

IGBOPHOBIA IN LAGOS AND NIGERIA 2023 ELECTIONS: MYTH OR REALITY?

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Abstract

Igbophobia or anti-Igbo sentiment has been identified as a phenomenon present during the 2023 presidential and gubernatorial elections in Lagos, Nigeria. The emergence of an Igbo, Peter Obi, as the presidential flag bearer of the Labour Party seemed to have fueled the feeling which peaked during the gubernatorial election. Igbos were reportedly identified, beaten and warned not to come out to cast their votes in the belief that they supported the Labour Party Gubernatorial candidate, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, who is part Yoruba (from his father's side) and part Igbo (from his mother's side). This study aims at establishing the reality or myth of Igbophobia as widely reported. Using the Sociological Model of voting behavior as theoretical framework, the research investigates the influence of ethnicity and religion in fueling this myth or fact of Igbophobia. The findings may serve as references to historians analyzing the elections for anti-Igbo sentiment. The study recommends that voting behaviour should be based on rational choice as an antidote against Igbophobia fueled by ethnicity and religion.

Keywords: Igbophobia, ethnicity, religion, voting behaviour, election.

Introduction

“Phobia” basically derives from the Greek word “phobos” which means terror or fear. And every word created from this root would embody this same anxiety. Igbophobia literally means “fear of the Igbo”. This is also called anti-Igbo sentiment. This refers to a variety of unfavorable views and sentiments toward the Igbo people. Igbophobia can be seen in negative and unfriendly actions like violence against Igbos and political and religious discrimination (Kogbara, 2022) (Onwuka, 2022). The Igbo people are indigenous to south-eastern Nigeria and a portion of the south-south Nigeria geopolitical zones.

A look into history seems to justify Igbophobia in the past

The Igbo were so captivated of western education that it did not take them long to develop an unfathomable understanding of it. They acquired western education somewhat late (Dr.

Nnamdi Azikiwe was the first graduate in 1930, long after Nathaniel King, a Yoruba of the Egba, graduated from the University of Aberdeen in 1876), but they quickly surpassed the Ibibio and nearly the Yoruba. Both the Yoruba and the Hausa were perplexed by this. In the majority of the prestigious Nigerian schools by the late 1930s, there were more Igbo than Yoruba students. As a result, the Igbo began to fight for positions that the Yoruba had controlled exclusively for more than 30 years. The Yoruba started to voice their concerns about Igbo dominance. The hostility was evident by 1948. The conflict between the Yoruba and the Igbo caused racial hatred and mistrust amongst them (Unaegbu, 2017).

The Igbo people were employed within colonial Nigeria by the colonial authorities and in the public sector in regions all over the country during the early years of Nigeria's colonial independence, which led to the Igbo being seen as a disproportionately-favoured ethnic group with wealth and multi-regional opportunity. This made some people angry with the Igbo. Popular evidence is the video clip of an interview granted by Ahmadu Bello, the former Premier of Northern Region to a European journalist. Here are excerpts of the text of the video:

White man: One thing I have noticed while I have been here is that northerners seem to have an obsession about the Igbos. Could you explain that to me?

Sardauna: Well, the Igbos are more or less the type of people, whose desire is mainly to dominate everybody. If they go to a village; to a town, they want to monopolize everything in that area. If you put them in a labour camp as a labourer, within a year, they'll try to emerge as head man of that camp, and so on. Well in the past, our people were not alive to their responsibilities; because, as you can see from our northernisation policy, that in 1952 when I came here, there weren't 10 northerners in our civil service here...and I tried to have it northernised and now all important posts are being held by northerners. (Voice of the Sun, 2023).

In 1960 when Nigeria gained independence and many expatriates left, employers in business and government had to find educated Nigerians to fill open positions. But many Nigerians' educational backgrounds had been impacted by the Second World War's circumstances. As a result, there were few people who were well-qualified. Government development goals were sped up by the demand for more Nigerian specialists in clerkship and highly technical fields like engineering and medical (Crowder, 1978:250). The video interview granted by Ahmadu Bello could be understood under that circumstance, given that though there was the great need for experts, ethnic sentiment still rode high in choosing where one would have to work. Before this time, there were two mass killings of the Igbo already. They were the Jos killing of Igbo in 1945 and the Kano Killings of the Igbo in 1953 (Plotnicov, 1971).

