

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT

**“THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE SOCIAL
SPACE: A PANORAMA FROM SOCRATES
TO AKARUESE”**

A Valedictory Lecture

By

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to:

The successive administrations of this University for recognising the rights of staff and students to academic freedom and democratic dissent respectively;

And,

To all the victims of the struggles against military despotism in Nigeria.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

From where do I begin to express appreciations to both the incorporeal and corporeal ‘Being’ and ‘beings’ respectively for the diverse contributions; firstly, in terms of existence which is restricted to the ‘Being’ of incorporeity, and also for contributions of mundane characterizations from my fellow ‘beings’ of corporeity for these decades of years of sojourning in this terrestrial.

I thank the Supreme Deity for his mercies and guidance irrespective of inadequacies largely resulting from human follies. Members of my immediate family; Roli wife and children-[Weyinmi, Oludewa, Boyowa and Bawo] deserve unfathomable thanks for always being there for me. My immediate junior sister and her husband, Mr. John and Mrs. Veron Guate (both of whom are based in London) deserve endless gratitude for all their numerous assistance. To Rt. Hon. Daniel Reyenieju (a former member of the Federal House of Representative-2007-2019- who represented the Warri Federal Constituency, and current Special Adviser on National Assembly Matters to the National Chairman of APC), it is a big thank you. You and your wife Mrs. Mercy Reyenieju remain a source of pride to me. To Distinguished Senator Ovie Omo-Agege (former Deputy President of Senate) I remain most indebted for your thoughtfulness. I must thank Hon. David Tonwe (D.G. Security, Delta State) for his diverse assistances. To Hon. Festus Ashima, the Executive Chairman of the Warri North Local Govt. Council Area, it is a big thank you for the assistance and cordiality. Hon. Weyinma Agabtieyiniro, the Executive Chairmen of Warri South Local Govt. Council Area, I say thank you for the assistance, mutual respect and cordiality. My friends, sisters and brothers; Dr. Yopele Banigo, Dr. Monday Agbeyi, Hon. Godfrey Ogbemi, Prince Emmanuel Okotie-Eboh, Hon. Aduge Okorodudu, (former Executive Chairman, Warri North Local Govt. Council) Hon. Simon Iluwa,

Isaac Dorsu, Engr. David Oniyeburutan, and a host of others, it is eternal gratitude cherished for the relationship. Mrs. Helen Bokuaghingin, Mrs. Doris Alpheus, Mrs. Evelyn Akinmejiwa, Diseye Gbubemi Weregaha, Mrs. Iwereyemi Agharaye-Dudu, Jurenmisan Mattu, Tosan Ikosini, Emmanuel Edem, Hon. Michael Eyide (PhD) and Mr. & Mrs. Felix Tuoyo deserve special appreciations for their respective concerns towards me. To the Members of Ugbarajo Itsekiri Leadership Forum, and Warri Strategic Forum, I remain grateful for the cordiality and the desire to serve our people. For Professor Nelson Brambiafa, I remain indebted for the risks taken for me during the heydays of the struggle against military despotism. For Prof. Mark Anikpo, it is a big thank you. In memory of Prof. Ademola Salau, Prof. Nimi Brigg and Prof Tony Arinze, I wish you all well wherever you may be in the metaphysical world. In similar vein, Prof. Chris Nwodo (late), Prof. Elijah Iyagba (late), Prof. Andrew Efemini (late), and Prof. George Oboforibo (late) were colleagues that once meant much to me, but have transited to 'where I know not what'. May the good Lord grant them eternal rest. To my dear Muslim Ummah (Muslim Community in the University of Port Harcourt) *I say Salam Aliekum waramatullahi Wabarakatu*. I remain grateful for the cordial relationship. To all my comrades within the civil society clan in Rivers State and other part of the country, it has been wonderful and exciting to be with you. I remain appreciative of your commitments to the ideals that we share together.

My colleagues in the Dept. of Philosophy remain most appreciated for the cordiality throughout the period spent together. To my former students both at the then University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo), Uyo and the University of Port Harcourt, I remain proud of you all and thanking God for giving me the opportunity to come across your respective selves and contributing to your knowledge of Philosophy.

For the Vice Chancellor and his team, I wish you well, and let me through Mr. Vice Chancellor thank the University of Port Harcourt for always being unique and standing by me when it mattered most. Permit me to draw your attention to the words of Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere when he said that: *fulfilling the wishes of the people does not always mean taking the most popular course.*

To my former colleagues and comrades during the pro-democracy struggles of the eighties and nineties including those I came across in the different detention centers in the Country, you all will ever be remembered in the annals of my history. For those who unfortunately lost their lives in the struggle, it is eternal rest I wish for you all. To those that were together with me in the different trenches and are still living, permit me to ask: were those sacrifices not in vain given today's realities?

Between 2010 and 2019, I painfully lost my four brothers (one senior and three juniors – Etemi, Oritseno, Bright and Samuel), all of whom should have been here today. Eternal rest I wish for them respectively. To my late Mother, Madam Mary Nanna who died on 4th Dec., 1994 while I was in incarceration at the State Security Service, Port Harcourt, I say thank you for your tenacity and ensuring that I got educated which I initially resisted as my aspiration was to become a sailor which was then a status symbol in the port towns of Koko and Sapele, both in Delta State. No doubt, the thought of my detention then, exacerbated your final exit. Stay well wherever you are!

To all those present here today including the umpteen around the World watching through webinar (zoom), I remain eternally indebted.

PROGRAMME

- 1. GUESTS ARE SEATED**
- 2. INTRODUCTION**
- 3. THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S OPENING REMARKS**
- 4. CITATION**
- 5. THE VALEDICTORY LECTURE**

The lecturer shall remain standing during the citation. He shall step on the rostrum, and deliver his Valedictory Lecture. After the lecture, he shall step towards the Vice-Chancellor, and deliver a copy of the Valedictory Lecture and return to his seat. The Vice-Chancellor shall present the document to the Registrar.

- 6. CLOSING REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR**
- 7. VOTE OF THANKS**
- 8. DEPARTURE**

PROTOCOL

Vice Chancellor Sir

Chairman and Members of the Governing Council

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Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Development).

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Staff and Students of the University of Port Harcourt

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

THE PHILOSOPHER AND THE SOCIAL SPACE: A PANORAMA FROM SOCRATES TO AKARUESE*

Introduction

Human history (within the context of western tradition) from its vanished past as epitomized in the ancient Greek society in their pioneering act of philosophizing, have had some of these philosophers equally engaging themselves in practical activities for effecting societal change/enhancement within their respective social spaces. Since then, and through the mediaeval era to our today, many philosophers have in different ways registered themselves in the history of civilization interms of making their presence and relevance felt within their different social spaces through participations in varied efforts and sometimes in combination with others to confront circumstances considered unacceptable. This specifically involved them in engaging in different activities to majorly confront *status quo*, and sometimes dominant pattern of thought; and this is in addition to philosophizing.

Beginning with Socratics, then Plato as manifested in his academy, and to Pythagoras within his mystic congregants, these philosophers in spite of varied difficulties not only established themselves and engaging in concrete social activities within their respective social spaces; but defiled all risks, in the form of prosecutions and persecutions (inflicted on them by their respective ruling classes and sometimes society in general) to engage in practical struggles towards actualizing their respective visions of what society should be in terms of governance. For example, Socrates was sentenced to death after being found guilty of corrupting the youths of Athens. In the same vein, Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.) who sought scientific explanations to celestial phenomena by claiming that the sun was not a god, but a ‘red-hot stone’ and larger than the Peloponnese, and that the Moon was a earth-like body that reflected the Sun’s light was sentenced to

* I remain immensely grateful to Itoro Akpan, a Professor of Mathematical Logic, Department of Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt for the choice of this topic.

death, but his friend Pericles (the famous Athenian leader) managed to get the death sentence commuted to exile. From the Medieval era within the context of scholasticism where for example William of Occam during the violent conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the State; to the contemporary era of Lucky Akaruese whose social space span Nigeria with the University of Port Harcourt as his epicenter, women and men who care about the unknown future of their respective societies have never ceased to deploy their knowledge to confront societal *status quo* as epitomized in ‘governance’ when such *status quo* are considered as repulsive in terms of being deficit of utilitarian ideals in intents and contents.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, when I assumed duty here on the 21st of March, 1991, I had no inclination that I will be in the service of this University for so long as much as about 35 years; nor was there any imagination (albeit guess) that a day like this will ever come when I will stand in front of such august gathering of eminent scholars, technocrat politicians and persons consisting of past and present members of the University of Port Harcourt community including others from far and near to formally execute this valediction. Specifically for the members of the University of Port Harcourt Community, a community that I have for about 35 years being a proud member of; and rising through the ranks as emplaced within the trajectory of professional ladders for academics, I cannot but say a big thank you for the opportunity. I remain eternally grateful to the past and present administrations of this University for the opportunity accorded me to make my modest contributions not only to the growth and development of this University, but equally contributing to the development of the ‘knowledge industry’ globally.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, kindly permit me to briefly digress specifically to humbly draw your attention and the entirety of members of this great community to a salient but critical fact that

is central to this gathering. I mean a salient but fundamental fact which in my view seemed not to have been adequately accorded enough importance in the process of organizing valedictory lectures for retiring staff within the professorial cadre who besides being of this cadre, but sorely occupied a special and preeminence status of absolute naturality at this point in time; and this made possible through the divine will of the Supreme Deity. After about 35 years of service (a meritorious one in my estimation) to the University of Port Harcourt Community, I will within few hours exit and bid goodbye to the University and my inestimable and invaluable colleagues that had been so wonderful and particularly contributing to the immeasurable worthwhileness for the period I was one of them.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor sir, I am by this valedictory lecture here doing my last ‘dance’ in the University of Port Harcourt with you even though as the ‘master-drummer’; but not qualified at this point in time to participate in this dance. This is a specific pattern of dancing whereby my body movements are such that must be choreographed to ensure that the dance remain unmitigatedly mono-directional and inexorably moving my steps in the direction that must take me out of the proverbial ‘village square’. I mean a specific pattern of ‘dance’ that must take me out of the University of Port Harcourt after 35 years of unbroken sojourning. What kind and pattern of dance is this that I have no control over? What a specific particular pattern of dancing that I have no alternative to? A dance with me as the sole dancer who should naturally be beaming with untrammelled smile to elate and entertain this wonderful audience, but now finding myself draped in mixed feelings characterized by nostalgic reminiscence particularly that as from tomorrow (4th March, 2026), all that I will then legitimately be qualified to say of this University is that ‘I was there as a staff’, and as at the time I statutorily exited, Prof. Owunari A. Georgewill was my Vice Chancellor!

“WHAT SOCIAL SPACE IS ”



Pictorial activities of participation in the ‘social space’ under the auspices of the Academic Staff Union of Universities, University of Port Harcourt Branch.

‘What social space is’ remain largely fluidly and consequently multifaceted terms of descriptions and reification and assuming multiplicity of forms and presence. For this discussion, ‘social space’ remain diversely conceptualized both in the realm of tangibility and otherwise with the former to be mainly focalized on in this discussion. Literally, ‘social’ refers to interactions amongst beings (persons), communality and togetherness, human

assemblage, gathering of persons on the basis of socially related issues and espousal of kinetic and non-kinetic actions, depending on what those involved may require, etc. By ‘space’ we have in mind location, specific place, area set aside for particular gathering, etc. Such interactions can take different forms which can manifestly be physical in relationship, or otherwise in this age of digital technology. Thus, According to Wikipedia;

Social space refers to physical, virtual, or hybrid environments—such as cafes, parks, or online platforms—where individuals gather, interact, and build relationships. These areas, ranging from public squares to private venues, are socially constructed, influencing human behavior, cultural exchange, and community dynamics.

From the above definition, social space is a convoluted concept encapsulating dynamic relationships and interactions amongst those within the said space, or a particular ‘social space’. Thus for example, our traditional societies’ village square clearly epitomize ‘social space’. Here in our University, the coffee shop located in the quadrangle of the old Faculty of Humanities building constitute a space. However, in recent years and specifically with the meteoric development in digital environment and its appurtenances, the concept of social space in terms of forms has further become diverse such that individuals who may not even know, nor apprehend themselves within the realm of physicality, nor expect any form of corporeal interrelationship in terms of contact or face to face vocal relationship could find themselves within the ‘same’ social space and interacting mutually , or otherwise through facilities provided by digital technology. In the same vein, social issues depending on the degree of interests that may have been generated can inadvertently evolve and crystallize the emergence of social spaces and same serving as connective tissues linking all those that may have shared interests on any issue of social construct. Equally, some social spaces could also eclipse anytime depending

on the extent to which issues propping such persist including attracting and sustaining interests.

