
AYATUTUISM: REMINISCING THE AKUME LEADERSHIP RECRUITMENT MODEL

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Your leaders have no respect for their people. They believe that their personal interests are the interests of the people. They take people's resources and turn it into personal wealth. There is a level of poverty in Nigeria that is unacceptable. I cannot understand why Nigerians are not angrier than they are. What do young Nigerians think about their leaders and their country and Africa? Do they teach them history? Do you have lessons on how your past leaders stood by us and gave us large amounts of money? You know I hear from Angolans and Mozambicans and Zimbabweans how your people opened their hearts and their homes to them. I was in prison then, but we know how your leaders punished western companies who supported apartheid. What about the corruption and the crimes? Your elections are like wars. Now we hear that you cannot be president of Nigeria unless you are a Muslim or Christian. Some people tell me your country may break. Please, don't let it happen.²

1. Introduction

The Mandela quip above is a representative state of leadership crisis in many African democracies. Observers of Nigerian politics have voiced similarly that, something is wrong with the nation, and that, something is wrong with anyone who says nothing is wrong with Nigeria. Today in Nigeria, the lack of capacity and ability to appreciate and grasp the salient details as well as the practical and temporal implications of leadership requirement has disconnected the leadership and the followership. This essay interrogates one of the major wrongs of Nigerian Politics namely, the problem of leadership recruitment. The Nigerian state has fallen from a formerly epistemic purity of the past and that, there is the conflict of “truth” and “facts” as opposed to falsehood. Poor leadership recruitment process has aided corruption, instilled the culture of propaganda, falsehood and created a huge gap between the anticipated gains of democracy and democracy dividends on ground. I argue further that the masses in Nigeria are like

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^{2.} Published interview reproduced as quoted by Jim Unah in Sunday Mirror, vol. 3 No. 54 December 22, 2013

boats on the volatile sea without a leadership guide and that, democratic consolidation in Nigeria suffers too often because of the problem of failure of leadership. Using critico-analytic approach, I submit that, the Nigerian governance culture appeals more to ethnic and religious supremacist tendencies than acceptable African values of solidarity and complementarity exemplified in *Ayatutu* leadership model which has the capacity to strengthen national institutions, manage diversities, establish and sustain a Nigeria worth living in and dying for. I argue the conclusion that this leadership model is by seeking the whole from the units foregrounded on mental magnitude, spiritual depth, selflessness and incorruptibility.

2. *AYATUTU: A Conceptual Labyrinth*

Ayatutu is a hyphenated word from the Tiv of Middle-Belt Nigeria, namely *aya-tutu* which means to eat - (*ya*) something that is hot - (*tutu*) or warm. It sometimes denotes eating something that has a high degree of heat or a high temperature or eating hot food containing pungent spices or peppers which produce burning sensation. Used as a communitarian ontology, *Ayatutu* refers to a way of life of a community, a people or ethnic nationality who as it were, are cultured in eating hot or warm food. *Aya-tutu* suggests a philosophical symphony, echoing with the timeless melodies of courage, justice, and the quest for truth. Its fundamental ontology encapsulates the metaphysical and epistemological characterization of the Tiv people with a communitarian philosophy of oneness and an indivisible wholeness. This is captured by the Tiv thus, *Ka tem Imiongo Mbagbera ve fe -iwa i-varen ye*, meaning, it is through communal living that *Mbagbera* Clan of Tiv nation developed the art of Blacksmith. Similarly, *Ijough-zwa ne Bem*, that is, cooperation or togetherness breeds peace and unity. A Chinese proverb best captures this idea thus: *When a man is at peace with himself, he will be at peace with his family. When the families are at peace there will be peace in the villages. When the villages are at peace there will be peace in the country. When all the countries are at peace there will be peace in the world.* The logic here is that, dependence and interdependence of every person in the community accounts for the preservation of *be-ing* as a wholeness. The overriding ideology being the subservience of the *self* (I) to the *other* (We). What these conversations signify is that, the Tiv worldview is holistic and inclusive of the *other*; a *not-self* and a *self* to extent that the self (an) I, as an individual person is by his insufficiency emptied into the group “they”. This is explained in the Tiv chorus *Ayatutu ka-u-no?* meaning, who are those that are cultured to eat hot food? The response is always that *Ayatutu Ka Se* meaning, we, (the Tiv) are the ones).

This quest for identity suggests that, communitarianism as a philosophy of life is inscribed on Tiv

identity and that, *Tiv* beliefs and desires, encourage us to unclutter our minds of false beliefs and misguided desires to *seek the whole from the units* and that, this ontology assumes the primacy of the reality of the communal world over and above the reality of individual life. It highlights individual capacities and abilities as important qualities in growing communal norms that eventually help the individual persons to acquire ethical maturity. In *Ayatutu* therefore, the idea of communal living in *Tiv* has intrinsic value, that is, that life grows more meaningfully in solidarity with other members of the community. Thus, the human capacity to commune with one another aids the development of a reliable disposition for character formation, communion of minds and the promotion of long-term relationships. This explains the communal conception of personhood as what is acquired through participation in communal life as the individual persons discharge their various moral obligations in the community. Through *Ayatutu*, with *Ayatutu* and in *Ayatutu*, the totality of the community validates humanity. *Tiv* orature captures this in proverbs thus: *angbian ka wan kpan ga* – a brother is not a slave, *Uma ka orjime*- Life (humanity) is fellow-feeling, *angbian ka nan lu sha pungwa uya ieren* – when a brother is on a tree-top (in control of affairs) you eat ripe fruits (you share in the benefits). *Ka a ta ikyur mngerem ikpe tswar yol* – when you wash the vagina, the anus also benefits. These expressions validate the position that the existence of another-self, not-self, allows the possibility or recognition of a self. The point at issue here is that, humanity grows through interdependence of persons in the community.

In *Tiv* ontology then, the human person does not exist spatially as to be disconnected from other *beings or persons*, but as a *being-in-the-world*, i.e.; inhabiting harmoniously alongside and in relationship with other *beings or persons-in-the-community* as a united phenomenon, object inside the other object. Thus, anything that exists serves a missing link of reality. It suffices to reason here that, in their individual capacities as units, he/she is incomplete or a missing link that essentially need other persons in complimentary roles to make him/her a whole phenomenon. Here reasoned, *Ayatutu* ontology is manifested in the principle *Ya Na Angbian*³ as an enabler of the whole. The informed idea here is that, in our limited selves and nothingness, every other person needs every other person to make a whole, a somethingness, a continuity and completeness of humanity in all spheres of existence. In *Tiv* thought system therefore, *Ayatutu* ontology evolved as part of a dynamic and creative dialectic that unveils the communal code of solidarity and integration that views all human actions as geared towards the complete joy of humanity.

³. This subset of *Ayatutu* shall be given full discussion under *Ayatutuism: The Akume Dajo Leadership Maze*

This ontology speaks about the wholeness man; humaneness, gentleness, hospitality, empathy or taking trouble for others, deep kindness, friendliness, generosity, vulnerability, toughness, compassion, for the *Tiv* therefore, the human person is the totality of human needs, interests and dignity of the otherness than the self. The summation here is that the human person embodies full expression through the collectivity of other persons in the community. While humanity (Nigerians in particular), may be excused of its ignorance of human interdependence, there glorification of same is a vice.

