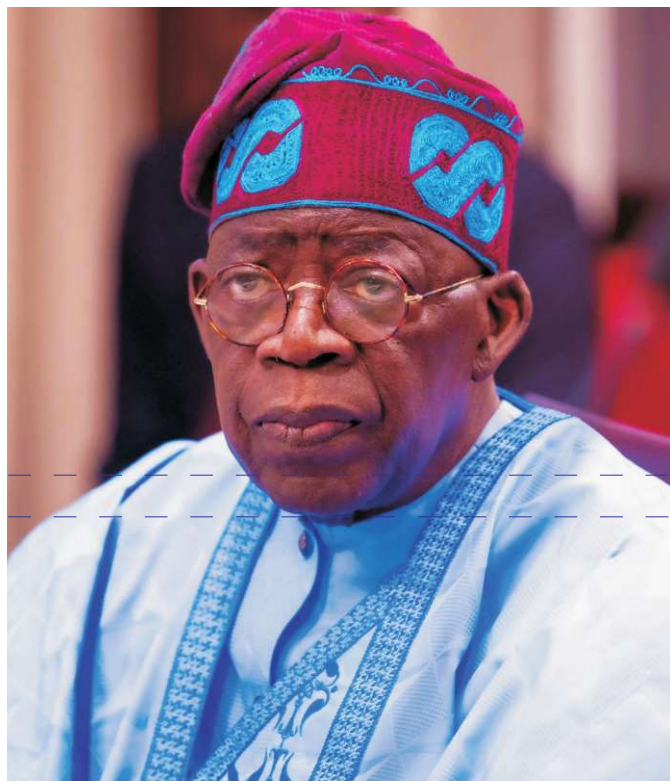


The truth Tinubu must be told

By Dele Momodu



Fellow Nigerians, once again, this is not the best of times in our dear beloved country, Nigeria. After we had thought, gladly and gleefully, that no government could be worse than the recent Buhari administration, we are now confronted by yet another monstrosity. In less than two months in power, Tinubu's government started collapsing whatever positive legacy Buhari left behind. Yet, we would have assumed and expected a President Bola Ahmed Tinubu to be far better prepared and more visionary than Buhari and his lacklustre team was. Unfortunately, this hasn't been the case. While I'm not about to give an overview of Tinubu's wobbly stewardship so far, and so soon, I'm constrained to put my thoughts and unequivocal opinion on the ongoing Tinubugate on paper. I'm doing this in my personal capacity as a Nigerian citizen and as a true and truthful friend of Tinubu. I believe only a true friend can look you straight, eyeballs to eyeballs, in the face, and tell one of the world's most powerful men, the Gospel truth. I have no doubts in my mind that the majority of Tinubu's so-called friends and ubiquitous hangers-on are pretentious hypocrites. Tinubu has also not helped himself by encouraging both royals and puppets alike to worship at his feet and turning him into a demi-god. I'm convinced that they serve him no useful purpose. I will establish this fact in a minute.

The Tinubugate did not begin yesterday. It started after Tinubu returned from exile and metamorphosed into the Governor of Lagos State in 1999 and instantly became the biggest beneficiary of our epic battles in exile during the NADECO days. In all honesty, we were all happy that he

was amply compensated for his salutary efforts.

But unknown to us, trouble was brewing. We didn't know how or what led the legal luminary, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, to exhume all manner of "false declarations" contained in the forms submitted for Tinubu's gubernatorial bid. On October 11, 1999, just months after Tinubu contested and won his election, Chief Fawehinmi's powerful interview was published on the cover of Newswatch magazine, with the screaming headline: WHY TINUBU MUST GO – Gani Fawehinmi. The fearless Lawyer also granted another interview on the cover of The Source magazine, with an even more acerbic headline: "TINUBU IS A CRIMINAL – Gani, and a rider below: Deserves 10 years in jail! On top of the same magazine was published a worrisome story: The Tinubu Story: THE SOURCE UNDER THREAT. This was the first tell-tale sign of the new and toxic Lagos State to come, a Lagos of one man, one permanent ruler, reminiscent of the Sicilian Mafia, which we privately rechristened the "Cosa Nostra" of Nigeria.

Some members of our "exile confraternity" were naturally alarmed. But we were somehow timid and, thus, carelessly dismissed Gani's case as, at the very best, alarmist and unnecessarily meddling. A few of us who were very close to Gani Fawehinmi knew it would be difficult and of no effect, to approach him and try to persuade him to drop the case. The other sad revelation was when some of Tinubu's commissioners started fretting and sweating profusely. God is my witness. Many of them, out of panic, about the imminent impeachment of Tinubu, were, stylishly, dissociating themselves from their boss. We

heard all kinds of gibberish, from some of them, who are even in government today: "we brought our integrity into this government, we can't allow anyone to tarnish it..."