Thus, at the risk of repetition, social space could assume the form of physicality including environmental and visual amongst other forms of manifestations; all variedly providing platforms primarily for interactive and communicative relationships amongst those who may have subscribed. As already noted, technological developments has made it possible such that the reification of the concept of ‘social space’ could transverse different geographical locations of different manifestations. It (social space) could come into being through either intended, or unintended actions of persons irrespective of locations. This also include taking the form of global dimension in terms of ‘space’ and issues involved as subject-matter that may have underlined the evolvement of the particular ‘social space’ and providing individuals with the platform to ventilate their views through various means. Furthermore, from the different subject-matters in the open, and depending on the nature and robustness of human interests, spontaneously or otherwise, ‘social spaces’ of varied nature could spring up to provide veritable opportunities and platforms from which issues of interest remain being differently disserted, articulated and evaluated; and sometimes precipitating actions of different types. It should be noted that ‘social space’ in its reification could either be of limited duration, or permanent in form; but what is central is that they provide platforms where people gather and interact with others involved who may be diversely influenced and possibly exposed to different thought patterns and ways of addressing social issues.

Here in the University of Port Harcourt for example, the Senior Staff Club, the coffee shop in the old Faculty of Humanities, the Unique Icon WhatsApp platform including those platforms of the respective faculties, departments, unions and those put in place by

the different ethnic associations to mobilize their members in the University for particular interests are in different forms reification of the concept of ‘social space’. These ‘social spaces’ provide platforms for subscribers to relate, share ideas including planning and executing different courses of actions for varied purposes.

Specifically in relation to this discussion, we contend that for an academic (albeit a philosopher) to be assumed as being involved or a partaker in the ‘social space’ is when such person(s) get involved in socially related activities that are of societal concerns which are not in pursuance of professional mandate of ‘lecturing’ and ‘research’ with such involvements being of altruistic involvement. Such involvements by an academic should be audacious depending on the subsisting circumstances particularly when mounting a challenge against predominant idea(s) and official policies. Any involvement by a philosopher in the ‘social space’ should be engraved with commitment to truth-telling and with the intention to making positive contributions to the social space and humanity in general. Such engagements could be in conjunction with different interests as may be epitomized in the forms of participation by multiplicity of persons of different social mutations and groups that may be involved. A philosopher participating in the social space will be expected to be imbued with committable utilitarian disposition and practicality ensconced on the ideals of the ‘common good’ and the dictates of common humanity. Conversely, the Socratic form of singularity or solo involvement in the social space remain a viable option, if need be.

From our personal experience, involvements in the social space broadens ones’ knowledge on social issues, and this is in addition to seamlessly emboldening and imbuing in one the capacity and audacity to freely speak out on issues, irrespective of whose ‘horse is gored ’; and not timidly tolerating or accommodating any action, policy and claim of those in authority that one privately considers repulsive and unfair.

For example, even in recent time, reports of our' past activities in the social space has become reference materials and tools for writers, netizens, academicians and others. When sometimes I Google 'Lucky Akaruese', the amount of information, reports, views and commentaries popping up always bemuse me, and above all reminding me of my past activities in the 'social space' and *ipso facto* conferring on me the status of an organic philosopher of the 'Socratic tradition' who refused to be restricted to the classroom only, but equally located in the realm of praxis.

A profiling and assessment of the totality of my involvements in the social space will unveil and demonstrate the nature of the University of Port Harcourt as an institution that espouse the dimension of untrammelled principle of academic freedom and its concomitant appurtenances. It is a University that will not gag its staff and students from expressing themselves in the social space. Any alleged or reported gaging must be self-induced. Inclusively, some of the information, commentaries and reports on me that I read in my Google platform always evoke in me inadvertent sense of satisfaction and pride resulting from the fact that I remain included amongst the 'few' that can be counted as one of the contributors to the history of struggle against military despotism and dictatorship who despite the risks involved stood on the side of social and political progress and raising high the banner for freedom. Furthermore, on my occasional reading of some of these reported items from the different social media platforms on my involvements in the social space, I am always joyous when I see the level of documentation arising from my commitments to what I can literally describe as the 'Niger Delta Struggle' against mindless and criminal exploitation of our peoples by the conspiratorial duo of the Federal Government of Nigeria and the collectivity of the hegemonic and profit seeking transnational oil conglomerates with active connivance from internal collaborators. Such reports and comments always give me self-satisfaction and sense of joy particularly for my modest concern for the Ogoni

dimension of the Niger Delta crises. Finally, in these reports, commentaries and information, the University of Port Harcourt which has always been my bastion and refuge remain always accentuated as one of my definiens. This aspect of projecting this University by virtue of my activities in the social space strike a particular cord that differentiate me from many of my colleagues.

Projecting and popularizing our University in the world of publications of research works is good and we get promoted as academics partly because of our respective contributions in that dimension. Equally, our respective contributions to the totality of efforts required for the producing graduates of the University also remain parts of the requirements for our professional advancement as academics. In both I have been involved like others to the satisfaction of the University. Both majorly contribute to our respective professional advancement and thus not isolated from the principle of enlighten self-interest. Should this be all that we can offer our University? No, the University of Port Harcourt needs be reflected more than these needs so as to make it a contributor to the visibility and functionality of the social space. The ‘social space’ which is dynamic, rich and variegated need the presence and inputs from this University through her staff and students. Thus, as academics including students we have historic and professional responsibilities to project this University in the ‘social space’ anywhere in the world.

A kaleidoscope of some Philosophers in the ‘Social Space’ and Consequences

According to Karl Marx; the first necessity for philosophical investigation is a bold, free mind.

Within the context of western philosophy, history is replete with cases of philosophers who were executed for ‘thinking differently’ as such thoughts were considered as acts of

transgression. In the same vein, there were others who were persecuted in the form of being exiled or forced to go on exile, or subjected to multiple variety of untold punishments including been killed for not conforming to the ideas of those who presided over the communities within which they had subsisted. In brevity, these philosophers were punished for either thinking or acting differently, or both in their respective efforts to making contributions to knowledge and consequently advancing societies.

Part of the Philosophers' tasks is to examine the epistemological foundation, logicity including truth-claims and contents of assumed knowledge, beliefs and activities. This also include putting and directing society along the path of moral rectitude for achieving orderly society through a well-structured pattern of governance. Executing these functions has in history consistently enthused Philosophers, and in the process, participation in the 'social space' becomes inevitable and thus a necessary platform for ventilating ideas. In the process of accomplishing such tasks as part of the philosophers' definiens, new ideas, practices and knowledge necessarily evolve whereby some could inevitably undermine what society may have hitherto assumed as immutable truth, knowledge and way of life. Such sometimes attract distasteful repercussions for such philosophers with the likes of Socrates, William of Occam and a host of others as classics examples. In the desire to execute such objectives, such Philosophers necessarily found themselves in different 'social spaces' as requisite platforms from which views and ideas were variedly articulated and reified partly for the purpose of ensuring the stability and progress of society in consonance with the view of Plato who contended that *'unless the philosophers become kings and kings and rulers become philosophers, there can be no cessation of troubles for mankind'*. In pursuance of such objectives and consequent participation in the 'social space', some of such Philosophers experienced distasteful repercussions as already pointed out. The imperativeness for us to exemplify the

above (i.e. in the history of philosophy, what some philosophers that ventured into the ‘social space’ experienced), we shall briefly engage in a kaleidoscopic excursus into mentioning a few amongst of such philosophers and the nature and degree of retributions inflicted on them by those who wielded state power.

As noted

in the Wikipedia;

Philosophers throughout the history of philosophy have been held in courts and tribunals for various offenses, often as a result of their philosophical activity, and some have even been put to death. The most famous example of a philosopher being put on trial is the case of Socrates, who was tried for, amongst other charges, corrupting the youths, and impiety.

In the same vein, Wikipedia further noted that:

Throughout history, philosophers have faced persecution, exile, or death for challenging established religious, political, or social doctrines. Notable examples include Socrates (executed 399 BC), Hypatia (murdered 415 AD), Giordano Bruno (burned at the stake 1600), and Baruch Spinoza, who was excommunicated.

Although this effort is designed to undertake an excursus ‘...from Socrates to Akaruese), even at that, our taste for comprehensiveness behooves us to take a quick glean into the pre-Socratic era to further buttress the view that the philosophers’ experience of negativity from society in the performance of their callings is as old as the ‘history of philosophy’. That is, societies’ propensity to subject philosophers to prosecutions and persecutions for thinking and acting differently even pre-date Socrates with Anaxogoras (a pre-Socrates philosopher) of the Eleatic School in the ancient Greek society, being the first recorded philosopher whose philosophical speculations and activities attracted the wrath of those that were in authority. In the

case of Anaxogoras, he was sentenced to death for cogitating differently from what society had held to be true; and for this he was sentenced to death, but the death sentence was later commuted to exile through the intervention of his friends and others.

In the history of western philosophical tradition, the prosecution and consequent execution of Socrates through his drinking of the hemlock in 399 B.C. remains more accentuated amongst philosophers of the different era. The trial as undertaken by the Athenian State was reportedly attended by one of the ancient Greek Philosophers Plato (who was a student of Socrates), and was (i.e. trial) predicated on the accusations of ‘corrupting the youths’ and ‘impiety’. Even though Socrates had the opportunity to escape from prison after his conviction and thus avoid being executed as suggested by his friends, he refused and opted to serve the punishment meted on him by the Athenian State. He was eventually executed by drinking the hemlock. The detailed accounts of the trial is recorded in Plato’s dialogue- Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, and Phaedo.

Another philosopher Hypatia, a Neo-Platonist who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, then part of the Eastern Roman Empire remain one of the first recorded female astronomer, mathematician and philosopher. She was also of the Hellenist genre who was determined to preserve the Greek mathematical and astronomical heritage in spite of the difficult times that overwhelmed Alexandria within which she lived. Her Neo-Platonist philosophy espousing the Platonic World of Form in the midst of the bitter conflicts between Paganism, Christianity and Judaism in Alexandria exposed her to hostilities which resulted from a religiously fractured society with the consequence of political split also. She was in March 415 AD murdered by Christian mobs likely for political reasons also.

William of Occam, (a Franciscan student of John Duns Scotus) born in England in 1280 was one of the most important medieval philosophers. He was a Franciscan who became deeply involved in the disagreement between the Papacy and the Franciscan order. Summarizing the involvement of William of Occam in the crises, Stephen Law (2007 p. 50), noted that:

In 1327 the Franciscan Minister General (administrative head of the order) Michael of Cesena, was summoned to the papal court (then located in Avignon, not Rome) on charges of heresy, having argued that Jesus and the Apostles lived in poverty (as did many Franciscans but not, of course the Pope and his retinue). Ockham was asked to investigate the matter, and he did so, concluding that the Minister General was correct and that it was in fact the Pope who was guilty of heresy for continuing to assert what he had been shown to be false. Ockham, Cesena and other Franciscans fled Avignon into exile.

Ockham in fleeing from the Pope and going on self-exile fled to Louis of Bavaria to seek refuge with the request to Louis that; ‘Do thou defend me by thy sword, and I will defend thee with my pen. (Sometimes referred to as the “first Protestant,” he lived at the Court of Bavaria until his death in 1347).’

Giordano Bruno, an Italian philosopher who amongst other branches of knowledge was an alchemist and astronomer that gained prominence for his cosmological theories which was inclusive of the then Copernican classic. His study and exploration of the universe led to his conclusions amongst others that the stars were distant from the sun including being surrounded by their own planets. He was of the view that some of the planets could possibly sustain life. To him, the universe was infinite. A considerable numbers of his philosophical views veered from some of the teachings and core values of the Roman Catholic Church such as Trinity, eternal damnation, the virginity

of Mary, amongst others. For this, Bruno was brought before the Catholic inquisition and tried for heresy where he was found guilty, tied to a stick and burnt in Rome in 1600.

Baruch Spinoza, was a Jewish philosopher born in Amsterdam in 1632 and by the age 23 he had rebelled against the Jewish religious orthodoxy through his philosophical speculations and was in 1656 excommunicated from the synagogue by the Jewish religious authorities for alleged heresies. The accusations also remain inclusive of his questioning the validity of the Hebrew Bible and his pantheistic views of the Supreme Deity. Report had it that he was once attacked by a knife-wielding fanatic in the synagogue accusing Spinoza of heresy. His books were added to the Catholic Church 'Forbidden Books' as they were categorized as blasphemous, heretic and atheistic.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau born in Geneva in 1712 remained a philosopher that was never afraid to express his view even in an age when it was extremely risky to engage in such. No doubt, his works in political philosophy partly manifested in his concept of 'general will' remain profound. His works on democracy, freedom and governance were equally insightful and acknowledged. However, his works on religion rejecting the idea of original sin including revelation which argued that the inculcation of virtue in persons remain the real benefit that religion could offer, irrespective of the nature and type of religion. For this espoused opinion, the government of France issued a warrant for the arrest of Rousseau whereby he fled to Bern, Switzerland. The government of Switzerland later expelled him on account of his said heretical views after reading the said book on religion for which the French government had earlier wanted to get him arrested. Rousseau had to leave Bern and fled to Motiers which was then governed by Prussia and was later expelled after about two years of stay as local priests there tagged him as anti-Christ element. From there, Rousseau for the next few

years had to be wandering from city to city until he had to return back to France when he was sure that the risk had significantly thinned.