3. Understanding the Nigerian Leadership Recruitment Crisis

The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. There is nothing basically wrong with the Nigeria character. There is nothing wrong with the Nigerian land or climate or water or anything else. The Nigerian problem is the unwillingness or inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example which is the hallmark of true leadership...⁴

The informed thinking only reminds us that, Nigeria is one of the unfinished national projects of the twentieth century. Understanding the current crisis in Nigerian polity entails a critical and diachronic analysis our socio-cultural history. In Bewaji's view, present Nigerian leadership is in mind and body with the leadership style of the colonial ruler-group who did not mix with the indigenous Nigerians. The inheritors of power at independence according to him, were (Nigerian) rulers who descended from an elite group who were distant from the people they governed. They were products of Western educational centers who claim that the indigenous peoples were uneducated, poor illiterates and common masses. In their ignorance selves, they became aliens in their own countries thus instituting a culture of leadership dislocation in Africa.⁵

In African indigenous societies, there are clear-cut methodologies of instructing youths in the ethos and mores of their culture. There are also careful mechanisms for nurturing and elevating people to take leadership positions in the traditional societies. Those to whom leadership will devolve (albeit hereditary) are carefully selected, groomed and instructed in the ways of the culture of their societies in wait for the esteemed positions they are prepared to assume. In fact, it

⁴. Achebe, Achebe, C. *The Trouble with Nigeria*. 1966:50

⁵. It's very clear that western education assaulted the African intellect, permanently corrupting and compromising his mental, moral, epistemic and ontological foundations of indigenous cultures. This form of education enslaves and deletes one's entire real and authentic elements of traces of indigenous cultures. As a conquered people and descendants of a conquered people, Nigerians have always hankered after the ways and lives of their western conquerors and superiors

was the responsibility of all the leaders of thought in societies to properly bring up those who would lead.

This traditional leadership culture gave birth to the great civilizations which tamed the Nile, created the Great Desert Art and engineered their economies through groundnut pyramids in Kano, developed the cocoa industry in the west, prospered the Tiv of central Nigeria with yam bans and energized the nation with coal in Eastern Nigeria.

Unfortunately, these giant strides died with the colonization and enslavement of Africa, creating a leadership vacuum which all forms of charlatans now fill by default. What Nigeria needs today most is a leadership philosophy that abhors ethnic entrepreneurship and religious bigotry. This calls for a carefully developed leadership recruitment process to ensure that leadership is imbued with humility, knowledge and wisdom.

A peep into our leadership history shows that, in polygamous families, those who initially went to the white man's school were first, the children of wives that were not very loved/liked by the husbands; children who were regarded as lazy and who showed a proclivity toward indolence; children who showed evidence of being cantankerous, disrespectful, disobedient and dishonest, and slaves and or that they were from the dregs of the family who in the thinking of the house holders were sent to the white man's school to waste and die away as invalids.⁶

It was this crop of people without leadership credentials that eventually inherited the reins of power. For these *Kakistocrats* (the unfit to rule), power became an end in itself primarily, and secondarily as a means of accessing state funds for personal selfish use. They soon reduced themselves to what Soyinka referred to as “wasted generation” but which I prefer to call wasting generation who as it were, pursued public interest for private advantage. Moreover, the quality and content of education received by these pathfinders and the skills they acquired were merely such that will serve only but the self-interest of Her Majesty.⁷ Expectedly, these educated Nigerians were firstly, unable to understand the concept of public life and public property, as they

^{6.} John Ayotunde Bewaji has argued this point powerfully that inheritors of the Nigerian Leadership were members of the society who had no proper education, upbringing, humility and patience. According to Bewaji, these crop of leaders became the worst irony that afflicted their society with poor leadership. See Culture, Poverty and Civil Society: A Critical Analysis of Aspects of Leadership in Africa and its Diaspora” In: Sola Akinrinade, Dipo Fasina, David O. Ogungbile, *The Humanities, Nationalism and Democracy* Ile-Ife, Faculty of Arts, Obafemi Awolowo University, Pp. 54-86

^{7.} Ayotunde Bewaji op.cit. p. 74

were not disposed tousing public property, especially public funds with diligence and propriety. Secondly, they were unable to separate their private income from public funds, seeing opportunities to serve as opportunities to embezzle public funds with impunity. Thirdly, they were unable to recognize the difference between the tactics and stratagems that gained their societies independence. Fourthly, they were unable to see that leadership is a call to service and finally, they were not prepared for the task of nation-building.

It is not strange then that, the contemporary Nigerian state is today decadent, cerebrally diminutive, innately corrupt, morally bankrupt, spiritually and culturally retrogressive. This of course explains why Nigeria has been differentiated on grounds of ethnic identities and state of origin, religious affiliations and political party lines. Today too, the Nigerian society has been polarized on religious and ethnic lines with explosive eruptions that results from banditry, religious entrepreneurs and corruptive behaviours. One recalls here the words of the celebrated Nigerian singer and political critic, Eedrees Abdulkareem who captured the state of the Nigerian leadership crisis that has reduced Nigeria to a failed state thus: *Nigeria Jaga jaga, everything scatter scatter, poor man de suffer suffer...* What this portrait of Nigerian leadership confirms is that, *Things have fallen apart and the centre cannot hold and is not holding again.* It suffices to state that, the Nigerian leadership decay has visible signs of a failing state and so, its survival is assured but only under men and women of mental magnitude, spiritual depth and incorruptible character. This state of decay has been chronicled by Catholic Priest, the Very Rev. Fr. Calvin Ugwu thus:

- From their failure to provide pipe-borne water, they created a class of bottled water consumers and borehole owners.
- From their failure to provide security, they created a class of bulletproof car owners with armed escorts.
- From their failure to provide electricity, they created a class of *Mikano* generators and solar panel owners.
- From their failure to provide education, they created a class of private school students, and abroad students.
- From their failure to provide good health care, they created a class of abroad medical tourists.⁸

⁸. Cfr. facebook

⁹. ibid

In Nigeria today he continues, it is unfortunately a mark of honour to drink bottled water, own a *Mikano* generator, own a bulletproof car, travel abroad for school or medicals, have become landmark.⁹

This scenario only proves that Nigerian leaders are *Bad Samaritans*.¹⁰ Their intentions for their country may be worthy though, their poor understanding of leadership requirement and history of where they are coming from leads them into policy errors. Their actions and or inactions have impacted more to enslave their people and country than help to develop the nation and its people. These *Bad Samaritans* have consciously and consistently developed new political institutions and unpopular policies intended to deprive their fellow citizens of their legitimate right of accessing power and good governance. This calls for a new governance ideology that preference communal knowledge and wisdom far removed from the mistakes of the past. That Nigeria is still tethered to the British colonial past staunts her greatness as a country, not just in Africa but in the world. According to Jerry Rawlings, there are two things that can salvage Nigeria: The first is Nigeria must peacefully retire these old colonial leaders who are still servants to western imperialism. The second is Nigeria must restructure their country back to the days when it was regional system of government. Let every region develop at its own pace, build its resources and people. With this that country called Nigeria will be the greatest hub for the people of color in the world¹¹

4. Towards a Nigerian Leadership Model

*Unless it shall come to pass that philosophers are kings or those who are now called kings and potentates be imbued with sufficient measure of genuine philosophy ... there will be no cessation of ills for the state nor ... for the human race; neither can the commonwealth, which we have now sketched in theory, ever till see the light of the day.*¹²

Plato assertion speaks to us that a leader must be characterized adequately to so act as a leaders to facilitate open dialogue within the polity, and about the meaning of justice, the possibility of just politics, and the nature of the best human life. This leadership philosophy entails self-knowledge that is here defined as the process of waking up out of the nonsense, nightmares and illusory

^{10.} Chang Ha-Joan, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism*, USA Bloomsbury Press, 2007

^{11.} <http://www.aloradunqwe.org/blog/april-05th-2019> Retrieved on Monday 12 th, 2024

^{12.} Plato's *Republic*, (473), 2001, p. 226

pleasures of what is ordinarily called real life into the awareness of eternity. It takes cognizance of a holistic exposition of the concept of leadership which flows from knowledge to wisdom, grounded in epistemic, metaphysical and moral content.