Again, there had been mutual distrust between westerners and easterners mainly because easterners were occupying many sensitive administrative and academic positions in western Nigeria, especially in the two universities at Ibadan and Lagos. Prof. Kenneth Dike was Vice Chancellor at Ibadan. Cyril Agodi Onwumechili was already the Nigerian Professor of Physics at Ibadan. Anene was Professor of History at Ibadan, and so on. Earlier in 1965, the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Prof. Eni Njoku, an Igbo too, was supposed to have been reappointed for a second tenure, but the Yoruba-dominated University Council going against the recommendation of the university senate and hoping (allegedly) that it would counterbalance the effects of having easterners in many sensitive positions, appointed a renowned Yoruba historian, Prof. Saburi Biobaku, as the new Vice Chancellor (Ijomah, 2011:457). Many staff and students of Eastern Region and even expatriates left the University as a sign of protest against Njoku's removal (Berrie *et al*, 1965:3). The University of Nigeria, Nsukka absorbed many of them (Ike,1986:36) (Unaegbu, 2008:81). Prof. Eni Njoku returned to the east to become the Vice Chancellor of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

A few years to the Nigerian Independence, Prof. Kenneth Dike, was made the Vice Principal of the University College, Ibadan, then he was promoted to Principal of the University College, and later, just after Independence, he became the first indigenous Vice Chancellor of the University of Ibadan. This University is situated in Yoruba land. After a while, Prof. Kenneth Dike was tired of the misinterpretations of his honest motives in his leadership style. After a tedious court case with the Registrar of the University, he took an accumulated leave and by the time he was about to resume after his leave in 1966, it was no longer save for the Igbo at Ibadan. He moved to eastern Nigeria with his family (Animalu, 1997:132).

The 1966 anti-Igbo pogrom further confirmed Igbophobia. The pogrom was a string of murders committed in northern Nigeria against Igbo and other individuals of southern Nigerian descent beginning in May 1966 and peaking after September 29, 1966 (Abbott & Anthony, 2003:133).

During this time, Hausa-Fulani soldiers and civilians who were seeking retribution for the 1966 Nigerian coup d'état, which was led by six Majors and three Captains of Southern Nigerian descent and resulted in the deaths of 11 Nigerian politicians and army officers of Hausa, Fulani, Itsekiri, and Yoruba origin, murdered 30,000–50,000 Igbo civilians throughout northern Nigeria (Ekwe-Ekwe, 2012).

A research asserts that the number of killing of the Igbo during the Nigerian Civil war were over 2 million people, including the massacre of Igbos at Asaba at the early stages of the war (Izundu, 2008). This war lasted from July 6, 1967, to January 13, 1970, when the Igbo-majority southeastern provinces attempted to create the Republic of Biafra in response to

the killings of Christian Igbos residing in the Muslim north. The lack of political power sharing in Nigeria further irritated them (Izundu, 2008).

Data of mass killings of the Igbo further showed that Igbophobia was a fact before now. Aside the killings before and during the Civil war, there were more than twenty recorded cases of mass killings of the Igbo. They include 1. Kano Killings of 1980; 2. Maiduguri Killings of 1982; 3. Jimeta Killings of 1984; 4. Gombe Killings of 1985; 5. Zaria Killings of 1987; 6. Kaduna and Kafanchan Killings of 1991; 7. Bauchi and Katsina Killings of 1991; 8. Kano Killings of 1991; 9. Zangon-Kataf Killings of 1992; 10. Funtua Killings of 1993; 12. Kaduna Killings of 2000; 13. Kaduna Killings of 2001; 14. Maiduguri Killings of 2001; 15. Jos Maiden Crisis and Killings of September 2001; 16. Jos Killings of November 2008; 17. Beheading of Gideon Akaluka in December of 1996 in a police station in Kano; 18. Igbo Driver who goes by the nickname, “Saint Moritz” Killed on 13th December 2001 for mistakenly driving his truck over the holy Quran; 19. Jos Christmas Eve Killings of 2010; 20. Madalla Christmas day Bombing of 2011; and 21. Mubi Killings of January 6, 2012 (Voice of the Sun, 2023). Even Igbo muslims and their relatives were killed in some riots (Uchendu, 2020:253).

In April 2015 nearing the 2015 gubernatorial election, the Oba of Lagos, Rilwan Akiolu, warned in a live audio that anyone (especially the Igbo) who failed to vote for the governorship candidate of the All Progressives Congress (APC), Mr. Akinwumi Ambode, would perish in the lagoon (Ameh. 2015).



