

Zane Asher of CNN held an exclusive Interview with Mr. Peter Obi the Presidential Candidate of the Labour Party in the forthcoming 2023 Election in Nigeria. The CNN Correspondent who described Peter Obi as an unconventional candidate, a wealthy business man with a penny pinching reputation Spoke on issues bothering on Security and the 2023 Election. Below is the full details of the Exclusive Chat.

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Zane Asher Mr. Obi thank you so much for being with us. You're certainly the most popular presidential candidate among young people in Nigeria, there's so much momentum behind you. But here's the problem. Nigerians are used to being disappointed by their leaders, and what do you think about some of the problems that are facing the country right now, they are systemic. I'm talking about the corruption, I'm talking about oil theft, I'm talking about insecurity, I'm talking about the fiscal hole that Nigeria is in right now. Can all of that really be solved by one person?

Peter Obi; Well, if you have a leader that is competent, has the capacity and commitment to start dealing with these challenges, you're not going to solve it overnight, but there will be a clear, visible, measurable attempt to deal with these. And there is nothing that is not solve-able. Some issues just have to be dealt with decisively. But you need to have a capable leader such that when you look at his past records in office, you can say YES - He is capable.

Zane Asher; If you do, indeed, become Nigeria's next president, Nigeria you know, is broke. It's barely able to service its debts. It spends so much more that it earns. What are your plans? From a concrete perspective, what are your plans to take Nigeria's economy off of life support?

“The situation obtainable in the past. We used to elect leaders based on ethnicity, religion, strong connection etc, and that has brought us to the bad situation we are in today. "Our structure", the structure of criminality, is what we want to dismantle now. We want to ensure that the next election is based on character, capacity, competence, commitment to do the right thing. Nigeria not just in a fiscal mess, it is at the last stage to collapse. The people in the north don't have a secure place, they don't have good roads. They don't buy bread cheaper than those in the South. They people in the south are facing the same issues. All what you hear about ethnicity, religion, connection, is an elite conspiracy to keep Nigeria undeveloped. But now we've reached the edge”.

Peter Obi; Well, a variety of things. One, is that we have to deal decisively with the issue of insecurity. It's impacting negatively on our economy. We have to deal with it head on. We have to get our finances right -- and start ensuring that the vast lands of the north are invested in and cultivated. We have to start pulling people out of poverty as quickly as possible. We have to immediately reduce aggressively, the cost of governance, and the issue of corruption.

Zane Asher; Anyone who knows anything about Nigeria knows that it has this embarrassing reputation of importing refined fuel, despite the fact that it's Africa's largest oil producer. What is your plan for transforming Nigeria's economy from a consumption economy to a production economy?

Peter Obi; Let me tell you it's not the issue of refineries not working -- there's no reason why we should not encourage the private sector to operate refineries. It can be done as quickly as possible. We can today, decide to remove the oil subsidies, and use the resources to invest in and support the principal areas of production; from critical infrastructure to education, to supporting investment in refinery, which will be, done in the shortest amount of time.

Zane Asher; A lot of Nigerian presidents have come in and talked about revitalizing the manufacturing sector, investing in refineries, but change, as you know, has been very, very slow. Why is it going to be different with you and what would you say were the biggest hurdles in

making sure that all of the things that you just listed come to pass?

Peter Obi; Well, what people need to do is to look at what I promised as the state governor. When I said was going to turn around education, health, pull people out of poverty, bring sanity and civility in governance -- did that happen or not? When I said we were going to save money, did we do that? Yes, we did.

Zane Asher; I want to talk about one of the major issues that Nigeria is dealing with, grappling with right now. That's violence and insecurity. You can barely travel from one part of Nigeria to another without fearing for your life. I'm talking about kidnapping. I'm talking about banditry. I'm talking about terrorism; I'm talking about Boko Haram. What is your plan for that?

Peter Obi; Initially, what we first have to deal with is the issue of security. Unless you have security, the farmers can't -- you can't have investment. Nobody will ever want to put or invest money in an insecure country. So we will deal this issue of insecurity decisively. We will start by reorganizing our security architecture. We will then bring in more hands into the security system, and motivate them properly, so that we can defeat the issue of insecurity. It's the most important thing that Nigeria needs today.

Zane Asher; You and I are both Nigerians, were are both from southeastern Nigeria. It's a very hard country to hold together. You have to manage about 200 million people, with so many different tribes, so many different ideas. When you think about the fact that you are from the southeast, how easy is it going to be to rally Nigerians from the north behind you? That's got to be on your mind?