(i). Epistemological Requirement

Here it may simply be indicated that many factors are called for here. These include the cognitive, intuitive, emotive, dynamic and introspective components. In this regard, we may indicate that there are two sides to this: a) the epistemological base of leadership and b) the epistemological base of followership. First, leadership must originate from the vantage position of “knowledge”. We can see that all the great thinkers agree on this, from Confucius, Buddha, Plato, to Jesus, to our own Obafemi Awolowo and Moses Orshio Adasu. Plato's suggestion that the leader (philosopher king) should attain a level of understanding of the universe, people and him/herself to be fair to all and just in the dispensation of justice fits this leadership qualification. Thus,

- the leader must be wise, not simply knowledgeable. This is because there is danger in mere acquisition of knowledge, as many persons are specialists in various areas but regrettably poor in most others and unfit for leadership. Hence, the better we conceive of leadership holistically as requiring wisdom.
- More briefly Wisdom can be considered as the art of making the best use of knowledge by exercising good judgment.
- It is the capacity to realize what is of value in life for oneself and others or as the end point of a process that encompasses the idea of making sound judgments in the face of leadership challenges or uncertainty.
- Being a wise leader and exercising good judgment is certainly more than the ability to recycle Wisdom in policy decisions.
- Being wise in leadership involves the ability of the leader to apply wisdom effectively in the practice of governance.
- Wisdom in this context becomes the vehicle in use to integrate values into decision-making processes. What is being suggested here is that, the leader should be intellectually rounded and epistemologically astute.

(ii) The Metaphysics of Leadership

In his *Leadership in Turbulent Times*, Doris Kearns Goodwin vouched, “scholars who have studied the development of leaders have situated resilience, the ability to sustain ambition in the face of frustration at the heart of potential leadership growth”. But more importantly, what

happens to leaders that makes a difference is how they respond to crisis under their watch, how they manage themselves in various ways to put themselves back together, how these watershed experiences at first impeded, then deepened, and finally and decisively molded their leadership. One thing is visible though that, when leaders are formidably best guided by a reasoned sense of moral purpose, they are able to channel their ambitions and summon their talents to enlarge the opportunities and lives of other members of their community. This crop of leaders can only come to be through the creative abilities of the mind. This prong of leadership philosophy has to do with relativities of time, space, context, families, cultures, groups, goals, etc.

In recruiting leaders, we need men and women with metaphysical prowess; a tincture of secret superpower that would allow them to know, on first meeting, how to tune into, and connect with followers in a way that delivers dividends of democracy. Through the twin lenses of body-mind psychology and neuroscience, this Leadership model provides the framework for recognising what motivates and inspires people within the shortest possible time of first meeting them. In many instances, those who turn out to be instrumental in the achievement of progress and development in various historical epochs in human history have been regarded as divine intervention. There is therefore nothing illogical to argue a necessary link between leadership and mystical or divine power in the advancement of the common good. Bergson's conclusion in this regard is revealing. He says,

...human beings, be they primitive or civilized, revert to supernatural explanations when they face vital events directly affecting them as persons. If primitive peoples seem overflowed with mystical beliefs, the explanation lies in the little control they have over their environment... This demonstrates that mystical explanations appear whenever human thinking pays attention to the "human significance" of phenomena over and above their mere physical nature¹³

Notwithstanding the truism of this position, we argue for the purpose of this dialogue that in history, leadership has never been Manna from heaven. It has been human, and full of sacrifices and opportunities for satisfaction of group and personal goals. African leaders, nay Nigeria must take special inventory in this regard that only those who sacrifice get higher glories in life and are the notables who live forever even in death.¹⁴ As has been mused by the great Theodore

^{13.} Kebede, M, *Journal on African Philosophy*, Issue 3. 2003, p. 48

^{14.} Shenge I. M. "Hegelian Dialectics and the crisis of Leadership in Nigerian Politics: Reinicing th Power of History, In: Ihuah A. S. *Dialogues in Faith and Reason for National Development: Essays in Honour of Very Rev. Chris Ierwua Utov*, Eagle Prints Nigeria, Abuja, 2013; 255

^{15.} Goodwin 2018: xv

Roosevelt, “If there is not the war, you don't get the great general; if there is not a great occasion, you don't get the great statesman; if Lincoln had lived in times of space, no one would have known his name now”.¹⁵ For George Akume, this prong of leadership quality connected very well with his integrity to refine his *Ayatutu* leadership style to process and free up blocked resources in his mental alcoves, thus igniting optimism and promise within individuals and across the entire Benue political space

(iii) The Axiology of Leadership

Under this prong of leadership quality emphasizes the normative nature and the norm generating nature of leadership. Leadership embodies the very hopes, aspirations, identity, dreams and realities of a society. Baring this, it is clear that there will ensue a drift in society that will be disastrous. It is important in this regard that there should be clear standards and channels for the enforcement of these standards on both the leaders and the led. This is because, when leadership disregards the least of the norms, ethos and statutes of a society with impunity, the signals sent reverberates through the entire fabric of the society, having consequences not easily redressed.

Thus, the ethical foundations of leadership require leaders to allow their consciousness to shift gear into the supernormal mode of cognition, behavior and relationship with the people under acute stress situations. They must not just be normal persons or even ab/sub-normal that we mentioned above. Society expects them to put society's interest above self-interest. It is at this stage that the true test of leadership can be determined. This stage of leadership instruments society's consciousness to become the tool for the propagation of organic existence.

Unfortunately, the Nigerian political landscape lacks these leadership qualities. Consolidating democracy does not reside in ochlocracy; the tyranny of the vociferous and noisy minority over the quiet majority but a combination of knowledge and wisdom of the leadership that facilitates good governance; the provision of social amenities, that fulfills election promises, that secures lives, property and general infrastructure upgrade. Such is the *Ayatutu* leadership Model of a giant Icon of democracy and liberty, the distinguished Senator George Akume Dajo. Before we properly situate this leadership philosophy, we shall first understand the Tiv concept of personhood.

5. *Or-che Uma*: Personhood in Tiv Heritage

African wisdom literature argues out a philosophy of human well-being with the Tiv people's

(Nigerian) expression, *uma ka orjime* (a meaningfully lived life is anchored on human fellow feeling). Expressed as such, the Tiv oral corpus presents a way of thinking which holds that well-being implies solidarity among individuals. The whole existence, from birth to death, is organically embodied in a series of associations, and life thus appears to have full value only in those close ties. This means that we cannot be fully human in isolation. It is in the same spirit that Chinua Achebe writes:

A man who calls his kinsmen to a feast does not do so to save them from starving. They all have food in their homes. When we gather in the moonlit village ground, it is not because of the moon. Every man can see it in his compound. We come together because it is good for kinsmen to do so¹⁶

This idea of communal living amongst the Tiv has intrinsic value, that is, that life grows more meaningfully in solidarity with other members of the community. Thus, the human capacity to commune with one another aids in the development of a reliable disposition for character formation and the promotion of long-term relationships and communion of minds. Even ordinary conversations and storytelling under the moonlight are always about people and their existential conditions in life; with hands empty, though, their hearts and minds are full of life-saving solutions. This explains the communal conception of personhood as what is acquired through participation in communal life as the individual persons discharge their various moral obligations in the community.