Karl Marx born in 1818 in Trier, Germany of Jewish parentage who can be said to have developed a gamut of philosophy within which his theory of scientific communism is encapsulated. Because of his radical ideas, the Prussian authorities in 1843 closed his newspaper whereby he moved to Paris, France to continue his writing, and it was there he met his lifetime friend Friedrich Engels. It was in Paris that what became known as 'Marxism' crystallized. Marx was again expelled from France in 1845 by the government after closing down his paper. He moved to Brussels with a promise to the Belgian government that he will avoid writing on contemporary issues. In 1848, Europe witnessed series of riots and the Belgian authority accused Marx of trying to lunch a revolution in Belgium and was subsequently jailed. He later fled to France after getting out of jail. With political persecution unabated, Marx moved to Cologne, Germany where after the German revolution, he agitated for communist revolt which did not materialized. He was thrown out from his birthplace, whereby he moved to Paris where the government rejected him. He eventually moved to London where he spent the rest of his life.

Hannah Arendt born in Linden Germany 1906 into a Jewish family, and by the time the Nazist took over governance in Germany, she had become of age. Her numerous works boldly exposing the anti-Semitic policies of the Nazi party while in power including prior to their capturing of state power earned her series of arrests from the German Gestapo on the accusation of anti-state propaganda. In 1933, she was banned from teaching in Germany like some others of Jewish extraction, whereby she later fled to France. Before the Germans overran France in 1940, she was arrested and detained by the French authority on the accusation of 'enemy alien'. After the fall of France to the

Germans, she fled to the United States in 1941. Her work, 'Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil' remain most controversial

The Origin of the 'University' and Its 'Social Space' Component

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, our discussions on 'what social space is' clearly demonstrate how it can be diversely conceptualized but majorly taken as various varieties of platforms for interconnectivity, interrelationship and mutuality for persons of diverse social mutations who may be executing social activities and common social interests bordering on kinetic and no-kinetic characterizations. Here, issues of interests constitute factors of linkages amongst subscribers within. As already noted, the evolution of digital technology has added another aspect to 'what social space is' and particularly the nature of subscribing and patterns of involvements and contributions to the thriving and virility of the 'space'.

Specifically central in any discussion on human institutions that remain inherently linked to the concept of 'social space' including its evolvments and blossoming is the 'university' which has historically been created, structured, governed and functional including allowing its human constituents that are interested the latitude to participate in the 'social space'. Let us quick to add here that when we talk of the 'university' in terms its characteristics and structure as inherently providing the freedom for its constituents to unimpededly get involved in 'social space', we specifically have students and faculty members in mind. This is because both social categories are not in any way encumbered to participate in the 'social space' if any individual within the respective duo chooses to. This is because the principles of 'self-governance' and 'academic freedom' which remain some of the fundamental definiens of the university definitely provide the requisite leverage for them to so act.

Back to the university and specifically it's coming into being and characteristics. Discussing the evolution of the first set of universities, Hayes and Baldwin (1949, p. 310) opined that:

The first universities were not, of course 'founded'. They sprang up naturally and more or less spontaneously in the twelfth century.... In Paris, for example, the cathedral school became so expanded and famous and so attractive to students from all parts of Christendom that it evolved into what was called *stadium general* (general study-place) or 'university'.

Such developments also occurred in *pari passu* in some other European cities, specifically in Bologna, Italy, which even possessed a *stadium* before Paris. Still, it was in Paris that they (i.e. Hayes and Baldwin) emphasized that the distinctive university character first developed, which also informed on our concentrating on the events in Paris. Writing on Medieval scholars, Hayes and Baldwin (1949, p. 311) observed that these scholars were from the beginning, very concerned about bringing into being:

an autonomous organization of their own through which they might control their affairs, determine their curriculum and license their teaching staff. For this, they quite naturally borrowed the type of organization then coming into general use-namely, the *guide*. The Latin word is something used to designate a guide word, 'universities', meaning corporation- was derived from the popular name for the new *stadium general*, or 'university'.

Speaking further on the perennial problems between the university community, on the one hand, vis-à-vis officials of Paris (government), including citizens on the other side of the divide, Hayes and Baldwin specifically mentioned a particular riot in Paris between the two groups which resulted in the suspension of university activities, a development that greatly affected Paris

diversely. The aftermath of the riot, precisely the step taken by the King of France to avoid future occurrences and the consequences mentioned above, was thus reported by Hayes and Baldwin (1949, pp. 312-313) as below:

Shortly after one destructive riot and a consequent suspension of university activities, King Phillip Augustus decreed (1200) that masters and scholars of Paris should be officially immune from the interference of civil authority. Masters and scholars were thus confirmed in the privilege of responsibility only to themselves and the ecclesiastical authority.

The above captures the contemporary notion of academic freedom and its attendant ideals of university self-governance, which were meant only for faculty members and students of the University of Paris. It is still so today, as espoused in available literatures, where academic freedom remain restricted to faculty members and students as the only exercisers. Even at this level of self-governance granted to the University of Paris, it was further reported that friction persisted between the university and the supervisory role of the Catholic Church, which later necessitated the intervention of the papacy and this led to the second effort for the emplacement of academic freedom and self-governance in the University of Paris. The reported papal intervention resulted in what Hayes and Baldwin (1949, p. 313) summarized thusly:

The result was that, in the early decades of the thirteen century, Popes Innocent III and Gregory IX recognized the university as a corporate entity and confirmed its right to determine its own course of study.

The combination of the decree issued by King Augustus Phillip of France and the proclamation of Popes Innocent III and Gregory IX on academic freedom has today assumed the core definiens of university globally. From the decrees and pronouncements emerged the contemporary notion of university self-governance. By this, it can be assumed that a conceptual fundamental

characteristic of self-governance espoused in the principle of academic freedom should remain inherent, including defining every university with constituents as inadvertent possessors who should necessarily ensure actualization and unassailability, irrespective of milieus.

From the brief discussions above, we can understand the nature of a university which is fundamentally structured to be academically autonomous and a self-governing center for lecturing, learning, research and contestations of ideas whose composite human categories should necessarily include students and faculty members as denizens. The principle of self-governance as definiens of the university as emphasized in this discussion remain inclusive of the untrammelled freedom (but within the bounds of municipal and international laws) of any student including faculty members who so desire, could get involve in any issue of social and general concerns within any ‘social space’. Such involvements could be reified through the expression of opinions and views, including involvements in any related activity of both kinetic and non-kinetic characterizations. It must however be pointed out here that whatever the form of participation of members of faculty including students in the social space, such must be altruistically driven with the strong hope that involvements will consequentially be in the overall interests of society and humanity.

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT: A ‘COMMUNITY’ THAT IMBIBE THE IDEALS OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM

It is a common practice whereby any university in Nigeria always have the word ‘community’ attached to it. The same is applicable to our University. When we deploy the phrase ‘University of Port Harcourt Community’ in this discussion, what actually do we have in mind? For the avoidance of doubt ‘University of Port Harcourt Community’ remain inhabited by denizens; all of whom interrelate and sharing a sense of belonging and with common

goal embedded in collaborative spirit towards achieving the aims and objectives of this University as statutorily provided for. Inclusively, denizens collectively exude such traits and characteristics that has historically been associated with universities the world over. Basic to these characteristics, is the infusion of communality as a vector providing the necessary linkage for interrelatedness for a symbiotic enhancement of our respective interests specifically those that can be accommodated within the status establishing this University. For our discussion here, ‘University of Port Harcourt Community’ is loosely conceptualized to be approximating the likes of such communities (towns) like Choba, Abonema, Bori, Buguma, Opobo, Omogwa, etc. Suggestively, we all here are at liberty to conjecture our respective indigenous communities or those of residence as being inclusive amongst the ones mentioned above. While these mentioned communities (including ours that may not have been mentioned above) are occupied by peoples of different callings and social categories; however the University of Port Harcourt Community in this discussion remain occupied by peoples bifurcated into two categories only; viz. staff and students, of which I remain located within the first category.

A common feature and usually well pronounced in the collective psyche and the customs of all these respective communities specifically amongst their indigenes is the existence of a position of primus usually reserved and apportioned to the known oldest surviving member of these respective towns (albeit lineage); which may be of patriarchal bias.

Here in our University of Port Harcourt Community (unlike the above mentioned ones) even though there is no defined appellation or word for the oldest staff member in terms of chronological age (within official records), Mr. Vice-Chancellor may wish to note that as at today 3rd of March, 2026, I Lucky Oritsetojumi Akaruese at this material time remain the oldest amongst all your staff and thus remain the occupant of the

imaginary ‘position’ (if any) reserved for the oldest staff member. The fact that we are all gathered here for this valedictory lecture (made possible with the kind permission of Mr. Vice-Chancellor) which is reserved for a staff within the professorial cadre that has clocked the metaphorical 7th floor remain a testament to the somehow acknowledgment of this position of naturality within this community. It is my humble suggestion here that besides the usual valedictory lecture to be delivered by such retirees, the University should in future decorate such fortunate individual with at least a badge of longevity. Thus Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, it is my sincere prayer that while giving your usual concluding remarks after my ‘dance’, I humbly implore that you please note this very important distinction between me and the rest members of staff of this community including your humble self. The ‘distinction’ is simply that, at this material time, as you for example sorely occupy the position of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Port Harcourt and thus the *de facto* and *de jure* head of the Community by virtue of positive law; however, in the realm of ‘natural law’, I at this material time sorely remain *Doyen* and *Supremo* in the ‘world’ of chronological age amongst all the staff of the University Community and I should as from this moment until 12.59 pm of today (i.e. Tuesday the 3rd of March) which approximately is about 9 hours from this moment be so recognized as such and be addressed as BIG BROS or BIG UNCLE (courtesy of Delta State version of pidgin English).

As already noted, universities globally in different forms has historically provided platforms for the concept of ‘social space’ to thrive. In the same vein, university academics globally remain majorly saddled with three primary functions, viz.:- lecturing, research and community service. Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, you may wish to recall that when I delivered the 168th Inaugural Lecture series of this University titled **But for Philosophy, What is Man**, I largely dwelt on the extent to which I (then) had fulfilled my responsibilities specifically in the direction of

‘lecturing’ and ‘research’ including my overall contributions to the global knowledge-search. In the said lecture, specifics in terms of ‘community service’ (which for the purpose of this discussion is considered as approximating the extent of my involvements and activities in the ‘Social Space’) were largely blurred with at best just a tiny few specifics were tangentially reflected in the lecture. However, this valedictory lecture will no doubt provide me the modest opportunity to inform this audience here present in our enviable Center of Excellence, including those now watching me, courtesy of the zoom technology and other social media platforms all over the world some of the specifics of my involvements and activities in the ‘social space’ as manifested in my different engagements here in the University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria, South America, North America, Asia and Europe as a staff of our Unique University of Port Harcourt. It is important for us to note that even though my engagements in the different ‘social space’ sometimes transverse the different continents of the World (except Australia) as already mentioned, but importantly the University of Port Harcourt remains my epicenter (or do I say center of mass) from where I remain nourished, tolerated and energized with comfortable and conducive environment provided in accordance with university culture and tradition ensconced on the ideals of academic freedom and university autonomy. Specifically for the University of Port Harcourt, it has historically epitomized the virtues of an ideal university which accentuate academic freedom where students and faculty members are not in any way restrained by the respective Vice-Chancellors (since 1991 when I assumed duty) from participating in the struggle for social transformation anywhere.