Let us digress a little. One of them, extremely close to Tinubu, was the first to tell us about "the falsification of Tinubu's age, the identity of his original parents from Iragbiji, his forged academic records", and so on. This chain-smoker claimed absolute knowledge of Tinubu's life. He told us in my Accra home that anyone who tells Tinubu the truth is instantly marked down as an enemy, so he has stopped telling him the truth. With this kind of mindset, you can imagine what quality of advice Tinubu gets regularly.

Then, out of the blues, my very daring and loyal friend, Tokunbo Afikuyomi, decided to bite the bullet on behalf of Tinubu. What he did was reminiscent of the "lamb of God who took away the sins of the earth..." He, like a kamikaze soldier, took absolute responsibility for the errors contained in Tinubu's files. Miraculously, Tinubu was saved, and we were all relieved. Everyone is asking me how has Tinubu compensated Afikuyomi, and my answer is I don't know.

It is noteworthy that Festus Keyamo had jumped on the bandwagon of those seeking to impeach Tinubu at that time. This is another story for another day. I cannot wait for my memoirs to be ready in order to put names and faces to the main dramatis personae. Let's now fast forward to the year 2002. There was a popular magazine known as The Week. It planned a cover story on Tinubu. Somehow, the story leaked out to then Governor of Lagos State. Tinubu immediately, and with automatic alacrity, reached out to the Publisher of the magazine, Alhaji Atiku Abubakar, and pleaded that the scandalous story should be dropped. Out of love and respect for his friend, Atiku reached out to The Week magazine Management and got the story to be stepped down. The Editors were miffed by this development, and in the aftermath, led to the resignation and exit of the Editor, Mr Simon Kolawole.

The meat of my epistle today is that there are many didactic lessons to pick from this Tinubugate. Tinubu eventually left office in 2007. But he never really left Lagos alone. He became Nigeria's ultimate godfather, who determined, almost to the pin, who gets what. Many of his acolytes knew he was capable of turning them into emergency Billionaires and were ready to stand ramrod on his mandate. This, I believe, is the crux of the matter.

Now, why do I blame Tinubu and his die-hard fans? Two major reasons are carelessness (or is it negligence?) and recklessness. Why would a man who left office since 2007, 16 long years ago, fail to clean up the records that nearly got him impeached in the first instance? And given the fact that he couldn't have personally handled those documents himself, why did the hordes of minions claiming to love him till eternity fail to deliver a world-class file for his documents?

The Laws of Nigeria never insisted that a Presidential candidate must attend a university. In the last 16 years, Tinubu should have ensured his personal documents were thoroughly checked to be squeaky clean before submitting

them to INEC. If necessary, he could have easily gone back to school (Atiku still went to school recently to update and upgrade himself) and try to erase all the previous controversial details. As for his conflicting dates of birth, he should have settled for a preferred birthday date, like President Olusegun Obasanjo did. It can never be a crime that a child's parent did not record or obtain his birth certificate. As for claiming to have worked for Deloitte and others, he should have limited himself to "I have worked for big multinationals globally and they truly enjoyed my services and valued my contributions" without mentioning specific companies and dates.

As for parentage, I would have told the world about my humble background and poor parentage. It is nothing to be ashamed of, and it is not a crime to be adopted and acquire the name of one's foster-parents. Everyone knew how Chief MKO Abiola played the role of a father figure in my life, including travelling all the way to Ijebu-Igbo and Ijebu-Ode for my wedding in 1992, but that never stopped me from celebrating my poor parents. And if there were peculiar reasons for obliterating ones original family history, that can still be easily explained. A public figure cannot afford to keep too many secrets. For far too long, Tinubu has blatantly refused to open up his private life to the members of the public. The repercussions of this stiffness have been hugely calamitous to him and his immediate family. With more openness, this could have been avoided.

Let me now go to the specific handling of the Chicago scandals. For me, Tinubu and his noisy supporters have made matters far worse than it should have been. Only his blind and shameless supporters will continue to argue over a saga that started over five decades ago. All of us who knew the truth and looked the other way brought this calamity upon our country. And it is grossly unfair. Instead of Tinubu standing up as a man to offer sincere and unreserved apologies to Nigerians, his "brood of vipers" are busy insulting the long-suffering people of Nigeria, and studiously rubbing salt and pepper on our festering wounds. This is most unfair. This can only aggravate the anger of our citizens, especially the youths.

The first thing Tinubu should do is to climb down his high horse and experience reality for once. No man, no matter how powerful, can achieve everything by force, all the time. The popular story of EFUNSETAN ANIWURA, IYALODE IBADAN is very instructive. Power is transient. I'm certain there is a hand of God in this latest eruption about Tinubu's record, which has refused to go [away.it](#) is no longer about Atiku, Obi, Kwankwaso, Sowore and others. This is about Nigeria. Atiku has played his part honorably at home and abroad. What he achieved in Chicago was a monumental victory for our democracy. Because of Atiku, many Nigerians will have their pride restored. The burden has already been transferred to all of us. Whatever the outcome of the Supreme Court case, it is obvious to me that a new era beckons for us all except for those who choose to be voluntary slaves.