In Tiv orature, names are warehouses of religious and philosophical truth that aid the development of the person. Tiv names, songs, arts, proverbs, etcetera teach, instruct, motivate and inspire personal and communal identity. They reveal our being, our thoughts and aspirations, and express our relationship with our maker. Tiv names also represent our attempt to understand the universe and ourselves, our place in the universe, and our attempt to achieve order in our human midst. One's name, therefore, constitutes who one is the essence, without which one is no person. To be known by a name is to be dependent and linked with the one who utters it, and to know all a (wo) man's names is to have a special claim upon him¹⁷ Names not only express the dignity of the human person, but they also express life itself. Uma (soul), Ishima (Heart/Life) among the Tiv express a very comprehensive philosophical notion of human life, which on the one hand includes the world, the universe and creation, with all its grandeur, including the non-physical forces which constitute the cosmic reality. These expressions go a long way in affirming

^{16.} Achebe, C. *The Trouble with Nigeria*, 1959, p. 55

^{17.} (Kaunda 1967:45).

the dignity of the human person whose interaction with his/her fellow human beings discovers his humanness. As the Zulus would say, *Umntu Ngumuntu Ngabantu*, which means that a person is a person through other persons (Beight 2007:5). The concept of personhood in Africa is similarly found in proverbs. African proverbs serve as the storehouse and medium of African humanistic heritage. They express people's observations and reflections in a condensed form on human life, human relationships, human society and human destiny. They depict the attitudes and beliefs of Africans and their outlook on life. They are channels through which human communion and communication are made possible, and hence proverbs are like horses searching for truth and meaning in existence. So it is that human fellow feeling in a relationship is cherished above any quantity and quality of material acquisition. This idea of life argues that any negative behaviour or action on the part of the individual can affect collective living and spell doom for the entire human race—there is no individual immortality as such because there is no isolated force. But there is the immortality of life force, in which the individual life force participates in the advancement of the general well-being of all. The understanding here is that "life is real, more meaningful when human entities interrelate. This explains the Tiv dictum, *wagh za tsen hule* meaning, a river that flows unencumbered bends. The African philosophical dictum expressed by the Kenyan philosopher John Mbiti that *I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am* most appropriately captures the idea most.

The treatment above affords us the philosophical basis for concluding that the foundation of African culture has established that life is foundational to personhood and that *uma* (human spirit) is the constitutive element and the essence of personhood. This is the informed reason for Gyekye's assertion in the Akan proverb that, "All men are the children of God; no one is the child of the earth".¹⁸ Thus, personhood is before what an individual has acquired in life. Thus, the person is first of all an individual, unique, unrepeatable reality. An individual's being is defined by its intrinsic value more than what one has acquired in material possessions. Amongst the Tiv therefore, wholeness makes the person a related being to the community though, it does not take away from his/her self-individuality, it only adds to his/ her being to make him/her a communing being, relating and seeing individual self. It only means that each individual sees every other individual member as another self in terms of incorporating "an organic dimension in the relationship between the component individuals, creating a collectivity in the truest sense".¹⁹

¹⁸. Gyekye's (1984:85)

¹⁹. Ihuah S. Alloy, "Of Seeking the Whole from the Units: A Discourse Analysis of Aristotle's Essence, Asouzu's *Ibuanyidanda* and the Tiv *Ayatutu* Ontology" In: *APPON Philosophical Quarterly Vol. 1 No. 1* June, A publication of Association of Philosophy Professionals of Nigeria indexed in <https://acjool.org>, 2022: 95.

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This ontology credibly fills that gap by delicately erasing the line between the varied individual personalities and infusing the idea of missing links and complementarity into our understanding, interpretation and practice of human relationships. In this regard then, the individual is a dependent agent of the community for the fulfilment of his/her interest as has been succinctly put by Mbiti;

In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people, including those of the past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply part of the whole. The community must therefore make, create or produce the individual, for the individual depend on the corporate group.²⁰

The assumption here is that the individual understands and appreciates the meaning of community. Mbiti (1990:108–109) verily re-echoes this much when he says, *I am because we are, and since we are, therefore, I am*. What this supposes is that African ideas of personality allude to the ocular fact that humanity is one and should therefore see one another as serving a missing link of reality and not as fragments of existence. This will dismantle walls of ethnicity/sectional interests and curb the problems it breeds, namely hatred, division, ethnicity, violence and wars. Thus, every person has a unique personality, though s/he exists for no other reason than to share their unique qualities with other members of the community. In this view, the process of achieving personhood goes beyond mere socialization. It is a conscious effort by the human person to make oneself who s/he is or is going to be. The informed thinking here is that, humanity must transcend its narrow definitions and beliefs of '*self*' and '*other*', '*ours*' and '*theirs*'.

²⁰. (Mbiti 1990:108)

This by interpretation entails the hospitality of humanity for the joy of all. This ontology credibly erases the line between the varied individual personalities and infuses the idea of missing links and complementarity into the understanding, interpretation and practice of human relationships.

6. *Ayatutuism: The Akume Dajo Leadership Maze*

“It is the essence of being human. It speaks of the fact that my humanity is caught up and is inextricably bound up in yours. I am human because I belong. It speaks about wholeness, it speaks about compassion”.²¹

The above quip by the South African Nobel Laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu on *Ubuntu* ontology best describes the leadership model of George Akume, a three-time senator from the North Central geopolitical zone, two terms Governor of Benue State between 1999 and 2007 and the current Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) and a man of substantial grounding in governance, policy and statecraft.

While the context of the above quip is south African, these words fits very well with his leadership ontology. In itself, *Ayatutu* presupposes wholeness of man. It exudes openness and availability, willing to be vulnerable and affirming of others. With *Ayatutu*, one does not feel threatened because the others are able and good, for they have a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that they belong to a greater whole. *Ayatutu* ontology holds that the individual is diminished when others are humiliated, diminished when others are oppressed, diminished when others are treated as if they were less than who they are. That is to say that, *a person is truly human in the context of actual relations with other human beings*. For the Tiv therefore, *angbian ka nan zer muufu u nyian shigh*, (meaning you are one and the same with a brother who dresses well and attractive). This *Ayatutu* perhaps explains the non-existence of poverty and hunger in Tiv traditional society prior to colonization.

In adherence to this leadership practice, *Akume* was instructed into the *ethos* and *mores* of the Tiv indigenous society and carefully nurtured, and elevated to take leadership position in Benue and Nigeria at large. He grew up listening to his fathers' stories of heroic battles of Tiv warriors. His Mothers' enchantments of Tiv legends, proverbs, stories, tales and fables instrumented by *Takuruku Nyamazenga* all aided his knowledge of Tiv history, culture and philosophy that

²¹. Desmond Tutu on *Ubuntu* ontology in Dauglass Abrams, *The Book of Joy: Lasting Happiness in a Changed World, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Archbishop Desmond Tutu*, New York, Avery, an imprint of Penguin Random House, 2016

stimulated his childhood imagination. The Tiv tales which usually contained some moral lessons such as virtue, humaneness, gentleness, hospitality, empathy or taking trouble for others, deep kindness, friendliness, generosity, vulnerability, toughness, compassion and willing to share all groomed him for leadership responsibilities in his later life.