We have already described what the University of Port Harcourt community is whereby we liken it to such communities like Choba, Bori, Buguma, etc. But in the case of the University, it is a community that comprises those that can be categorized as being

imbued with the same characteristics in terms of occupying identical status of being knowledgeable denizens with defined missions epitomized in the sole thrust of contributing to developing humanity. It is a community where the ideals of humanity particularly along the trajectory of equality of all largely thrives and sustained by multiplicity of values, mores and rules with some codified. It is a community (I mean our University of Port Harcourt) where the primus (i.e. the Vice-Chancellor) largely occupy the status of 'first amongst equals' and only for a five year term and after that he returns back to his department (i.e. if she/he is a staff of this University before being appointed). It is a University that approximate a platform for equals in status. For example, this is a community where I have never bothered to lobby for me to get what is due me particularly within the context of professional advancement including privileges and perquisites. Here in this University, I have always freely express my opinions on any issue of interest to me during statutory meetings and others that I am qualified to attend without any repercussion since 1991 that I assumed duty. Inclusively, this is a University that relentlessly and steely stood for me, by me and offering me the requisite protection in the nineties during the heydays of military despotism when I got deeply involved in the 'social space' that evolved as platforms for galvanizing Nigerian peoples in the struggle to terminate military rule. The University of Port Harcourt from my personal experience remain a distinct community that has historically espoused the characteristics of the ideal 'social space' whereby freedom of expression for its constituents remain engraved, including untrammelled opportunity for constituents to engage in any justifiable kinetic and non-kinetic activities in pursuance of any legitimate social issue. This is a University with no history of any faculty member, nor student being impeded nor harassed for involvement in the 'social space' and particularly opting to ally with progressive forces to confront the Nigerian ruling class; a class that has historically been irresponsible, predatory and oppressive. It was the only

University in Nigeria (from information available to me) during the era of military despotism where Vice-Chancellors (specifically Prof. Ademola Salau (late) and Prof Nimi Briggs (late) will courageously find time to visit their staff in military detentions. Besides the duo Vice-Chancellors mentioned, such colleagues then like Prof. Tony Arinze (late), Dr. Maclean Jaja, Prof. Mark Anikpo and Prof. Nelson Brambiafa were colleagues who will defy the risks and accompany the Vice-Chancellors to visit me in detentions. From my experience as Senate member during the Vice-Chancellorship of late Prof. Nimi Briggs in his (second ‘outing’), Prof. Joseph Ajienka, Prof. Ndowa Lale, Prof. Stephen Okodudu and the incumbent Prof. Owunari Georgewill, I cannot recall any amongst them that exhibited any form of vindictive tendency, nor exuding narrow-minded pattern of leadership in their respective relationships with me. If you have reason to disagree with any of them over any issue in any of the statutorily meetings presided over by any during their respective tenures, such disagreements (if any) will not affect relationship outside the meetings, unlike what some colleagues in some universities allegedly experience. To me they were fine gentlemen. For the incumbent, our relationship up till now remain that of mutual respect and will always listen to me anytime I have the need to approach him.

The University of Port Harcourt is one whose founding mothers/fathers were conscious of the need for the University to be linked to its surrounding communities and in their desire to achieve this, they introduced a compulsory university wide course titled ‘Community Service’ for all students whereby students before completing their programs must of necessity be sent to any community around the University to render some manual services. I recall that when I was at the then University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo), Uyo, ‘Community Service’ as a course was also compulsory for all students then. This innovative program establishing linkages between the University

and host communities can be traced to Prof. Donald Ekong (of blessed memory) who at different times was the pioneering Vice Chancellor of both universities. Even though the present pattern of executing this course in our University has completely veered from what it was intended for which include amongst others to creating a ‘social space’ for both students and faculty members to interact with the outside communities for mutuality, but that the course was ever emplaced perfectly demonstrate the fact that this University is indeed unique in varied ramifications and most importantly in terms of innovative programs including the rendering of services to humanity in a manner expected of an ideal university. In this specific case, it was deliberately emplaced to create avenue for the exposure of her students to participate in the ‘social space’ for the organic developments and linkage with denizens of host/surrounding communities.

AKARUESE, AND THE UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT AS A SOCIAL SPACE AND FOTRESS

Mr. Vice Chancellor sir, in 1986 I got hired into the then newly established University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo), Uyo. About this time at the level of national governance, the then military government of General Ibrahim Babangida had become ultra-notoriously despotic, repressive and uncharitably throwing those canvassing dissenting views into detentions. Concomitantly, the repressive policies of the Babangida regime precipitated the evolvment of multiplicity of pro-democracy and human right groups (all categorized as non-governmental organizations-NGOs) using different nomenclatures with some deliberately put in place and coined to mask real ideological and political thrusts and intentions, specifically the aims and objectives of such groups. For example, in the old Cross River State (then inclusive of the present Cross River and Akwa Ibom States), the ‘Directorate for Literacy’ came into being with membership drawn from the trade unions, academia, community based organizations, women and youths organizations, etc. under

the leadership of a Marxist economist Prof. Eskor Toyo (now late) of the University of Calabar, and Comrade Bassey Ekpo Bassey (now late) who was then the Chairman of the Calabar Municipal Council. I was elected as the secretary of the Uyo Branch. About the same time (i.e. 1987), the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) was formed in Lagos; and before now the Civil Liberty Organization (CLO) was already in existence. Within few weeks of the coming into being of CDHR, I established the Cross River State branch in Uyo with the then University of Cross River State as the epicenter. In collaboration with the already existing Socialist Study Forum (in the University), we engaged in the education and mobilization of students and others within our reach to be involved in the struggle for the enthronement of human right values including democratic engagements. Particularly in the South-Western Zone of the Country, different pro-democracy and human right groups mushroomed. With this development, social spaces in their diverse forms evolved from which many Nigerians of varied social categorizations got themselves involved particularly in that zone.

For us (while still in the then University of Cross River State as a lecturer), in spite of the harassment from the different security agencies in Uyo particularly the State Security Services, we remained undaunted. In alliance with the comrades around, majorly those of the trade union mold and the progressive students in the University, we created different social spaces from which we canvassed our ideas and calling for socialist revolution Nigeria.

My first contact with the University of Port Harcourt was around the mid-1978 as member of the then University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife' 'Mobilization Council' of the defunct National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS) during the 'Ali-Mum-Go' national strike over what was then termed as

“government’ commercialization of education”. It should be noted that during this period, no state, nor private tertiary institution was in existence. The said national strike then embarked upon by Nigerian students (I mean students of the then existing tertiary institutions-Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Educations) had been on for about six weeks with human fatalities recorded in the University of Lagos where one student Akintude Ojo was killed, and in Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria about six students were mauled down by the Nigerian police. Inclusively, the then president of NUNS Segun Okeowo was arrested and detained by the then military regime of retired General Olusegun Obasanjo. Naturally enough, after about six weeks into the strike, lethargy was beginning to creep in and the leadership of NUNS had to call for a meeting to review the strike which was scheduled to hold at the University of Port Harcourt. About three of us represented the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ile-Ife Students’ Union. We arrived the University of Port Harcourt at about 8pm and hurriedly left early in the morning (about 5.30am) after an all-night meeting. I still recall that the meeting was held in a secondary school (technical college?) as the then Vice Chancellor would not allow the use of the University campus probably because the then military government had pronounced the banning of NUNS.

The other channel through which this University got engraved into my consciousness can be traceable to my taste for radical scholarship along the Marxist-Leninist genre. As a graduate student pursuing my second degree at Ile-Ife, the University of Port Harcourt (although occupying the second generation status’ of the categorization of universities in Nigeria in terms of when they were respectively established) remained amongst the few universities then specifically inclusive of the then University of Ife and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria where Marxist-Leninist scholarship had firm root amongst some scholars. I recall that

towards the late eighties freely mentioned scholars and apostles of radical scholarship in the University of Port Harcourt included the likes of Ikenna Nzimiro (late), Iya Eteng (late), Claude Ake (late), Goddy Nwabueze (late), Kimse Okoko (late), Ime Ekeke, Theresa Turner, Chidi Amuta, Mark Anikpo and Julius Ihonvbere. These were names that featured prominently in discussions bordering on the search for alternative ideological pathway to extricate Nigeria from the dependent and unproductive capitalist system and neocolonial dominations with internal comprador bourgeoisie as collaborators. No doubt this University was then a veritable 'social space' for Marxist-Leninist scholarship in Nigeria. I recall that while in Uyo, I attended a conference on Human Rights in the Presidential Hotel under the auspices of the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, and the University of Denver, Colorado, U.S.A. There, I recalled meeting for the first time some of these scholars mentioned above. Specifically, attendees to the conference were from the different parts of the world and I recall the extraordinary performance of some of the students of the Faculty who attended the conference in their analysis of Nigeria's social situation then. After the conference, linkages were established with some participants from Nigeria resulting into the emergence of more social spaces in addition to the already existing ones; all with the aim of further deepening and diversifying the struggle against military dictatorship and replacing same with a Marxist-Leninist model of governance. From then on, the University of Port Harcourt became one of the social spaces I became linked to resulting into participating in different meetings with other comrades mainly from the South-South zone aimed at putting in place strategies for confronting the military.

In March 1991, I was recruited into the Department of Philosophy of this University whereby I assumed duty on the 21st of March as already said. Before arrival to assume duty, I was already aware of the existence of some comrades anchoring the progressive

clime in Port Harcourt; I mean those comrades that were destined for the streets as part of the strategies for agitation. Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, when I assumed duty in this University, I had no inkling that a day like this will come when I will be delivering a valedictory lecture after about 35 years of service. My expectation then which today with the benefit of hindsight I now know was absolutely in the realm of delusional belief was that once the then military government was forced out of power and inevitably leading to the spark of revolution being lit, Nigerian peoples would rise up to the occasion and join us for the enthronement of socialist reconstruction of Nigeria. I can now confidently assert that I was indeed overwhelmed with deluding obsessive expectation as if the constituents and movement of history has always been linear, tidy and subjected to absolute deliberate human sequencing that once the military was out of political governance, Nigeria would immediately transit to a socialist governance and reconstruction of the country.

No doubt, the University of Port Harcourt in which I assumed duty had at that particular period experienced a depletion of its share of radical academics, but at the level of the student population, there were few progressive ones. However, a branch of CDHR was already established in Port Harcourt providing the requisite social space for me to express myself. At this time, its leader Christian Akani (now the present Eze of Mgbouba Community, and also a Professor of Political Theory, Dept. of Political Science, Ignatius Ajuru University, Port Harcourt) at the time of my arrival in Port Harcourt was incarcerated in Ikoyi Prison along with other activists of the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) by the military regime of Babangida. He was there for about a year before he was eventually released. No doubt the Rivers State branch of CDHR with a unit in the University of Port Harcourt jointly provided the required social space for agitations against the military regime.

In November/December 1991 different individuals largely made up of those from the trade unions, academia, human right groups, women organizations and a few others under the auspices of the National Consultative Forum met in Jos, Plateau State with the duo aims of articulating strategies and plan of actions for the convocation of a sovereign national conference, and forcing the military out of power at all costs. At the end of the meeting, a new platform christened 'Campaign for Democracy-CD' came into being with Dr. Beko Ramsom Kuti (now late) as pioneer chairman. It was an organization structured to create a broad 'social space' that should encompass all the then existing (including others to emerge later) organizations in Nigeria that were committed to the struggle to force out the military junta from political power, including the convocation of a Sovereign National Conference that should reshape and draw up a new constitution for Nigeria. I recall that at the said meeting in Jos, late Ken Saro Wiwa was elected as Vice Chairman (South-South) : a position that fell on me few years later after the successor to Ken Saro-Wiwa late Professor Festus Iyayi's completed his term . In Rivers State, I was elected the State Secretary of the Campaign for Democracy, while Christian Akani became the State Chairman of the newly formed organization. As part of our mobilizing strategies, units of CD were established in the different parts of the state with the University of Port Harcourt inclusive.

The annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election (by Ibrahim Babangida); an election widely believed to have been won by the candidate of the defunct Social Democratic Party (SDP) Chief Moshood Abiola precipitated wide protests particularly in the South-West region of Nigeria. Here in Rivers State, the CD took the lead in successfully organizing series of protests in Port Harcourt. The students of the University of Port Harcourt were not left out in all the street protests calling for the revalidation of the June 12 presidential election. Even the concoction instituted by Ibrahim Babangida and christened

Interim National Government (ING) with Ernest Shonekan as the head could not assuage the feelings of CD members and the millions of protesters.

From June 1993 when the ING was established till November 1993 when it was sacked in a military coup, a lot of arrests were made particularly within the leadership of the CD as protests were regularly being organized. In Port Harcourt, I was for weeks being stupidly paraded between the State Investigation and Intelligent Bureau (SIIB) and the State Security Service. In all, the leadership of the University of Port Harcourt stood behind me. Mentioned must be made of Prof. Nelsion Brambiafa who had a way of sniffing out which ever dungeon I would have been kept. In the South West zone where the protests were intense, a few lecturers that were involved and got arrested hardly ‘enjoy’ concerns from the leadership of their universities, unlike me where two successive acting Vice-Chancellors (i.e.) Professors Ademola Salawu (late) and Nimi Briggs (late) will go out their ways and respectively working for me to be released.

It is important to mention here that the coup which removed Ernest Shoneka with Sani Abacha appointing himself as the new ‘messiah’ further intensified the persecutions of pro-democracy activists. There was an incident during Shonekan’s brief period that must be mentioned here for the fact that it happened close to this University. Less than two weeks before Shonekan was ousted, he visited Rivers State as part of his efforts to get acceptance elusive legitimacy from the Nigerian peoples. While in Rivers State, parts of his itinerary was to perform a groundbreaking ceremony for the (now moribund) Industrial Layout located in Ahoada. He indeed visited Rivers State and went to Ahoada for the program. On his way back after the program, and on getting to the junction of NTA /East-West roads in the front of the University of Port Harcourt campus, protesters in their thousands had blocked the only available road through which the

convoy of the Head of the Interim Government, Chief Ernest Shonekan had to pass and were displaying placards demanding for his stepping down, and Chief Abiola to be sworn-in as President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. It was an hectic task for security operatives to able to get the convoy out of the logjam. On my part.... Few days after this incident, a High Court in Lagos declared the Interim Government illegal and within the same week General Abacha executed his coup sacking the Interim Government.