Peter Obi; That was the situation obtainable in the past. We used to elect leaders based on ethnicity, religion, strong connection etc, and that has brought us to the bad situation we are in today. "Our structure", the structure of criminality, is what we want to dismantle now. We want to ensure that the next election is based on character, capacity, competence, commitment to do the right thing. Nigeria not just in a fiscal mess, it is at the last stage to collapse. The people in the north don't have a secure place, they don't have good roads. They don't buy bread cheaper than those in the South. They people in the south are facing the same issues. All what you hear about ethnicity, religion, connection, is an elite conspiracy to keep Nigeria undeveloped. But now we've reached the edge.

Zane Asher; Thank you for coming on our program.

Peter Obi ; Thank you for inviting me.
You are welcomed.

My Senatorial Ambition is a Complete Departure from the Norm

...Osiriame Obalabi Edeipo

Osiriame Obalabi Okhumeode Edeipo is the State Chairman of BOOT Party and the Edo North Senatorial Candidate of the same party. In an expository interview he granted to the Editorial Crew of Development Monitor, Osiriame opened up his mind on a number of issues that would radically transform the political and economic narrative of not just the good people of Edo North but Nigeria at large. Below is an excerpt of the Chat.

Please can we get to meet you briefly, who is Osiriame Edeipo?

My name is Osiriame Obalabi Okhumeode Edeipo. I hail from a village called Ayogwiri in Etsakor West Local Government Area of Edo State. I hold a degree in Mechanical Engineering from Ambrosia Ali University, Ekpoma and another degree in English language from Benson Idahosa University, Ugbor G.R.A, Benin City. If not for the non-responsive nature of the current government to ASUU, I would have had my Master's degree handy by now. I speak and understand Etsako, Hausa and Yoruba languages and understand a little of Igbo language because my dad is from Etsako and my mum is Yoruba. I had my Secondary School education in the ancient commercial city of Kano, I did my NYSC programme in Igbo land and I am happily married to their daughter. So, I jokingly tell my friends that I am Nigerian's Barack Obama. If I have a family function, persons from a number of Nigeria tribes will be there because of blood tides. I have travelled to about 30 states of Nigeria and have friends in virtually all the 36 States and the FCT. Therefore, I can confidently call myself a broad view Nigerian that is well positioned to articulate real-time practical solutions to the many problems confronting us as a people.

You are the Edo State Chairman of BOOT Party. Can you please tell us a little about what inform your pitching tent with them?

BOOT PARTY is one of the 18 registered political parties in Nigeria and the full meaning of BOOT is, **B**ecause **O**F **O**ur **T**omorrow. BOOT Party stands for Fiduciary, Obedience and Service and is arguably the most IT compliant Political Party in Nigeria. It is the only Political Party (to the best of my knowledge) that practice Direct Primaries. In the recent past, we all saw the nauseating occurrence in the "selection" of candidates by Political parties that practices Indirect Primaries. Indirect Primaries has to do with electing very few



Osiriame Obalabi Edeipo, Edo North Senatorial aspirant

party members that will go to represent all the party members in the election of the party's flag bearers in a general election. This arrangement is often hijacked by corrupt and visionless men that have plenty of stolen funds to throw about because it is extremely very easy to bribe the "Delegates" than to bribe every member of the party. My point is, every Candidate of the BOOT Party, got his/her nomination on merit. He or She had the clear backing of the majority of the people in his/her constituency as required by the Law. The National Working Committee of the BOOT Party is bent on maintaining our Direct Primaries *status quo* and I give them great kudos for their doggedness. If Nigeria is to get (and keep producing) credible leaders, we must therefore, make laws that will completely ban Indirect Primaries and make Direct Primaries the only acceptable way of nominating candidates for all public election. The afore mentioned achievements and many others that I cannot state here for want of time in less than 4 years of her being licensed, makes her one of the most transparent political party in Nigeria and these are what attracted me to them.

What informed your decision to go for Edo North Senatorial ticket and what is your agenda for the people?