This leadership paradigm tilt towards servant leadership which been best articulately stated by Greenleaf in Mbigi²² maintains that:

- i. Listening – listening with regular periods of reflection is essential to the growth of the servant leader and listening also encompasses getting in touch with one's inner voice and seeking to understand what one's spirit, body and mind are communicating.
- ii. Empathy – the servant leader strives to understand and empathise with others. Some of the most successful leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic leaders.
- iii. Persuasion – the leader is effective at building consensus within groups and this is the “heart and soul” of African leadership that is embedded in the ancient African philosophy of Ubuntu.
- iv. Healing – Many people have broken spirits and have suffered emotional hearts. Leaders should realise that they have an opportunity to help “make whole” those with whom they interact. Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to “dream great dreams”.
- v. Self-discipline – the management of self-discipline is important – doing very ordinary things in an extraordinary manner, thus putting their sincerity on constant display in order to create trust.
- vi. Consciousness – leaders must have an inner serenity and a high degree of personal consciousness. High consciousness can only be attained through a personal spiritual journey, by reaching into the depths of our inner spiritual resources to transcend our self-interests and contribute to transformation.

For Akume Dajo therefore, the glory of the Tiv history and culture, his early childhood training in Tiv metaphysics and Christian faith fired his leadership spirit in thoughts, words and in actions to come to the realization that the human person is the apex of cosmogenesis in the hierarchy of beings. Here understood, humanity is seen to bear in a translucent manner, the principle responsible for the process of its existence. This is supported by an analysis of the concept of *Or-CheUma* (Personhood) in Tiv thought system. As it were, this concept signifies the 'totality', 'beauty' and 'essential appreciation of the nature man in whom life is the defining criterion of all (materially and spiritually) that humanity is. In addition to the criterion of life, personhood is

²² Mbigi, L. *The Spirit of African Leadership*. Randburg: Knowres Publishing. 2005, p. 219

laced with good deeds/knowledge (*Or-fan-kwagh*); being a rational man or mind (*Or-u-Mfe*), moral agent (*Or-dedo*). *Or-cheUma* (personhood) thus represents not only a man of high credit balance of integrity, he is a person of healthy relationship with his community and nature in the promotion of the well-being of the community. This has been well acknowledged by Wiredu and Gyekye when they say,

More than this one is required to make concrete material contributions to the well-being of one's lineage, which is quite a sizeable group of people. A series of events in the lineage, such as marriage, births, illnesses, and deaths, gives rise to urgent obligations. The individual who can meet these in a timely and adequate manner is the true person.²³

While arguing that this form of socialisation advances the human personality, it suffices to state that personhood in Tiv culture requires an individual investment in the moral and material development of the human person. It requires first and foremost the individual's will and his or her critical evaluation of the mores of a given community that are ethically guided to promote and protect life and the well-being of the person. These fragments of cultural heritage inform the Akume leadership model which in turn energizes him to survive and emerge still human, humane and relevant in local and national politics to date despite sustained clandestine efforts to dehumanize him and diminish his political dynasty.

This is the communo-centric philosophy that informs the cherished leadership model of the distinguished Senator George Akume. This leadership philosophy embodies *Ya-na-anigbian* (from the Tiv verbs *ya* - eat, *na* - give or share, *anigbian* - brother). Taken together, *ya na anigbian* means *eat and share with your brother(s)/relation(s)*. In itself, this principle has a metaphysical foundation. Rupert East (1939:106) very well captures this line of thought as a principle that applies more to sharing of *Angôr* (female siblings) within and among close relations. This practice not only serves as a means of exchange for a wife, it also connotes solidarity, fellow feeling and communal living or brotherhood among the qualified male members of the family unit (the Iye-Ingyôr group). This sharing is always done with the intent to *yam ishô/chia* (earn a justification) to prevent brothers/relations or other members of community from bewitching one's children. This point has been made more cogent by Tarnande (2015: 20) who says the practice “provided the basic ingredients of social cement that worked to hold society together. These cementing factors instilled a feeling of oneness in the group”.

²³. Wiredu and Gyekye 1992:107)

Used as a political model, *ya na angbian* denotes *Democratic Humanism* which entails equitable distribution of dues among community members or a political group. For the Tiv therefore, the individual does not and cannot effectively exist outside the community. Although this leadership philosophy settles more with the idea that aligns with communal interests than that which signposts individualism, it abhors the radical strand of communitarianism that distracts the individual's ability for autonomous reasoning.

Strong in the triple heritage of the indigenous African culture, Christian faith and epistemic prowess, Akume combined the virtues of temperance, patience, Godliness, brotherly kindness and charity to the service of the common good of his acolytes; the poor, the marginalized and the physically challenged in the society. In his convinced mind, humanity must boldly speak for the poor and demand a more just society that upholds rights of persons. In his exemplary life and lived commitment to the principle of *Ya Na Angbian*, he elicited the blessings of the late Elder statesmen Wantaregh Paul Iorpuu Unongo Kwaghngise, a one-time second Republic Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Going spiritual Unongo evokes the instrumentality of the progenitor of the Tiv nation that Senator Akume's progress will have no limit, and that he will grow beyond human imagination as he vouched metaphysically;

I am old and close to God so let me tell you the message from God. Because you have gotten and refused to eat alone so God will continue to bless and provide for you. You will not die but will be alive to fulfill these words. No man can kill or terminate your promotion. You will grow from grace to grace and build on the grave of late *J.S Tarka*, build the home of my father and teacher *Tarka Nachi* and the home of my father-in-law *Wannune Kibou*.²⁴

The informed idea here is that, human well-being for the Tiv evokes sharing and an exudation of an ethic of existence that organically embodies a series of associations and activities that portray life as fully valuable only in community living. The invocation by *Wantaregh Paul Iorpuu Unongo*, the spiritual head of the Tiv people on the Tiv elemental spirits and the greatest spiritual being called *Aondo Abaver Ijua* also called *Gba-Aondo* (The God of Creation) to not only bless George Akume, but to reward him as well. This calls to mind the twine that tethers solidarity with human flourishing among the Tiv.

Given the tapestry of these cultural beliefs, the individual being subsumes into the us or we as

²⁴ Posted on Facebook by by Verlumun Sevavs

opposed to the I as found in “the autonomy of the individuals” that is so elaborately celebrated in the West in Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* (*I think therefore I am*) as against African *Cognatus ergo sum* (I am related by blood, therefore, I exist). The suggestion here is that, for the Tiv, humanity as a whole is relational and interrelational and that, a well evolved life is not *found in having more but in being more*. This is the copula that joins the important and critical principles and practice of *Ayatutuism*, the Leadership model of the distinguished senator George Akume as shall be discussed below.

a) Mental Magnitude

When reason is dethroned from the affairs of the being of man, emotions, mediocrity and unimportant desires reign. This inevitably breeds intellectual corruption which in turn leads to greed, bribery, and executive lawlessness among other social vices. This suggestion argues the point that, those who aspire to leadership in any society must be those who are ruled by reason rather than appetite. They should in the words of Awolowo, “possess comprehension and mental magnitude” (Awolowo, 1968: 158). This leadership quality is found in abundance in the person and character of the Distinguished Senator George Akume who in our estimation may be said to be the very expression of “*humanistic will and political vision, a symbol of culture and dialogue backed by an unparalleled generosity of spirit*”. This humane human quality of life freed him from the tyranny of the unexamined life, negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy, selfishness and greed. This condition achieved for him tranquility of the mind and enlarged his conception of what is possible and enriched his intellectual imagination. As it turned out to be, the lessons of history capacitated Akume to envision a better Benue that he helped to render great for the general common good of its indigenous population. This vision was informed by the realities of the historical antecedents of the food Basket State and the potentialities and possibilities that the endowments of nature and human resources can transform for posterity.