Towards the end of May 1994, the call for the validation of June 12, 1993 election became intense and diversified with the crescendo this time vibrating widely within the country and beyond. By the end of May, I was already picked up by operatives of the State Security Service and after about a week, I was moved to the State Investigation and Intelligent Bureau (SIIB) where I was detained for weeks before being charged before a Magistrate Court. This detention specifically the period of incarceration in the SIIB brought me face to face with a particular horrendous situation which inadvertently exposed me to another 'social space' that cried loud for involvement.

By 1993, I was already familiar with the existence of the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP), Furthermore, the coming into being of Campaign for Democracy with Ken Saro-Wiwa as the pioneer South-South Coordinator, and my humble-self occupying the position of Rivers State Secretary inadvertently placed us together with others within the same 'social space' that evolved. Back to what I have just described as 'a particular horrendous situation' at the State Investigation and Intelligent Bureau. Many here will recall that a tragedy occurred in Ogoni whereby four Ogoni chiefs were brutally murdered reportedly by mob in Gokana. Before now MOSOP was at this material time the only organization in the region loosely referred to as Niger Delta that was effectively deploying polemic to agitate

against environmental devastation in the oil producing areas of the region, and also the need for communities' control of their crude oil resources with Ken Saro-Wiwa as the arrowhead. The mentioned gruesome incident in May, 1994 led to the military invasion of the entirety of Ogoni land with massive arrests of men and women. In the SIIB where I was detained, about seventy of those arrested from Ogoni communities were also there. After a magistrate court granted me bail after weeks of detention in SIIB, I had no option than to be concerned with the Ogoni situation given the sub-human conditions they were in the SIIB. Here in the University of Port Harcourt, many of my then colleagues of Ogoni extraction were simply wonderful in their contributions to assist the Ogoni detainees who were starving in SIIB. I will not want to document their names even though some have passed on.

Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots were eventually judicially murdered on 10th November, 1995; an action that generated international outcry and sanctions against the Sani Abacha government. In April, 1996, the United Nations (UN) sent a fact finding mission to Nigeria to conduct investigation on the Ogoni, human right and political situations in Nigeria, and the team was expected to visit Port Harcourt, Lagos and Abuja for interactions with governments, groups and individuals. The Rivers State government with Dauda Komo (a military officer) as the then military administrator in its preparation for the visit of the UN team had mobilized traditional Rulers, leadership of the different ethnic groups, prominent individuals of Rivers State extraction and others to appear before the UN team with the specific instruction to justify the trial and subsequent murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots. Not unmindful of our usual audacity to confront the military government at all costs, the Rivers State government embarked on intimidation and arrest of those they suspected will likely take advantage of the presence of the UN Team to expose the monstrousness of the government and consequently embarrass the military regime.

The first to be arrested and whisked off to Bori Camp military cantonment was Ledum Mitee (who now had to lead MOSOP after the execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa, and the only survival amongst those detained along with Saro-Wiwa). The viciousness with which Dauda Komo (military administrator) was executing his agenda to prevent any possible pro-Ken Saro-Wiwa/Ogoni presentation before the UN Team (while in Rivers State) was brazen and frightening. The situation became more compounded and generating further fears with unconfirmed information at our disposal to the effect that the military administrator had put in place necessary mechanism to identify any comrade that will appear before the UN Team to present the Abacha government in bad light. Under the tense atmosphere of threat, one of us Azibaola Robert (a lawyer by profession) who was the Executive Director of the Niger Delta Human and Environmental Rescue Organization (ND-HERO) had to escape to Lagos to meet the UN Team. Other comrades in the leadership positions within the civil society groups for fear of arrest went underground leaving Ayankwee Nsirimovu of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, Christian Akani, Lucky Akaruese of the University of Port Harcourt and Sunny Anyan ‘to bell the proverbial cat’. From the advertised itinerary of the UN Team, it was billed to arrive Port Harcourt on Tuesday the 9th of April, 1996 and will on the Wednesday 10th of April interact with interested groups and persons. On our part, it was decided that at X hour of Tuesday 9th the four of us should differently find our ways into the Presidential Hotel, Port Harcourt which was the venue for the UN Team’s assignments for us to sniff out for relevant information on modalities, more so that we were conscious of the fact that security operatives particularly many from the State Security Service knew each of us as we had respectively been detained in their facilities at different times. This strategy was successfully executed, and we got the relevant information we sorted for and finally had our team slated amongst others. But unfortunately for us in the process of departing

individually from the Hotel complex at about 10pm, Ayankwee Nsirimovu was unlucky and was apprehended and taken to Bori camp, while the duo of us (i.e. Christian Akani and Lucky Akaruese) were fortunate to escape even without knowing that Comrade Ayankwee had been arrested and whisked away to Bori Camp gulag.

Totally unaware of what had happened to Ayankwee and expecting him as planned for the D-day (i.e. April 10, 1996), the two of us differently got ourselves into the Presidential Hotel with all attempts to get Ayankwee futile. This singular incident discomfiting and embarrassing to us, even though aborting our appearance before the UN Team was for us impossible to contemplate even remotely. Thus, we refused to be weighed down by the inexplicable painful turn of event epitomized in Ayankwee' sudden disappearance from this historic participation in such an *ad hoc* 'social space' of global standing. We (Akani, Ayan and Akaruese) were later joined by a female comrade, Jeroma Ikomi of the Southern Minority Forum (SMF), whom the then leader of the group Dr. Mofia Akobo (late) had sent to join our team. Also, a few others from different pro-democracy, minority, human right and environmental groups were able to join us at the lobby of the hotel complex and we were most elated.

Now fully inside the hotel complex, our team became confident that security operatives can no longer prevent us from interacting with the UN Team, and if they had dared we would resisted them uncompromisingly, and further humiliate the military junta to the gaze of the public and the international community. We were finally invited into the venue and for about two hours our team interacted with the UN Team. It was when we had almost finished our interaction with the UN Team that Ayankwee got into the venue looking haggard and worn-out after being released from the gulag. On our request, the UN Team obliged Ayankwee some time to inform on how he was whisked off on Tuesday night, and

his experience in the hands of security operatives in Bori Camp. After the interactions, we insisted that two members of the UN Team should escort us out of the Hotel complex so as prevent our being arrested within the complex, and they obliged. Now outside the complex, how the individuals escaped from being arrested will be subject of another discussion. For me, I came back to my refuge –the University of Port Harcourt, while some of those living in Port Harcourt town were for some time subjected to different forms of harassments with some abandoning their houses for some period.

Find below the report of our interactions with the UN Team as captured by the Guardian Newspaper correspondents. Other newspapers and electronic media cleverly avoided reporting our interaction with the Team for the fear of possible reprisals. For the report as quoted below, Tayo Lakulu the then Guardian Regional Editor in Port Harcourt was mercilessly harassed by the Dauda Komo government and forced out of Port Harcourt. I later got to know that he had to escape to the United States.

Saudi Arabia rejects Nigerian pilgrims

Eulogies for Ron Brown at funeral service

By Ambrose Okoh, Foreign Affairs Reporter

Oil about two hours yesterday, prominent American politicians and businessmen, including the United States President, Mr. Bill Clinton, gathered for a funeral service for Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, who died in a plane crash in Costa Rica last week.

The service took place at the Washington National Cathedral, President Clinton, eulogizing Brown at the service, described him as an incredible life force.

ing Nigerian pilgrims from leaving, throwing stones in the plane's transportation that began on April 7. In a message faxed to Nigeria by the Saudi Civil Aviation Authority, the president, Dr. Al-Kafal, warned that "no plane carrying any Nigerian from any part of the world will be allowed to land in Saudi Arabia."

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UN team in Rivers, meets activists, returns to Abuja

From Udemu Ogi, (Port Harcourt) and Abiodun Adeniji (Abuja)

laxed atmosphere. One source said: "The UN team was welcomed by our arrest on Monday night. The security has been relaxed a bit by the government. The UN team was very glad that we made statements to ensure we met them. If we had not gone to them, the government would have been the false impression it could be. The UN team that only MOSOP (Movement for the Su-

UNN students to pay extra N4,000 on accommodation

From Missy Igbagbo, Enugu

On the campus, the measure was contained in a letter to the parents and

gauldians of the students by the institution's sole administrator, Prof. Umara Gowwaki, who said that the problem had

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Ex-minister's aide authenticates appointment

By Prince Egede, Labor Reporter

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States to distribute fertilizer

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UN team in Rivers, meets activists, returns to Abuja

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government should cease from implementing all measures that deliberately trample on human rights and abuse of rights and due process of the law. The IHRR urged the team to press on the government to immediately terminate the obnoxious Decree 2 and the 1987 Decree on Civil Disobedience as amended.

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Suit against Ibru others dismissed

From Robert Ekanjio, Warri

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Girl, 10, found wandering

Agit, Ugechi

Agit, Ugechi

Agit, Ugechi

Agit, Ugechi

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Agit, Ugechi

Agit, Ugechi

UN Team in Rivers Meets Activists, Returns To Abuja

Visiting United Nations fact-finding mission members discuss with human right groups in Port Harcourt yesterday.

The team was scheduled to leave Port Harcourt last night after a farewell visit to Rivers state administrator Lt-COL. Dauda Komo.

Yesterday's meeting by the team with human right, pro-democracy and environmentalists groups was not a casual event as they were alleged moves by some official agencies to advert it.

Some of the activists who met with UN team had been rounded up and arrested on Monday, but were released on Tuesday.

After yesterday's parley, the activities said the discussion was held in a relaxed atmosphere. One source

From Udebba Orji, (Port Harcourt) and Abiodun Adeniyi (Abuja)

said: "The UN team was embarrassed by our arrest on Monday night. The security has been relaxed a bit by the government. The UN team was very glad that we made strenuous efforts to ensure we met them. If we had not gone to see them, the government have escaped with the false impression it created before the UN team that only MOSOP (Movement For the Survival of Ogoni People) was against them. "The government had created the impression between the visiting team that they were not human right pro-democracy or.

Continued from page 1

environmentalist groups in Rivers State. But now that the UN team is going, we are preparing for the worse. The security operatives will soon start dealing with us. But we have no regrets."

The activists said some of the questions asked them by the UN team were on the zero-party council election. One source said: "But we pointed out to them that what gave the impression of a large turnout was because few polling stations were erected, and so there was overcrowding at the few stations. There were less polling stations in the local government election than in previous elections."

Mr. Lucky Akaruese, teacher at the University of Port Harcourt and Vice-Chairman of Campaign for Democracy

(CD). Delta zone, said: "We met with the UN team. The members told us they were no longer expecting us as they had earlier received a report that we were not going to appear before them. Our group was made up of different pro-democracy, human rights, minority rights and environmentalist groups. We spoke differently.

The team asked questions on every issues raised, quite unintimidating, thorough in putting incisive questions to us, and honestly. They demonstrated an honest desire to know our perception of the Nigerian crisis. We put before them the objective reality as apprehended by the vast majority of Nigerians.

"On the likely mind of the UN team, I say there is a difference between appearance and reality. Also, I am not a prophet I do not underestimate the vast propaganda factory of the Nigerian State. But I think the UN team is made up of men of honour who will ever protect the integrity of the various UN charters and conventions which the military regime has consistently trampled upon... The UN team did not take lightly our fear of being arrested, such that a member of the team was detailed to see us out."

Mr. Anyakwe Nsirimovu, Executive Director of the Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law (IHRHL), who also met the UN team, said: "The IHRHL suggested to the team that the sure way out of the political crisis is for equal voice of all citizens of the land to be heard. To effect this, the government as a matter of urgency should release all political prisoners, including the so called coup plotters without conditions. Also, the government should cease from implementing all measures that deliberately trample on human dignity and abuse of rights and due process of the law. The IHRHL urged the team to prevail on the government to immediately terminate the obnoxious decree 2 and the 1987 decree on civil disturbances as amended".

On the Ogoni issue, Nsirimovu said "The IHRHL shows the flaws of government in the peaceful settlement of genuine devastation of ogoni land and the people that live of the foot of the same land. The IHRHL urged the team to see to see environmental pollution as a fundamental human right issue that requires urgent

solutions in ogoni land and all the oil bearing communities.” He added; “On the transition programme and democracy the IHRHL pointed to the abysmal failure of the zero party local government election as irrefutable evidence of the insincerity of the operator of the programme, and indeed the reason we still see it as a transition to autocracy, not democracy. The paper election was with executive high handedness and intimidation. To that effect, today, care taker chairman of the local government have been replaced by government appointed so administrators IHRHL urged the team to make government think seriously about solutions such as government of national unity, which shall be able to fashion out an effective and acceptable transition programme.”

