

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES IN THE CITIZENSHIP-INDIGENESHIP CRISIS IN NIGERIA: LESSONS FOR MULTI ETHNIC CITIES

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Since the advent of the present democratic experience in Nigeria, there have been various ethnically and religiously propelled violent conflicts. Even though some of these violent crises wear religious garbs, more often than not, they are always based on ethnicity and contestation for space. The currency of citizenship issues in most academic discourse has been nurtured by reported experiences of violence against Nigerians who are treated as foreigners in certain spaces within the territory of the country. Ethnicity is often further broken down into "indigenes", "natives" "son-of-the-soil" versus "settlers" or "strangers". This kind of treatment has affected the psyche of some people and is often reflected in politically motivated crises in urban settlements like Ibadan, Kano, Jos, Aba, and other places. The focus of our discourse today is to see how indigeneship has created or nourished the level of insecurity in Nigeria.

In this event, we shall adopt the description of Ogoch Alubo (2003) which states:

Citizenship crisis refers to a situation, practice and experience where some **bona fide** Nigerian citizens are subjected to discrimination and various forms of exclusion from rights, privileges and opportunities as enjoyed by others. Often, notions of indigeneity and gender are adduced as the rationale for such exclusion. In this sense, "indigene" and "settlers" are part of the

processes of “ordering” and being “ordered”. They are labels manufactured and stuck to people, often times with little rational basis or whether those labelled accept these or not. There are therefore various contestations by people excluded to become included, and by the included to maintain the **status quo**. As I have argued elsewhere, it is the politics of who is in and who is out.

The presentation today will interrogate the the reported cases of indigene settler crises in Nigeria and relate the experience to Ibadan where most of our participants have been invited from.

A of Indigene-Settler Conflicts

Many of these struggles between indigenes and settlers result in violent clashes which often lead to loss of lives and property. Some of the reported cases in the North-Central Zone, a region where these issues flare up regularly, include:

- Jos and most of Plateau state (1994, 2001, 2004) in which Beroms, Afizere and others who claim to be indigenes are pitted against the Hausa/ Fulani regarded as settlers. Since September 7, 2001 violent explosions continued including the Yelwa eruption in April 2004.
- Namu, Plateau State-in early 2006, the government created a Development Area and made Namu the headquarters. The Kwalla and Demak in the area prefer the name Pan Development Area while the Gomai want the name Namu. There were further controversies over the ownership of Namu town. In the ensuing violence (in February 2006 and April) up to 250 people were killed and houses torched.

- This long running Tiv-Jukun crisis erupted again in 2000/2001 when hundreds were killed and thousands were forced to flee. The violence led to the establishment many refugee camps especially in Benue state but also in Taraba states.
- Alago et al Vs the Tiv in Nasarawa State. This violence erupted about the same time as in Taraba state and resulted in wide scale killings, burning of property and refugees.
- The Bassa-Igbira-Gbagyi Conflict in Nasarawa state – these three ethnic groups have been at dangers drawn since 1986 and in several subsequent waves of violence. The grievances are related to claims over land and who arrived in the area first. There are stereotypes on both sides with the Igbira claiming to be superior.
- Explosions of violence in Zangon Kataf in 1986, 1990 and 1992 between the Kataf (indigenes) and the Hausa/Fulani (settlers). Here, the former are predominantly Christian or animist while the latter are Muslims.
- Kaduna town was convulsed in 2000 by protests over the imposition of Sharia; the protest pitted the Christians against Muslims. Thousands were killed and thousands more fled “home” after taking refuge in military installations.

At the end of some of these clashes, some or all of these events are recorded

- Some Nigerians are defined as persona non grata and expelled from particular locations.
- Massive mobilisation of religion and ethnicity to define the enemy and engage in violence.
- Physical eliminations of such Nigerians

- Burning and looting of their poverty
- Mass exodus of the assailed to safety, mostly military and police installations or regions where they have large numbers – usually the ethnic homelands
- Institution of commission of inquiry the report of which is rarely implemented.
- Hardly are people prosecuted for their roles

These situations put to questioning, the issues of integration in our multi ethnic urban centers. When elections take place in Ibadan, the patterns of voting in the ethnic groupings often reflect the situation in their home states, and often times different from the affiliations in their cities of abode.

WHAT IS INDIGENE SETTLER DIVISION

Indigene settler division has as its main issue, identity. The questions often asks is Who owns the land? and how some people possess advantage over others because of their circumstance of birth. The constitution of the country did not help matters. It defines citizenship more in terms of indigeneity (descent), and considerations of residency are secondary. The constitution itself provides the context for citizens exclusion and provides room for the frequent complaints of marginalization by different ethnic groups. Modern Nigeria, As aptly put by Otite (2002:5), Nigeria has several kinds of pluralisms, the cores ones being ethnic, religious and political. Many of these groups had very little contacts, several were not even aware of the others' existence.

How are Citizen often discriminated against?

The most common forms of discrimination against fellow citizens referred to as settlers include:

- Employment –Jobs are distributed based on where you come from or who you know..
- In many states all non-indigenes have been sent back home.
- Admissions to secondary and higher institutions – indigenes are given preferences over more qualified settlers.
- Scholarships – this is exclusive to indigenes; non-indigenes are required to go home, even where they may not have another home.
- Discriminatory schedule of fees in institutions
- Election issues.

Best Practices in Building Inclusion

Some of the best practices of building inclusive citizenship include the following. I must however add that various forms of these practices might exist in some states; hardly are all obtainable in the one state.

- Equal opportunities for all, irrespective of ethnic identity and gender.
- Non-discrimination in admissions to educational institutions.
- One schedule of school fees and other levies .
- The right to residency – where a non-indigene is accorded full rights as indigenes.
- Voting and being voted for – this is important both as a mark of integration and as participation in decision-making.
- Sense of belonging and recognition of talent, irrespective of considerations of origin.

- Residency as the basis of citizenship – this has made it possible for the Bush family who are indigenes of Maine to be Governors in Texas and Florida; and for the late Ronald Reagan, native of Illinois to be Governor of California.
- There are a few cases in Nigeria where residency is upheld, as well as where married women have ran and won elections in the constituencies of their husbands.

Examples from Other African Countries

There are a few examples from the African continent where residency, rather than indigene/settler is the basis for the exercise of citizenship rights.

Conclusion

This paper is intended to provide insights into the nature of citizenship in Nigerian and how primordial considerations, especially the indigene settler division, take primacy over universal citizenship as contained in the constitution. Participants here are then encouraged to rub mind together and share information on how to make citizenship work in Ibadan by sharing information.