b) Spiritual Depth

Spiritual depth is a necessary qualification of being human that depicts the Akume model of leadership. This is a theory of the meaning and value of human existence. Here used, it serves to underscore the metaphysics of politics. It is the copula conjoining the leader to the led. Used in association with mental magnitude, this leadership quality commands love and the pursuit of the good. In his *The people's Republic*, Awolowo states these principles as love of God and love of one's neighbor presumably alluding to the Biblical injunction in Matthew, 19:16-24 and 22: 36-40. In itself, spiritual depth involves the notion of God from whom love ultimately emanates. This

religious love in conjunction with metal magnitude acts as a spark that insures the leader against that which perpetually undermines good governance and rather promote greed and naked selfishness or sickness that makes people loot the national treasury including the monies they do not need on earth. Like President George Washington of America, Senator George Akume believes that “It is impossible to rightly govern our country or the world without God and the Bible” This leadership quality promotes honesty, transparency and fairness in government business and in the process shapes the demeanor of the followership in many instances. Akume's power of forgiveness and patriotism all add to quintessential personality as a secular prophet, the Benue Moses leading his people to the promise land and away from oppression and suppression. It may be noted here that, if in the last three decades truly there was one single statesman who came closest to being *number one* among leaders of the Middle-Belt region, Senator George Akume Dajo is probably one such person. He demonstrated this in the unfortunate crisis that stole the peace of the Middle-Belt states of Benue, Nasarawa and Taraba between 2001 and 2003 during which the distinguished senator consistently and meticulously lead other leaders of the region to dialogue, debate and converse for, and restored peace in the troubled region.

c) Self-Knowledge

Socrates is quoted to have said that, he who knows not, and knows not that he knows not is a fool. On the other hand, he who knows not, and knows that he knows not, is a wise man. Leadership qualities demands that the leader must engage in self-examination for the purposes of bridging leadership gaps requires critical thinking, rationally persuasive, compelling and convincing policies and actions. This means that the leader must have conceptual and concrete thinking skills, he must be able to focus on issues of importance, curious and inquisitive, and must possess confidence in seeking knowledge of the unknown. For Akume, truth stands out as the alloy that binds social progress. Such was his grounding and guiding philosophy of life that oiled his entire long walk to leadership by example. George Akume recounts the wise words of Mandela thus, “honour belongs to those who never forsake the truth even when things seem dark and grim, who try over and over again, (and) who are never discouraged by insults, humiliation and even defeat”²⁵

Like Socrates, *Akume* sees self-knowledge as a necessary quality of human existence and appropriates it as an indispensable liberating tool for his people. In Akume's heart therefore,

²⁵. Ihuah A. S. *Dialogues in Faith and Reason for National Development: Essays in Honour of Very Rev. Chris Ierwua Utov*, Eagle Prints Nigeria, Abuja, 2013

leadership is a sacred trust. It is like the priesthood in civilized, humane religions which no one gets into it lightly or unadvisedly. It demands tranquility of mind and discipline of body and will far beyond the ordinary citizen. For the distinguished Senator George Akume, knowledge is information in its altruistic use. It resides in the community and not in the individuals that make up the community. It is inherent in proverbs, songs, traditional arts and crafts through listening to elders telling stories of their experiences as youths and how such experiences can be relevant to the lives of the youths of today. Wisdom on the other hand is the integration of knowledge and values to produce wise action. It is the power that enables him to use knowledge creatively in governance and management of human beings and resources for the common good of humanity.

(d) Incorruptibility and Selflessness.

Democracy signposts human development and the good life that promotes political good, economic independent and virtuous life far removed from the gargantuan paradise of charlatans that characterize the African political and social life. Consequently, it is immediately urgent to understand that leadership needs transparent dedication to the cause of society. This is why in civilized societies one cannot indicate that there are no distinctions between private and public lives of leaders. The “official secrets act” in many third world countries are outdated, counterproductive and antithetical to the interest of the people whose interest is being protected. Leaders must not only be dedicated to the cause of human development, they must transparently act in such manners that will release the fibers of human existence; truth, justice, concern for others and reset them to form the pillars of a New Nigeria in contemporary world. Professor C.S. calls this political behavior the Philosophy of Moralism; a doctrine that puts the other before or alongside the self. It holds that honesty, service and concern for the interest of the others ought to be the basis and measure of all actions and policies.²⁶

George Akume lived this quality of life in Politics and out of Politics, in richness and in poverty, in power and out of power. Even though Akume and his Benue tribes found themselves in the cauldron of extreme hate, discrimination and organized attacks from herdsmen, he preached tolerance, moderation in ideas and actions and in the promotion of unity and peace in the larger Nigerian state. The *Akume Dajo* model of leadership personifies a committed, patriotic, selfless and disciplined leader who has self-control and aversion for excessive indulgence in sensory pleasures. For him, all that exist belong together and are made manifest together in the service of

²⁶ Momoh, C.S, *The Funeral of Democracy in Nigeria, Lagos, African philosophy* Project publications, 1993:157

humanity. Disorder in Nigeria today results from abandoning the poor to rot in their misery. This way of life of the leader does not endure with the poor alone, it harms us all. Failings or crimes and sufferings of an individual radiates, offends, and it debases the whole political community. Individuals much less communities cannot be insulated from it. This point has been validly stressed by a Lithuanian Philosopher, Levinas according to whom identification and differentiation enables the formation of personal identity which in turn results in hostility when the traits we use to distinguish ourselves from others are totalized and taken as absolute. This attitude not only reduces others to a simple or single category that distinguishes “them” from “us”, but often produces an allergic reaction to others and builds fences around humanity. This is/has been the bane of Nigerian politics and politicians.

The distinguished Senator George Akume under the guidance of *Ayatutu* is exempted from this unpolished political culture. His sublime features, chivalry, genial frame, quixotic-temper; dignified deportment and inspiring noble exudation, was such which cuts an almost perfect symmetry with Brutus whom Mark Anthony describes “the greatest Roman of the all, of whom the element is so made, that nature might stand up and say this was the man” (Kola Johnson, 2013:47). This description perfectly fits *George Akume Dajo* so much that we can say that the Akume *personae* belongs to a very distinguished caste of leaders who truly represent a leadership figure that can stand tall as a leader worthy of emulation. His humble disposition crafts for him a philosophy of life that fits his humane and generous spirit. I recall an encounter with him in his Abuja home when I visited him alongside Prof. Msugh Moses Kembe, the then Vice-Chancellor of Benue State University, Makurdi. We got talking about the human condition, and the relationship problems of man namely of jealousy, blackmail and betrayers by friends, families, relatives and loved ones, and how that has led to the underdevelopment of Tivland. A generally simple and humble Akume quipped,

Prof. never blame anyone in your life. Humanity has the good, the bad, and the ugly. Good people give you happiness. Bad people give you experience. Worst people give lessons. And best people give you memories. we are often let down by the most trusted people, loved by the most unexpected, some make us cry for things that we haven't done. While others ignore our faults, and just see our smile. Some leave us when we need them the most.²⁷

What the above conversation reveals is that, this man of quintessential healthy love for humanity