He said the group also appeal to the UN team to impress and the government to establish a genuine human right commission “Staffed with men of integrity and experience in the land.”

The UN team, scheduled to return to Abuja last night, may today meet with detained politician, Chief Moshood Abiola, if its stay in Nigeria will not stretch beyond tomorrow.

Team leader, Justice AtsuKoffi Amega, had last weekend said the Federal Government was not opposed to the mission's meeting with Chief Abiola who is being detained at the Federal Capital Territory (Mil, to ensure broad-ranged consultations.

By the UN delegations intinerary spamming 10 days, today is supposed to be its last busy day in Nigeria – a day scheduled for conclusive parleys in Abuja.

Besides chief Abiola, The UN Team will also call on Head of State General Sanni Abacha on a farewell visit.

As at 8.25 pm they were still being expected' at their NICON NOGA HILTON HOTEL lodging. Hotel records said their reservations indicated their checking in yesterday.

In November, 2005, I was invited to deliver the keynote address in the Hague, Netherland at a ceremony to mark a decade after the murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his compatriots under the auspices of the Dutch Foreign Ministry, and Friends of the Earth. Part of

the commemorative activities included my leading a protest march to Shell International Headquarters at the Hague. See below the photograph from the protest.



At the headquarters of Shell International, Hague, Netherland leading a protest to commemorate a decade after the judicial murder of Ken Saro-Wiwa and the other Ogoni compatriots

As variedly noted ‘social space’ in its reification including actions and subject-matters central to any could be of unintended *ad hoc* nature, and sometimes of different mold of longevity. The one just discussed above was largely of *ad hoc* mold, and in fact the concept remain majorly reified with specifics mostly within the *ad hoc* configuration.



A condolence visit to the father of late Ken Saro-Wiwa after the judicial murder



At Bani in Ogoni with a foreign Journalist

Let's briefly report another 'social space' of *ad hoc* mold that unexpectedly popped up in October/November 1999 with the University of Port Harcourt 'indirectly' affected.

One of the University of Port Harcourt host communities (i.e. Choba) was also the host community to an American company named Willbros Group, Incorporated. Towards the end of October, 1999 the community had dispute with Willbros over issues bordering on marginalization specifically that after about 37 years (as at 1999) of Willbros in Choba community, the community still remain alienated and underdeveloped. For about three days the women of the community blocked the gate to Willbros facilities in a visibly peaceful manner with canopy erected at the access gate facing the NTA road in Choba. Without any further provocation from the community besides the call from its leadership urging Willbros to implement the contents of the agreement earlier reached between the community and the

conglomerate, Willbros in connivance with the Rivers State government with Dr. Peter Odili as Governor opted for the use of brute force and the military was called in. For over a week the Nigerian soldiers in their characteristic manners engaged in a systematic sacking of Choba with umpteen deaths, properties and personal belongings of some residents destroyed, raping of women, indiscriminate arrests of indigenes and others human right abuses. Specifically Choba was gradually being decimated and turned into a ghost town. From our observation then, Choba community was gradually being suffocated out of existence. News reports on this macabre situation was extremely low as the conglomerate in conspiracy with the Rivers State government may have deployed their enormous powers to ‘cage’ these gruesome tragedy from finding its way into the different news rooms for the information of Nigerians and the global community. This incident coincided with the period I was the chairman of the University of Port Harcourt Branch of the Academic Staff Union. Furthermore, from what we observed from our undercover visits(night and day) and reports from displaced residents including students of this University in their thousands, the soldiers had become an ‘an army of occupation force’ and were far from being in a hurry to leave. We quickly established contacts with the leadership of the Choba Youths Council whose members had been chased out of the community and being hunted with some of them reportedly whisked to unknown destinations by the military. Those we could meet at a secret location (on a Friday evening I can still recall) were most accommodating and open, and were firm and convinced of their actions. From there, we rushed to Lagos and returned within the weekend using ‘night buses’ to arrange a press coverage for the Choba tragedy. Find below the report of the press coverage.

Continued from Page 19

equally matched.

The armed boys had, barricaded Boundary, which is the main entry point for those coming from Akoka road, Obafemi, CMS, Ojuelegba, Victoria Island and other parts of the state. Three other persons including two pregnant women were said to have been killed.

At about 6.30 a.m., the Egbura boys reportedly returned to Ajegunri where the traditional head of the area (Bale) and his family were "captured" and killed. His house was burnt while his household was made to watch the inferno.

Following an unsuccessful attempt to attack a Naval base where the fleeing boys took refuge, they quickly took a

When the devil descended

precaution as stern looking soldiers were quickly posted at the two adjoining gates of the army barracks nearby.

At about 2.30 p.m., this reporter was able to manoeuvre his way into the "no man's land" after offloading himself of his identity card.

Weapons-wielding troops were lined up for about a two-kilometre stretch close to the Ajegunri Police Station. The boys had divided themselves into groups. Some sets armed themselves with broken bottles and knives, others with dangerous weapons such as cutlasses, daggers, axes and the last group

with arms. Those with arms, some of who covered their faces with black clothing materials, were sighted at strategic positions sitting with their arms on their laps.

The situation changed around 4.10 p.m. when anti-riot policemen arrived the Ajegunri Police Station in 10 vehicles. They came in through the Mile 2/Akoka end of the road, thus circumventing the Boundary route where the rampaging boys held sway.

However, while the anti-riot policemen were routing the armed youths in Ajegunri, the Egbura boys had completely taken over

several parts of Mile 2 including the overhead bridge, hijacking vehicles in commando style.

Menstrua hurriedly made U-turns while commuters jumped down from vehicles and joined others fleeing to safety. It was a scene of confusion as the armed boys wearing red head ties and black waist bands, positioned themselves on the highways, commanding the drivers to park and off-load occupants.

Lerway came for inhabitants of Ajegunri on Tuesday morning when relative peace was restored by the anti-riot policemen who port-dut major streets in the

area in convoys of five limousine vehicles and about eight other vehicles belonging to the Rapid Response Squad (RRS).

Earlier on Monday evening, the Lagos State Governor had imposed a dusk to dawn curfew on the then volatile Ajegunri/Ifelodun local government, venue of the rampage which started on Friday.

The curfew announced by the governor, Mr. Bola Tinubu held from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. in the affected areas.

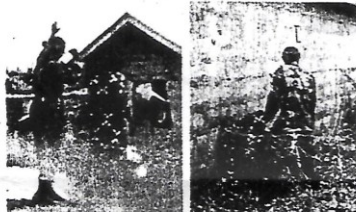
The governor expressed sadness "that this kind of disturbing development can occur in Lagos State, which has established an enviable

FEATURES

reputation over the years as a peaceful melting pot of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. What is happening is certainly not in the best interest of this state. There can be no democracy without peace. Economic growth and development cannot take place in a violent environment. We cannot attract much needed foreign investment through thuggery and bloodshed."

At about 2 p.m. on Tuesday when the state governor and his entourage which included the police commissioner, Mr. Isiah Okoro and his deputy in charge of operations in Lagos State visited the affected areas, they were shocked at the carnage. At a stage, Tinubu became momentarily speechless and was just nodding with mouth agape.

Community alleges rape by soldiers



A woman being beaten by a soldier

The women being raped by the soldier



Another woman being flogged

The woman being raped by the soldier

ADEWALE ADEOYE
EMBATTLED natives of Choba community in the Akoka end of Rivers State have alleged incessant raping of their young ladies and even married women by soldiers posted to maintain peace after days of violent uprising by youths in the troubled community.

The leaders of the community, backed with alleged victims of the bizarre incidences, spoke to our correspondent in Choba on Thursday. "Not less than 25 of our women have been raped. The incidence goes on everyday. Women are being forced out of their homes and taken to secluded areas where soldiers rape them. Dr. Lucky Akarueze, Chairman of the University of Port Harcourt branch of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) at the University of Port Harcourt told our correspondent on Thursday.

The President of Ikumaka Development Organisation, Richard Ihunwa, was one of the most enraged.

According to him his relation, a middle-aged mother in late forties, was later raped by one of the soldiers after she had been tortured and humiliated.

"I watched the scene from a distance. Three soldiers pounced on her. After subduing her,

one of them undressed, tore her undies and it is a walling Ihunwa said, mopping a stream of tears from his eyes.

Trouble began barely a week ago when Choba youths, fuelled by feelings of neglect, rose in anger against Wilbros Nigeria Limited, a multinational oil subsidiary company located in the community.

Protesters, including a constable bus belonging to the company were said to have been destroyed by the youths. Authorities first dispatched policemen to the trouble-spot, but when the riot could not be stemmed, soldiers were later called to intervene.

While the Choba community alleges rape and brutality, the state governor, Mr. Peter Odia, has cautioned against youths expressing their grievances in a civilised manner. The youths also claimed that no fewer than 10 members of the community have been killed, including a lady and student of the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT).

The Head of Public Relations at UNIPORT, Williams Wodi told our correspondent that the school "is aware of allegations of rape and that a student of UNIPORT was killed, noting that the school authority would investigate the matter."

But to the local folks, the alleged cases of

rape remain the most infuriating. Mrs Lucy Morike, 26, who alleged she was raped, said she was dragged away from her room by armed soldiers who raped her in the presence of her children.

"The whole community is aware of my situation. Many of them saw me when I was being raped by armed soldiers, as I cannot hide it anymore. I will carry the cross until I die," she told our correspondent late night on Thursday.

According to Ihunwa, "the victims of rape have to choose between death and rape. Those who choose rape lose their dignity, those who gain their dignity lose their lives."

Authorities at the Wilbros company were reluctant in granting a request for interview last week. When our correspondent visited the company located at the seaside of the ancient community, leader of the five-man team of soldiers guarding the company, said Wilbros authorities could not wish to speak with the press on the issue.

Though the Choba community, a clan in the 14 million Ijaw ethnic "nationality" has hosted Wilbros for over 30 years, the recent event perhaps was the worst in the decade long feud between the two.

Akarueze however said the army authorities who moved soldiers mostly of

northern origin into the state, should be held responsible for the "bizarre brutalisation of the Choba people."

He called on President Olusegun Obasanjo to immediately order the withdrawal of the soldiers, saying the development "negates the principle of democracy." According to him, the development in Choba confirms the fear of rape by soldiers which has been a common cry of the preceding communities.

Part of the events that led to the violent crisis in Choba was the demand that Wilbros should employ more Choba indigenes into its 3,510 workforce.

An agreement to generate better understanding with the oil producing community was signed on September 17 between Wilbros and the 35 Choba community leaders. The agreement, made available to our correspondent, promised to employ more Choba indigenes into the company.

But the recent crisis might make that a far-fetched dream. However, an official of Wilbros who later spoke on phone to our correspondent but preferred anonymity said "We are not responsible for the coming of the soldiers. Wilbros properties when threatened, by anybody can be protected under the law."

See below the newspaper report as transcribed

ADEWALE ADEOYE

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An agreement to generate better understanding with the oil producing communities was signed **on September 17** between Wilbros and the 35 who community leader. The agreement, made available to our correspondent promised to employ more Choba indigenes into the company.

But the recent crisis might make that a far-fetched dream. However an official of Wilbros who later spoke on phone (0 (Jut' correspondent but preferred anonymity said.; "We not responsible for the coming of the soldiers. Wilbros properties when threatened by anybody can be protected under the law".

When this newspaper publication came out, the Rivers State government and the Defense Headquarters, Abuja were no doubt shaken and enraged; and respectively resorted to denial accompanied with relentless vitriolic propaganda accusing Lucky Akaruese of the University of Port Harcourt of malicious fabrications and that the published photographs were simply manufactured. Such venomous ranting and official propaganda designed for a cover up, and arising from frustration from the State government and Defense Headquarters that tolerated criminality made no meaning to me, more so that I was comfortably protected in my University. Within a week of the publication, the 'occupation force' was totally withdrawn and relief came to Choba and environ. The Rivers State House of Assembly on its part (faking neutrality) set up an *ad hoc* House Committee to investigate the Choba incident. For whatever reason, instead of communicating with me directly or through the University, the House Committee opted for radio announcements through relentlessly advertorials and news items to invite me to appear before it with Hon. (now Senator) Magnus Abe as chairman. I actually appeared on a different date before the

Committee only to insist on my call for a Judicial Commission of Enquiry into the incident as I had no confidence in the Rivers State Government, including the House of Assembly. Whatever may have eventually been the outcome and findings of the House Committee remain unknown to me till this day. In another dimension, through the efforts of some Ikwere groups like the Ikwere Rescue Organization led by a comrade, Uche Okwukwu (a human right activist and a lawyer) a team from the National Assembly led by Hon. Chebudum Nwuche (then Deputy Speaker of the Federal House of Representatives) visited Choba Community for an on the spot assessment. The Federal legislators also visited unique University of Port Harcourt, and after their courtesy on the Vice Chancellor, I had a brief informal talk with the committee.