Let me quickly answer that question by telling you my 3-

point agenda **1. Current Realities Legislations 2. Transparent Representation 3 Genuine Grassroot Development.** I took time to read our Criminal and Penal Codes and was shocked to discover that most of our laws are obsolete and the penalty they meet out are laughable. Did you know that about 65% of the laws banning a Nigerian from producing fake money talks about coin money? When last did anybody in Nigeria spend Kobo coin, let alone produce it? How many children and youths of nowadays have ever seen a Kobo coin, let alone spend it, that they should be warned not to illegally produce it? Did you know that the penalty for most criminal offenses in Nigeria carry few months' jail term or an option of fine of N40, N100 or N200? The highest penalty in our Criminal and Penal Codes is a N1,000. Did you know that in our Criminal Code, a crime that is as serious as infringement on someone's intellectual property by mass producing his/her Books, Magazines or Journal attracts just two months' imprisonment or an option of fine of maximum of N1,000? If after 20 years of our nascent democracy, the House of Representatives and Senate are yet to change these laws or make them modern day compliant, then one is forced to ask what the former and present legislative sessions have been doing. It is the responsibility of our legislators to make laws that will meet up with the challenges of our days. There is anarchy all over the nation because we don't have adequate laws that will adequately address the excesses of criminally minded persons in our shores. If voted to go to Senate, I will not only sponsor modern reality laws but will make my colleagues see the need for such bills to get speedy passage - whether they were initiated by me or by another. Secondly, I have watched with pains in my heart, the wide gap between the people and their legislators. Once voted into office, most Nigerian legislators become demigods that the electorates can only see on TV or past through the eye of a needle to access. They make Abuja their permanent abode all through their tenure and their constituency office only become operational when elections are near. In other progressive climes, Legislators are easier to access than the Executive or Judiciary because they are expected to bring the people's excruciating nightmare to national view and possibly attract national funding and get solutions. I want the good people of Edo North to have a first hand knowledge of how beautiful life can be when they have a formidable and transparent legislator who truly cares for their collective and individual welfare. My constituency office will be open to the general public from my day one in office to the very last day and I will put mechanism in place that will enable them monitor the progress I have made on their complaint(s). A vote for Osiriame therefore, is a vote for a legislator that truly cares for everybody in land - educated or non-educated, rich or poor, indigene or stranger, etc. I also intend to go to Senate to eradicate the attitude of many legislators that have converted their Constituency Allowance to what I call PPM (Private Pocket Money). It is an open secret that Legislators in the Federal Republic of Nigeria for now, are given opportunity to insert projects worth hundreds of millions of Naira yearly into the budget as constituency project and are expected to supervise the implementation of the projects. Unfortunately, most of them use their proxy companies to collect the jobs and embezzle the money while the projects are not executed at all. If you look at what many of them claim they did with the money, you will be forced to laugh in Pidgin English. I will make sure that constituency projects will be directly supervised by me to deliver to my people. My focus will be on Human Capital

Development (which basically covers formal and informal education, Youth and Women empowerment and Security. Another agenda I want to seriously pursue if given the opportunity to go to Senate is the building of a standard bridge between Agenebode in Etsako East Local Government of Edo State and Idah in Idah Local Government of Kogi State. That project will make the Edo North to have two major connecting routes between the Southern, Western and Eastern parts of Nigeria and the North. I will need another detailed interview to be able to explain the unquantifiable opportunities that Edo North and indeed, Nigeria at large stands to gain by such a wonderful project. I don't just want to go to Senate for going sake. I have well-mapped out lofty goals that I want to achieve in order to make life more beautiful and meaningful for our people.

Considering the present political terrain, some persons may feel that you are too young and inexperienced to handle a senatorial ticket. How do you react to this?

I was born 20th August, 1976 and therefore, turned 46 years August this year. That date of birth is what you will find in all my documents. If at 46 years, one is considered too young to go to Senate, then one is reminded of the terrible sad condition we find ourselves in this country where old men that are physically, intellectually and emotionally bankrupt wants to be the ones to control our present and future growth but in the long run, they end up taking us many decades backwards in all sphere of life. Who among our politicians will establish a multi-billion-naira company and employ a 70-year-old man to run its operation? You know very well that many of them have political age and real age. So, someone that claims 70 years may be 78 years or more. To be candid what intellectual work can such a man do? Many of them go to the Senate chamber to sleep and only wake up to say "hi" or "Nay." The good people of Afemai land don't deserve such a weak soul as our Senator. As for being experienced, please go read two of my books: "To Serve Nigeria Is Not By Force" and "Nigeria: Actual Problems, Practical Solutions" and you will appreciate the depth of experience I have at my finger tip. I have real time, result oriented solutions to many of our problems as a people and therefore, I am most qualified to go represent our people in Abuja

So what advice do you have for youths?

I wrote a poem that is titled - Naija Youths: is your brain paining you? The General Election is around the corner, our youths must wake up in 2023 and refuse to be controlled by men that don't care if they dine or die. Many of them have stolen so much from our people, that should they decide not to work till they die, they and their children can never exhaust the must they have in their coffers, yet such men want to grab more by contesting for one public office or the other. The number of months our undergraduates have had to stayed at home due to ASUU strike is just one out of the many evil our current political class have done to us. Afema Youths and the Elderly must wake up to the fact that it is only a young, energetic, intellectual and vast man like myself that can truly represent them at the Senate and bring back proper developments rather than controversies and backwardness.

It's been nice talking with you and hope to do same in the nearest future.