²⁷. Personal conversation with the Senator in his Abuja residence

is building coalitions that extend beyond our natural allies; family, friends etc. The greatness of a man is for him measured by the way he treats the little man. This is the content of Tiv ontology as embodied in *Ayatutu* with practical application in *Ya Na Angbian* communitarian sharing principle. This principle is not a narrowly interpreted and applied principle among the Tiv nuclear family alone, but expanding outwards in ripples-like, concentric circles to include the entire Benue family. Here, understood, Akume represents a just leader who leads with a passion for truth, fairness, equity and justice; the essential qualities of a successful leader in nation building. His persuasive leadership skills throw him up as one who lived and practiced compassionate leadership; leading by example and forgiving his adversaries

7. Lessons from the Akume Leadership Model

Leadership requires creative abilities of the mind, it is grounded in epistemic, metaphysical and moral content. It has less to do with tyranny of the flesh; negative emotions of anger, hate, fear, envy, selfishness and untruth. These are the virtues that oiled the heart of Akume to engage in the long walk to liberate his people. The informed idea here is that, the individual existence makes meaning though, only to the extent that he or she connects with another member of the community. What this means is that, the individual member of the community is open and available to others, by the affirmation of others. He does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based on a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed. Such is the essence of being human. For Akume, the human personhood comes as a gift from other persons and that, each person is a focus of shifting forces, changing as they change, existing only as a part of the different relationships that bind us to others.²⁸ This leadership philosophy does not treat individuals as entities in action and thought, separated from one another, rather, the individual is connected and dependent on others in the community for true selfhood and full humanity. In essence, this leadership model is far from arbitrariness and impunity that are the hallmark of tyrannical and dictatorial regimes. It's rather a commitment to democratic values which the revered Senator Akume demonstrates to his followers. He not only brings hope, he fulfills the hope and upholds the rule of law. Nelson Mandela's call at the UN's Fiftieth anniversary in New York on October 1995 speaks to this leadership model thus;

what challenges us, who define us as statespersons, is the clarion call to dare to think that what we are about is the people-the proverbial man and woman in the

²⁸. Ihuah S. Alloy (2022) Of Seeking the Whole from the Units: A Discourse Analysis of Aristotle's Essence, Asozu's *Ibuanyidanda* and the Tiv *Ayatutu* Ontology In: *APPON Philosophical Quarterly Vol. 1 No. 1* June,

street. These, the poor, the hungry, the victims of petty tyrants, the objectives of policy, demand change. (Guardian, 2013:16)

What indeed challenges and defines the Akume leadership model is the use of wisdom in satisfying the politically important needs and desires of the people on whose behalf he holds power in trust. With courage, sacrifice, love and reconciliation, he acts as a leader and mentor, exemplifying the human virtues needed in the management of diversities. He evolved democratic dispositions that promoted inclusivity and nonviolence. This disposition has been well articulated by Bethke Elshtain in line with Akume's thought as:

A preparedness to work with others different from oneself towards shared ends; a combination of strong convictions with a readiness to compromise in the recognition that one cannot always get everything one wants; and a sense of individuality and a commitment to civic goods that are not the possession of one person or one of one small group alone²⁹

It is reasoned on this count that, the lessons of this leadership model cannot be more than the lived life of Akume himself. He fought against intimidation and manipulation of the common man. For him, personal sacrifice, selflessness and service to humanity are the building blocks of a strong nation. He lives it and consistently resists the temptation and pressure to exclude his opponents and hold Benue to the jugular. He, it was who recruited and dragged Gabriel Suswam to contest for political office to represent Katsina-Ala/Ukum/Logo federal Constituency. Here understood, Akume was a selfless and humane statesman who etched his name in gold. His quintessential essence no doubt finds meaning in the words of the English Romantic Poet, Percy Shelly who forcefully wrote: *The One remains; the many change and pass*. Akume, in this context, is this *One*—a great and good man; a humble and compassionate man for all tribes, tongues and creeds.

The will to sacrifice for the greater glory of Benue counts as another lesson from this leadership model. Akume refused to reduce leadership to political messianism in favour of his belief that it is when power is exercised creatively and used humanely to uplift people and societies for the better that leadership makes meaning to the people. In his revered mentorship legacy, Akume sighted the leadership gap in Benue State and recruited the Rt, Hon. Gabriel Suswam and his Deputy, Chief Stephen Lawani (2007-201) to succeed him. Dr. Samuel Ortom and his Deputy, Engineer Benson Abounu (201-2023) and the current Governor, Very Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Iormem Alia and his deputy Barr. Sam Odeh (2023-date), all reminisces George Akume as their political god-

²⁹ Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial*, New York: Basic Books, 19930 p.3

father. That he elevated these great sons of Benue to leadership of the state in succession as executive Governors of Benue State even against the powerful and the mighty in the state, sets him apart as an example for other leaders to follow that, the older generation must give way to the younger and allow their states to move forward.

We are also reminded of George Akume when we see the likes of Prof. Joseph Utsev, the serving Minister of Water Resources, Nicholas Wende, the North Central Representative on the NDDC Governing Board, Mathias Ibyuan, Executive Director, Housing Finance and Accounts, Federal Housing Authority, Jonathan Terlumun Akputu, Director, Federal Housing Authority among many others. The list is endless though, what this presupposes is that, Senator George Akume invested in community and people, he built societies, made people and provided shelter for many. The lessons from this hospitable and welcoming leader does not just end with his ability to reach his goals and live in absolute luxury, but also in nurturing and grooming his mentees, political associates and promoting talents. For him, the wise words of Dr. Myles Munroe more than anything fits his mentorship profile. In his words;

If what you learn, achieve, accumulate or accomplish dies with you then you are a generational failure. Mentoring is the manifestation of the highest level of personal maturity, security and self-confidence. An insecure person will never train people, they will oppress people. Mature people create people greater than themselves. Your assignment has a shelf life. You will die one day; so train your replacement. Your Greatest Gift to the world is your mentee. True leaders do not attract followers; they do not seek followers. The Greatest obligation of true leadership is to transfer your deposit to the next generation. Leadership success is measured by the success of your successor. No matter how great you may have been, if you didn't produce a successor, you are a failure. You preserve what you built through mentorship. Legacy is about preserving all that you've built by raising other people. Success without a successor is failure. Leadership that serves only its generation is destined to failure. If your vision dies with you, you have failed. Legacy is about living beyond your grave.³⁰

This quip reminds us that, the task of remaking a Nigerian nation worth living in and dying for is not in air-conditioned offices, not in the long stretched SUVs, fat bank account within and without Nigeria, or the pent houses on foreign beaches that house the property acquired with resources appropriated from the people's common wealth. The remaking of the Nigeria of our

³⁰. Myles Munroe: *Spirit of Leadership*, New Kensington, Whitaker House, 2005

dream lies in the collective knowledge, wisdom and communal efforts of both the leadership and the followership. They must jointly make efforts to put right the blunders that were inherited from authoritarian regimes that primed and exploited the decadent Nigerian state. The future Nigeria many of us hope for lies in developing a leadership rationally designed to strengthen the guardrails of democratic practice which have been weakening for decades. This in our estimation is not an insurmountable project. It is rather a democratic norm to keep Nigeria one which is a task that must be done by *Ayatutu* leadership model. The art of governance thus descends from theory to practice, to articulating problems of living, and purpose that critically assesses situation, possible actions and policies from the standpoint of their capacity, if implemented, to promote wiser and better ways of living.