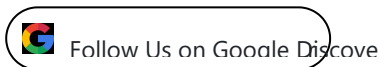
Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the specifics of our activities in the social space are multifarious and what we have so far touched are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg. As an academic and a philosopher of the organic mold, will have the firm belief that every academic (particularly in such societies as ours that are educationally, economically and developmentally distraught has the inherent moral and professional obligation to be concern about the society and particularly the direction it should go. I do not subscribe that as an academic, I should wittingly or otherwise recuse myself from the social movements and going-on in my community, society, region, country and even the world as a social space and later turn round to complain and grumble over the activities of those determining the pace. The evolvment and presence of social spaces are multifarious and variegated and, academics should not isolate themselves and must be prepared to be involved, including taking the lead, irrespective of the costs.

The news items and photographs below culled from different social media platforms epitomize our conception of social space and the different forms of involvement.

‘Call for interim government, an agenda of anti-democratic elements’

By : Kehinde Olatunji **Date:** 13 April 2023 4:08am WAT

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Chairman of the group, Prof. Lucky Akaruese, in an address read by the Secretary, Prof. Sylvester Odion Akhaine, during a media briefing, said other proponents of the interim contraption were doing so to ambush democracy.

Akaruese said that it was regrettable that after over two decades of democracy, the country is still grappling with basic democratic principles, which if not properly handled and effectively checked, have the potential to set the country back into the dark days of military dictatorship.

He said many of those who are today parading themselves as politicians and group leaders and threatening Nigeria’s nascent democracy without regard to the rule of law did not play any role during Africa seeks global investment to bridge infrastructure deficit

The group, therefore, urged the incoming administration of the president-elect, Asiawaju Bola Tinubu, to address poverty, unemployment, insecurity, separatist agitation, debt overhang, corruption, poor infrastructure and “skewed” power distribution.

On his part, Special Adviser to Babajide Sanwo-Olu on Drainage and Water Resources, Joe Igbokwe, said: “It’s not going to happen (interim government). We are witnesses of history and we won’t allow what happened in 1993 to repeat itself. The interim government was initiated from the section of the country I come from and it’s the same section calling for it again. Interim government will not happen.”

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NEWS ☐ EPAPER METRO SPORT LIFE

☐ TECH GTV OPINION



Niger Delta leaders demand republic for region
By : Anietie Akpan, Deputy Bureau Chief, South South
Date: 25 June 2022 5:06am WAT **Share :** ☐ ☐ ☐
☐ ☐

Some leaders of the Niger Delta have demanded granting of selfdetermination to their region to take total control of its resources and end years of alleged exploitation, deprivation and slavery of their people in the Nigerian state.

The leaders, who lamented that the people of the Niger Delta had been talking and agitating for resource control and restructuring of the country through conferences but to no avail, said the time had come for them to take their destiny in their hands.

In a keynote address at a conference by the Niger Delta Alternative Convergence (NDAC) to endorse the eight-point demand in the “Niger Delta Manifesto for Socio Ecological Justice” in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State on Thursday, former Chairman, Editorial Board of The Guardian, Prof. G. G. Darah said: “From the challenges we are facing in the Niger Delta region, we seem to assume that the Federal Government is on our side whereas the Federal Government is the number one enemy of the Niger Delta.

“Today, people are anxious to be the president of Nigeria because there is the Niger Delta oil for them to squander. What this means is that the political system is all organised for taking control of the oil money, to share it among the friends of the president. All the parties are organised gangs to loot and plunder the Niger Delta resources.

“That is the country we are in, therefore we must assume that whatever government that comes to office in 2023 will not be different from the past ones since 1960. Nigeria has been designed to steal our resources and share. They gather monthly in Abuja to share the money. All our presidents, now and past, occupied office for the purpose of plundering our resources, otherwise our own son would have done something. Jonathan, when he was president, had no capacity to touch any bad section of the constitution against the Niger Delta”.

According to Darah, “Nigeria exists today because of Niger Delta oil and Nigeria is the only country in the world that has colonised its people.

“Now we are pleading that the Federal Government should implement the manifesto. We have to do it by ourselves because if you look at history, it is not today that our people have been fighting against injustice. Jonathan called for a national

conference and all the issues raised could not be implemented. So what we are doing now is the authentication of the national conference for Nigerian people.

“The structure of Nigeria is against us and to build a new Nigeria will take time. We need a Niger Delta that will be in charge of its own resources and aim to be a country of its own, a sovereign country. Some ethnic groups in the Niger Delta are bigger than some European countries and our ancestors in their grave will not forgive us that we Activist urges FG to review framework for pipeline surveillance Prof. Lucky Akaruese of the Ishekiri nationality aligned with the position of Darah, noting that many countries of the world like Easttimor and Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia, Denmark and Norway, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union that split into many countries are products of negotiations, so the Niger Delta and Nigeria cannot be an exception.

A prominent traditional ruler from Rivers State backed the demand for a sovereign state.

“I agree with Prof. Darah that we should clamour for Niger Delta Republic and the manifesto we are signing today, we should speak with one voice. We have been talking and now it is only action that will bring result. There is nothing the Niger Delta has gotten without struggle. The manifesto will remain a document if we do not put it to action. The Pan-Niger Delta Forum (PANDEF) presented a 16-point agenda but only two were implemented. So we need to take a deliberate action on some of the issues we raise here.”

The convener of NDAC and Executive Director of Health of Mother Earth Foundation (HOMEF), Comrade Nnimmo Bassey said: “The convergence also aims to produce an inclusive Niger Delta Manifesto for SocioEcological Justice highlighting needed alternatives for transformation and social mobilizations for

resource justice. It is hoped that NDAC will provoke a platform for convergence of communities in the region to galvanise action for needed changes for re-source access, including through demands for legislative changes, debates on the Petroleum Industry Bill and for critical attainment of re-source democracy – defined as the right of a people to live in harmony with nature and to retain a right to use, or not use, the gifts of nature.”

He stated that 64 years of oil extraction had brought untold misery and cut life abysmally low in the region.

“Things cannot continue this way. We have demands and resolves in the proposed Niger Delta Manifesto shared to delegates. Let’s all rise to be counted, demand that politicians declare their environmental plans before they gain our votes. Let us demand real climate action, including a halt to gas flaring and a restoration of our ecosystems. Let us demand action to stall the washing away of our communities. After 64 years of a nightmare, it is time to wake up, it is time to demand socio-ecological justice. We are not calling for charity, we are calling for justice” .

Former governor of Akwa Ibom State, Obong Victor Attah and the National Chairman of PANDEF, Senator Ibok Essien clamoured for restructuring and total control of resources. They pleaded with the people of the region to get their PVCs to vote people that will carry out restructuring of the country.

Nigeria: Niger Delta - Whither Technical Committee Report?

Vanguard (Lagos) (<http://www.vanguardngr.com/>)²⁶
MAY 2009

By Okey Ndiribeh

minority groups in the Niger Delta- with in the wider context of the region's quest for a resolution of the pervasive crisis that has rocked the area- resurfaced at a forum where it was least expected recently. It took just one question from Dr. Lucky Akaruese, a lecturer at the University of Port Harcourt for all who were present to appreciate the fears of the Itsekiri nationality in Delta State. The question Akaruese had asked

Ledum Mitee- Chairman of the Federal Government's Technical Committee on the Niger Delta (TCND) - at the forum was: " Don't you think some bigger ethnic groups in the region would see themselves as synonymous with Niger Delta if the recommendations of the Technical Committee are implemented?"

The murmuring generated by the question Dr Akaruese asked was yet to subside when Dr. Mrs Umukoro fired her own salvo in which she posed the question of what is to be done by the TCND regarding the widows and children who lost their parents to the violence in the region.

Nigeria: Re: the Battle for the Soul of Lagos State

This Day (Lagos) (<http://www.thisdaylive.com/>)
2004

27 SEPTEMBER

OPINION

By Ayodele Adewale

Lagos — My attention has been drawn to a feature story written by some writers on the political desk of the ThisDay Newspaper edition of Monday, September 13, 2004.

In a desperate attempt to re-write living history, Nigerians have been told by the feature in Paragraph 8 that, following the annulment of the June 12, Presidential Elections, there " was a time when some politicians like Senator Tokunbo Afikuyomi had to go abroad to ensure their safety, just as Senator Musiliu Obanikoro who held the home turf bring meaning to the struggle and efforts of those abroad". For emphasis, the same point was reiterated in Paragraph 18 of the same piece as, "while Afikuyomi was in exile, Musiliu Obanikoro joined forces with pro-democracy activists on ground in Nigeria. Now, let us even venture into the truth content of the paragraphs quoted above. Was there a time Senator Musiliu Obanikoro joined forces with pro-democracy activists on

ground in Nigeria? Thank goodness, the likes of Dr. Beko Ransome-kuti, Olisa Agbakoba, Chief Gani Fawehinmi, Femi Falana, Chima Ubani, Sylvester Odion-Akhaine, Abiodun Aremu, Bamidele Aturu, Joe Okei-

Odumakin, Mayegun Olusegun, Ebun-Olu Adegboruwa, Jiti Ogunye, Jaiye Opayemi, Prof. Toye Olorode, Dr. Dipo Fashina, Dr. Osagie Obayuwana, Dr. Frederich Faseun, Comrade Lucky Akaruese, Wale Balogun, Shina Loremikan, Debo Adeniran and a host of other foot soldiers of the Nigerian democratic struggle are still alive and probably read the piece and are reading this first reaction. I challenge Senator Musiliu Obanikoro to name those Pro-democracy activists with whom he joined forces to hold the home turf as the write-up would want us to believe. He should please disclose where their meetings were held. For someone like Afikuyomi who was one of the objects of attack, the meeting places were either Best Hope Hospital, Mushin or Century Hotel, Okota both owned by Dr. Frederich Faseun or 6/8 Imaria Street, Anthony Village, the Secretariat of the Campaign for Democracy (CD) and the residence of Beko Ransome-Kuti. It may interest Senator Obanikoro to know that, after a lobby session held on the controversial Labour Bill at Hearing Room 3 of the House of Representatives on Tuesday August 31, 2004, Dr. Beko Ransome-Kuti had confessed not knowing Senator Obanikoro to an aide of one of the legislators and requested to be helped to identify him should he be seen within the precinct of the National Assembly.



On the streets of Port Harcourt with other comrades during the 'Occupy Nigeria' protests against the removal of 'fuel subsidy' in January, 2012.



In the Presidential Villa, Abuja, during a meeting of the Leadership Itsekiri National Youths Council with former the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo in my capacity as the then patron of the youth body.



Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, this University in my estimation from its records within the context of academic freedom has the potential to gravitate towards the realm of an ideal university within the context of its available resources. Thus I suggest that the university must be jealously guarded against the inordinate ambition and propensity for lawlessness and selfishness by any individual or group, particularly if within. Assuming any assault on any law, convention, value and rule is being orchestrated from outside, it will be easy to be confronted with the combined efforts of all that are within including the unions to protect the University. But if such assault is orchestrated and executed from within, it could then be difficult particularly if for whatever reason the Vice Chancellor would not want to stir the proverbial “hornet’s nest”. Let’s for example take a cursory look at the University law and the self-invested activities of the Committee of Provost and Deans;

UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT ACT THIRD SCHEDULE
[Section 10 (3).]

University of Port Harcourt Statute No.1 *Section 8*

(5) There shall be a committee to be known as the Committee of Deans consisting of all the Deans of the several faculties and that committee shall advise the Vice-Chancellor on all academic matters and on particular matters referred to the University Council by Senate.

Find below clear evidence of the illegal activities of the Committees of Provosts and Deans

2/23/25, 11:44 PM

Committee of Provost and Dean.jpeg

**UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR**

MEMORANDUM

From: Registrar	To: Provost, Deans and HODs
Ref: UPH/REG/30	
Date: 19 th June, 2025	

DECISION OF COMMITTEE OF PROVOST AND DEANS AT ITS 422ND MEETING (EMERGENCY)

At its 422nd Meeting (Emergency) held on Thursday, June 19, 2025, the Committee of Provost and Deans (CPD) decided as follows:

- That there will be a Combined Convocation of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 Academic Sessions.
- The Chairman, Degree Result Verification Committee (DRVC) should have a conference vetting of the sixteen (16) Departments results in processing and the outstanding five (5) departments.
- The Departments that their degree results are already with the DRVC should pick them for photocopying between Thursday, June 19, 2025 and Monday, June 22, 2025 and submit to Academic Office.

The above decisions of the Committee of Provost and Deans are hereby conveyed to you for your information and necessary action.

Thank you.



Mrs. Gloria O. Chindah, PhD

**UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT
PORT HARCOURT**

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Registrar	To: Provost, CHS
REF. NO: UPH/ADMS/10	Deans of Faculties/School Heads/Ag. Heads of Department
DATE: May 2, 2018	

**DECISIONS OF COMMITTEE OF PROVOST AND DEANS ON:
(I) OUTSTANDING 2016/2017 SESSION 2ND SEMESTER RESULTS
(II) 2016/2017 DEGREE RESULTS**

At its 371st Meeting held on Wednesday, May 2, 2018, the Committee of Provost and Deans (CPD) deliberated on the request by the Student Affairs Department for Senate approved Degree Results for the 2016/2017 session, to enable them to complete NYSC mobilization exercise before May 20, 2018.

After due deliberation, in view of the urgency on the matter, the Committee of Provost and Deans decided that:

1. all outstanding second semester results for 2016/2017 session must be turned in, through the Academic Office to the Vice-Chancellor, on or before Friday, May 4, 2018.
2. the names of the Lecturers with outstanding second semester results of 2016/2017 session, should be compiled by the Heads /Ag. Heads of Department and through their respective Provost/Dean, forwarded to the Vice-Chancellor by Friday, May 11, 2018 for necessary action.
3. all Departments and Faculties should convene their Boards on or before Friday, May 11, 2018, for the consideration and approval of 2016/2017 Degree Results. The approved results are to be submitted immediately to the Degree Results Verification Committee (DRVC), accompanied with the list of the non-graduating students and the reason(s) for their non-graduation.
4. the 2016/2017 Degree Results duly considered and recommended by the Departmental and Faculty Boards, and signed by the Chairman, Degree Results Verification Committee (DRVC) and be submitted to the Academic Office on or before Tuesday, May 15, 2018.

The above Decisions of the Committee of Provost and Deans are hereby conveyed to you for your information and necessary action please.

Thank you.


Mrs. Dorcas D. Otto

Cc: Vice-Chancellor and Chairman
Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Admin]
Deputy Vice-Chancellor [Acad]
Deputy Registrar Academic

Chairman, Senate Business Committee
Chairman, Degree Results Verification Committee
College Secretary/Faculty Officers

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, let's take a cursory look at the two documents issued by the Committee of Provost and Dean as above and relate each to the letters and spirit of the section of the law that created the Committee as earlier cited. Both documents no doubt demonstrate arbitrariness and absurdity on the part of the Committee who opted to remain oblivious of its limit. Shockingly, the University for whatever reason has opted for

mute indifference while the committee thrives in ultra-illegality. It should be noted that it is only the Chairman of Senate that can legally and legitimately act on behalf of Senate, and afterward report to Senate which successive chairpersons of Senate including the incumbent are never in default of. I strongly suggest that before the Committee cause further harm to the system, Senate should take the necessary steps to remedy the situation and instruct the Committee to limit itself to only ‘advising’ the Vice-Chancellor and desist from such unhealthy meddlesomeness, even to such ridiculous extent of willfully breaching the University law.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, there is a dimension in the day to day running of this University bordering on financial accountability in the faculties and academic departments that has consistently bothered me. I know that Vice-Chancellors are accountable to the Governing Council of the University to which they are obliged to give records of the finances of the University to, yet they would not ensure that similar process be replicated in departments and faculties. In my private reflection, I have often wondered why successive Vice-Chancellors have wittingly opted for this untidy path of not informing members of the respective departmental and faculty boards on remitted subventions to the respective departments and faculties. Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, what kind of policy is this that can willfully encourage the privatization of faculty and departmental funds by individuals? In the same vein, monies that will usually accrue through non-statutory collections, sales of brochures amongst others that are carried out in the respective faculties and departments has always remain within the private knowledge of these ‘managers’ of departments and faculties.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, when a valedictorian in this same venue in December, 2025 rhetorically informed that Deans of Faculties and Heads of Departments ‘live in luxury’ at the expense of their

colleagues; let it be noted that he was not too far from the obvious. Between 2003-2005 when I was the Ag. Head, Department of Philosophy, I espoused the principle of openness such that my then colleagues in the department were never kept in the dark as to the financial position of the department. The blame for this unfortunate anomaly whereby Heads of Departments and Deans remain totally unaccountable to their respective boards on issues bordering on finances rest on the laps of successive Vice-Chancellors, and the reason(s) they (i.e. successive Vice-Chancellors) remain comfortable with such opaque, immoral and indefensible policy can never be for the general good of the University. A change should be considered, and urgently too! It is my humble suggestion that a policy should be emplaced by the Vice-Chancellor whereby Heads of Departments and Deans of Faculties remain obligated as a matter of University guideline to keep members of both boards of studies abreast of the state of their (i.e. departments and faculties) respective finances, specifically incomes and expenditure, so that public funds are not taken for private ownership. The model of financial accountability espoused in the management of the finances of the University of Port Harcourt branch of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) remain worthy of emulation in the department and faculties. Least, I stand the risk of being misinterpreted specifically that I am alleging that all deans and heads of departments administer these funds in opaque manner. There could be some of these ‘managers’ that could be humane including espousing the ideals of a university as a ‘community of equals’. Let’s recall an information that got to Senate sometimes in 2023 after the University remitted subventions to all the faculties whereby it was reported that the then Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at a meeting with all the heads of the department in the faculty informed them of the subvention. About the same time, something similar happened in the Department of Philosophy. The issue here is whether their respective successors espoused such morality and policy.

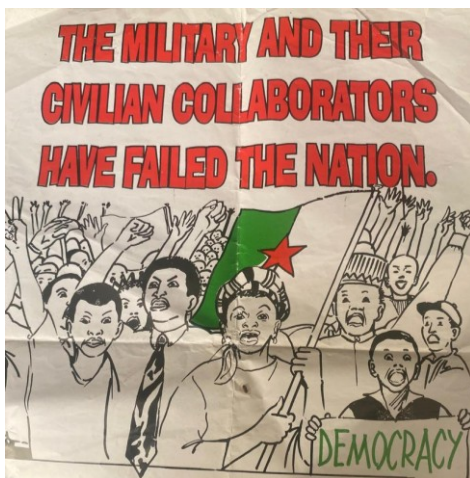
Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, we can comfortably assume that it was an oversight and not deliberate that successive Vice-Chancellors including your humble self never put in place the policy of informing members of department and faculty boards of studies anytime subventions were remitted to these respective arms of the University. Sir, let us equally assume that it was not an intended omission that during the administration of your immediate predecessor when the non-statutory collection policy was emplaced (a beautiful and ingenious policy no doubt), and that accompanying relevant safeguard mechanisms were not emplaced to check possible ‘maggotization’ by those that will in future be in charge of these monies; and since then no significant issue of distraught has been raised by anyone concerning the administration of these funds by their successive managers. Now it has for the second time been differently raised and you have so heard from valedictorians. Sir, you have only two alternatives: either you willfully condoned and romance a presence that offers no future for the University, or you opt to be on the side of morality, probity and integrity for you to be on the right side of history. As you may contemplate on what to do, I wish you well.

As I will in few hours from this very moment be blotted out from the staff membership notebook of the University of Port Harcourt and consequently bid goodbye to the wonderful Senate of the University, permit me to humbly suggest to Senate members that it should not allow its electoral function to be subtly undermined in whatever form. For example, a situation whereby some candidates presented to Senate for the contest for Vice Chancellorship positions will at the time of voting decline to contest for whatever reason is in my view discomfiting, awkward and insulting to the integrity and sensibilities of the august body. Senate should regulate itself and draw up relevant guidelines to check this practice of mischief so as not turn itself into a platform for wilful moles amongst Senate members to practice their trades. Democratic practices remain ensconced on

the availability of choices for voters and once that choice is deliberately taken away, democracy remain assaulted.

REMINISCENCE AND CONCLUSION

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I have opted to be brief in terms of our actions and activities in the different social spaces that we found ourselves from 1986- 2023. Such activities in Libya, the Himalayas and Brazil will be stepped down and reserve for the future. No doubt, some of our activities were audacious to the point of absurdity in our quest to contribute positively to the different social spaces that we found ourselves. Our ideals and beliefs goaled us into such. We and umpteen others (with many killed in the process) confronted the military in our quest for the enthronement of democratic engagements in Nigeria. The ‘democracy’ indeed came in 1999 and many of us up till now remain confused over what democracy is all about in relation to the living conditions of majority of citizens.



Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, the above photograph is a specimen of posters we deployed during our struggle to remove the military from political power. Now that there is ‘democracy’, it thus behooves us to evolve new wordings to convey another form of

message as a way of engaging the Nigerian peoples. What then should be the contents of such message that will suit today's political and economic realities? In all honesty, we are still contemplating, and we need assistance! Any hope for Nigeria?



Mr. Vice-Chancellor sir, in the process of my reminiscences and specifically reflecting on the University of Port Harcourt, I came across the above photograph. The ASUU football team then may have been the best team Nigeria never had. It might interest you and some colleagues present here to note that by tomorrow 4th March, 2026 only two of the fifteen persons in the photograph will remain as staff of the University of Port Harcourt. This perfectly demonstrate the temporality of existence and all that we do.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor Sir, I am done and I thank you sir.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of his spirit, washed in his blood*

Refrain:

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my savior all day long,
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my savior all the day long*

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Citation



PROFESSOR LUCKY ORITSETOJUMI AKARUESE

B.A, M.A, (IFE); Ph.D. (UNN), FPAN, MAPS, MFISP, MNAL.

Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities

Lucky Oritsetojumi Akaruese was born on the 3rd of March, 1956 in Nanna Town, Koko, in the present Warri North Local Government Council Area of Delta State, Nigeria. He attended the Local Authority Primary School, Koko, Academy (now Okotie-Eboh) Secondary Grammar School Sapele where he obtained his West African School Certificate in 1972. In 1974, he enrolled at the Institute of Continue Education, Benin City for his Higher School Certificate (HSC). In 1976, he was admitted into the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree (Philosophy/Sociology) in 1979. After his National Youth Service Corp, he was employed as classroom teacher in Iwere Grammar School, Koko and later rose to the position of Vice-Principal. In 1984 he returned back to his *alma mater* where he obtained the M.A. degree in Philosophy in

1986. He joined the then new Department of Philosophy, Cross River State University, Uyo (now University of Uyo) in 1986 as Assistant Lecturer and from there moved to the University of Port Harcourt in 1991. He obtained his PhD (Social Ethics) in 1999 from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Akaruese has grown through the ranks and he is currently a Professor in the Department of Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt. He has published extensively majorly in the area of Applied Philosophy.

From 1986-1991, he lectured at the then University of Cross River State (now University of Uyo), Uyo. He later moved to the University of Port Harcourt where he assumed duty in the Department of Philosophy, on the 21st of March, 1991, and will be going on statutory retirement with effect from tomorrow 4th March, 2026. Throughout his years of services to this University, he served as acting Head of the Department of Philosophy from 2003-2005; and was in 2021 elected into Appointments and Promotions Committee (SPATS) as Senate Representatives for a 2-year term.

He is a widely travelled academic who has visited all the Continents of the Globe, except Australia to share ideas with others.

Lucky Akaruese has served as onetime Financial Secretary, Vice Chairman and Chairman of the University of Port Harcourt Branch of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). He was among the pioneering members of Nigeria's Pro-Democracy and Human Rights' Movements during the military dictatorship of Generals Ibrahim Babangida and Late Sanni Abacha respectively. During this period, he held the following positions: Rivers State Secretary, Campaign for Democracy (CD); National Ex-Officio, Campaign for Democracy; National Vice Chairman, Campaign for Democracy; National Vice President, Committee for the Defense of Human Rights; National President, Committee for the Defense of Human Rights. Like some of his then compatriots, he

was at different times incarcerated and maliciously prosecuted; all of which came to end with the sudden death General Sanni Abacha.

Lucky Akaruese once served as member of the Delta State Technical Committee on the Niger Delta from 2009-2014; Member, Delta State Technical Committee on the Development of Oil Producing Communities from 2017-2019, and Member Presidential Committee on the Strategic Work for the Niger Delta in 2017. He is a member of the Advisory Board of the Nanna Living Museum, Koko, Delta State.

He was a Consultant to MPP3, a European Union Interventionist Agency in the Niger Delta, and was also a Consultant and Resource Person to the Swedish based Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, (IDEA). At different times he had visited the United Nations, New York, Indian Parliament, New Delhi and the World Bank, Washington DC on different assignments. He is a professorial assessor to many universities, and has been member of Accreditation Teams of the National University Commission (NUC).

He is a Fellow of Philosophers Association of Nigeria, Member-African Philosophy Society, Member- International Federation of Philosophy Societies and Member- Nigerian Academy of Letters

Lucky Akaruese is married to Mrs. Roli Emiko Akaruese and both are blessed with four children. He remains a committed advocate of the Marxist Political Model for governance in Nigeria.

Professor Owunari Abraham Georgewill
Vice-Chancellor