The challenge drawn from this iconic leader is to create a tradition of patriotic leadership and raise a crop of young leaders, bound by common ethos that exude the quintessential personae of Mandela. Unlike a typical Nigerian politician who thinks of the next election, the statesman *Akume Dajo*, thinks of the next generation. He was led to explore two riddles namely, to shape his time or for time to summon/shape him. In reminiscence of Theodore Roosevelt's philosophy of life, he reasoned that *it is not in the still calm of life or the repose of a pacific station, that great characters are formed* (Goodwin 2018: xv). In the brain of this great son of Benue, the habits of a vigorous mind are formed in contending with difficulties. In his many leadership outings in the past, *Akume Dajo* was no doubt confronted with the great difficulties and necessities that called out the qualities of his virtuous life. When he presided as the Governor of Benue State (1999-2007), there was the problem of crisis of confidence in the economic survival of the state though, his spirited combativeness was called to the fore. His self-confidence and infectious optimism restored the hope that earned him the trust of the Benue people to rebuild the economy of the fledgling state and maintain a democratic veneer.

What these lessons translate to is that, our leadership recruitment process should highlight more, the idea of servant leader not a messianic leader. Those on whose shoulders leadership rests should jettison the concept of leadership indispensability and process the younger generation to whom they can gracefully and willingly cede power to when they mature. This leadership model involves the identification of leadership questions, working together to define what the group wants, exploring possibilities for the future and actively creating new behaviors. It requires knowledge of the power of history and wisdom. Here, the leadership and followership engage each other in a dialogue and use what they have heard, seen and felt to co-create new ways of

working together to achieve their shared goals while creating deeper social bonds and satisfaction. History and wisdom are important as a moral imperative, a tool of strengthening democracy and ensuring accountability. It aids our resolve to *never ever forget* the good, the bad and the ugly past as well as the moral courage to say, *never again* to bad leadership. The former German President, Richard von Weizsacker reinforced this point when he says that “Whoever closes his eyes to the past becomes blind to the present. Whoever does not wish to remember inhumanity becomes susceptible to the dangers of a new infection”.³¹ What Nigeria needs today is a leadership that will move it away from the fangs of leadership failure. This the encyclopedic Bertrand Russell suggests, “the main thing needed to make the world (Nigeria) happy is intelligence ...because intelligence is a thing that can be fostered by known methods of education”³²

The problem however is that our present day Nigeria is structured to fail because it has been emptied of men of thoughts, stature and deep knowledge thus leaving its helpless and hapless population in the world of mental pygmies; a country which greedy men have seized the reins of power and so, suffocated it with a decadent leadership without the wise use of knowledge. The chronic institution *Kakistocracy* (the unfit to rule) as a leadership idea in our body polity is what has made Nigeria a failing state. On the other hand, advent of *Ayatutuism*; a communitarian leadership model championed by Senator George Akume should serve as the ease of consolidating democratic practice in Nigeria. This welcoming leadership model which signposts a political culture without guardrails will more likely shrink ethnic and religious supremacist tendencies and progress Nigeria out of the brinks of anarchism. This thinking may have informed the reasoned opinion of Socrates of antiquity who likened leadership to a skill that is the preserve of the true lovers of wisdom in society and of the *noblest pursuit* who alone should be privileged to steer the ship of governance. Through Socrates, Akume's intuitive mind instructs us thus:

- Tell them it is true that the best Philosophers are useless to the multitude.
- However, this is not because something is wrong with those who love wisdom but because people do not know what to do with them.
- It would be unnatural for the captain to plead with the sailors to be put in command or for wise people to beg at the doors of the rich - whoever came up with that saying has it wrong.
- The truth is that sick people, whether they are rich or poor must go to the doctor rather than

^{31.} Quoted in Matthew Hassan Kukah: *Witness to Justice: An Account of Nigeria's Truth Commission*, Ibadan Bookcraft, 2011

^{32.} Muiyiwa Falaiye (ed) *Africa's Political Stability: Ideas, Values and Question*, (Lagos: Panaf Publishing Inc., pp 1999:17-18.

expect the doctor to come to them, just as those who need a leader must seek out the person who knows how to lead.

- if rulers are to be genuinely useful, they cannot go round asking to be put in charge.
- They are not at all like our current politicians, who resemble the mutinous sailors in our analogy and who call the true pilots useless stargazers. ...³³

The informed thinking here is that, firstly, a good leader is one who is *on a mission* with a strong sense of purpose. Secondly he must not only be a thing being, he must be *Thinking in questions*. Rather than merely asking good questions, he must inspire an entirely different way of thinking. He must ask and think in right questions. Thirdly, he must think like a beginner to cultivate an open, continuously inquiring mind that is as free as possible from false attachments and corruptive tendencies. What this means is that, leadership is the singular preserve of the greatest of men/women with knowledge, abilities and virtues. It requires a life of a strong sense of purpose, reflection, an open and continuously inquiring mind and courage to build societies of peace and enduring prosperity. These leadership skills made George Akume one leader crafted of gold and delivered to Nigeria for leadership lessons. He it is, who walked in faith and hope, who lived in the midst of arrows but on whom the world has no hold. The good, the bad and the ugly both celebrate this iconic political figure and a true aristocrat. This rightly puts him in the category of a great leader in his own right that political leaders in Nigeria must not only take leadership lessons from him, they must be compelled to key into his leadership philosophy in the advancement of a New Nigeria. It may after all not be an exaggeration for Nigerian leaders to converge in a vision of this political model as a benchmark against which leadership will be measured in Nigeria.

The crisis of leadership being experienced in Nigeria today compels us to think strategically and only the power reconciliation holds more promise than the decidedly less charitable route of docility. Nigerian leaders must converge in a vision of *Ayatutuism*; the Akume's Praxis Leadership Philosophy as a benchmark against which political leadership will be measured in Nigeria. Lessons of humility, tolerance, virtuous life, courage, quintessential discipline and self-denial that are evidenced in this leadership philosophy has placed him in the category of a "Grand Democratic legacy stretching back to the ancestors of African democracy like Nelson Mandela, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Joseph Sarwuan Tarka, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, Apollos Aper Aku and the Very Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu. These inspirational and charismatic

³³. Plato's *Republic*, 2001, p. 226

leaders not only led by example but inspired their supporters and subordinates to do same with a sense of efficacy, integrity and accountability. This is the leadership model that African leaders should adopt as a bench mark for continental leadership guide. In context and content, this model is epitomized by George *Akume* in *Ayatutuism*. It is ethical and imbued with core competencies like survival, solidarity, respect and dignity.

8. Conclusion.

I have argued the thesis that the Nigerian leadership is deep neck in organized conspiracy against the Nigerian peoples and that, political decay has been a function of poor recruitment process in which *Kakistocracy* has been the leadership recruitment model. The paper argues pointedly that, Nigeria needs a communitarian leadership model to recalibrate its diversity for national unity and development. While cooperation within the human community is never perfect, with some members who have fallen below or risen above acceptable standards, and while within the same political climate there are criminals, idiots, prophets and discoverers, Senator *George Akume's* leadership model tagged as *Ayatutuism* has been advanced as a leadership recruitment model. This leadership model signposts deep patriotic spirit and redemptive forgiveness. This leadership spirit has been popularised by a father – figure personality, *George Akume* who bore the light of redemption with an intensity that scares darkness, a courage that conquers political blackmail and the power that casts off intimidation.

A conclusion is argued here that this leadership model is known less for what it proclaims but more for what it delivers, less identified for its clamor for title and position but more for its expertise and competence. As a leader, George Akume is known less for what he controls but more by what he shapes. He represents a compassionate and visionary leader who cares about his followers and is dedicated to the humane and noble cause of Nigeria. This leadership portrait is African in origin and content, guided by basic, traditional African values and principles. This leadership portrait is epitomised by *Ayatutu*, an Afrocentric leadership model. It accentuates communalism and co-operative teamwork that promotes and progresses Africa within and beyond.

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