Photo of anti-Igbo protesters in Lagos. Date unknown. Source: Onyinye Dike: <https://republic.com.ng/february-march-2023/igbo-2023-elections/>

The Boko Haram killings and Fulani herdsmen killings from 2001 up to 2022 were motivated by other concerns, including hatred for western education and corrupt Muslims (in the case of Boko Haram) and the desire to expand in search of fodder for cows and turf for family (in the case of the Fulani herdsmen). Furthermore, since the Boko Haram and

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Fulani herdsmen killed members of other ethnic groups too, the motive for the murders cannot be entirely taken as Igbophobia.

It would appear that there is this power which typically pushes the Igbo ethnic group toward more individual freedom and prosperity rather than toward complacency and a leisurely way of life, according to learned observation of the Igbo ethnic group. The Igbo people's tenacity for surviving and propensity for independence have been proven in several historical incidents. Works have been written about the Igbo landing, in which Igbo slaves commandeered a slave ship in 1803 and chose to drown themselves rather than be sold as slaves after the ship grounded (Ciucevich, 2009) (Sieber, 1988).

In answer to this quandary about that force which influences the spirit of the Igbo man and breeds for him hatred and resentment, the researcher notes that philosophy, religion and culture (PRC) influence the behavior of humans. Reciprocal Determinism, a theory developed by the Canadian-American Psychologist, Albert Bandura, shows that a person's behavior influences and is influenced by personal factors (genetic makeup) and the social environment (Bandura, 1986). Thus, the Igbo had previously emphasized the Ikenga, or the personal culture of individualism. Whether the Ikenga culture was a product of this passion to succeed in the Igbo or it is the direct cause of it is open for research. There is evidence that the Ikenga culture may be the reason behind their aggressive rise in every endeavor, thus resulting in resentment in other ethnic groups (Okere, 2011).

It is in the light of this discomfort with the power of the Igbo that the actions of the Yoruba witnessed recently during the 2023 presidential and gubernatorial elections in Lagos, Nigeria, have to be appraised. The emergence of an Igbo, Peter Obi, as the presidential flagbearer of the Labour Party seemed to have fueled anti-Igbo sentiment which peaked during the gubernatorial election. Igbos were reportedly identified, beaten and warned not to come out to cast their votes in the belief that they supported the Labour Party Gubernatorial candidate, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, who is part Yoruba (from his father's side) and part Igbo (from his mother's side). This study aims at establishing the reality or myth of this Igbophobia as widely reported.

Theoretical Framework

In investigating the influence of ethnicity and religion in fueling this myth or fact of Igbophobia, this paper utilizes the analyzing tool of the Sociological Model of voting behavior as theoretical framework. The sociological model, frequently referred to as the "School of Columbia," is rooted in Columbia University's Applied Bureau of Social Research, whose work began with the release of the book, *The People's Choice* (Lazarsfeld, Berelson, & Gaudet, 1944), and which concentrates on the effects of social factors.

Aside from the book, *The People's Choice*, two other key books define the theoretical presumptions of the sociological model of voting behavior. They are *Voting* (Berelson,

Lazarsfeld, & McPhee, 1954), and *Personal Influence* (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955),. In their study of the 1940 U.S. presidential election between Franklin Roosevelt and Wendell Willkie, Paul Lazarsfeld's research team had two main goals: to study the effects of exposure to the media, that is, to understand how voters make decisions and the role of media in this process; and to test a new methodology of consecutive interviews with a panel of subjects and a control group. The findings of Lazarsfeld's research team were published as the book, *The People's Choice*. The team described the supporters of the two main political parties in the United States using a panel of 600 subjects who were interviewed seven times over the seven months of the campaign. To then identify the voters who changed their position during the campaign period, three groups were compared: those who made up their minds about their vote before the campaign began, those who changed their minds during the campaign, and those who did not cast their vote till later in the campaign.

According to Antunes (2014:146, 147), referring to Lazarsfeld et al. (1944):

The main finding... was that the majority of voters voted according to their original political predisposition. Of the 600 subjects who were included, only 54 changed their position throughout the process. The association between electoral behavior and the social groups to which they belonged was so strong that it was possible to explain the electoral choices using only the three factors that defined the Index of Political Predisposition used in research: socio-economic status, religion and area of residence.

The last sentence describing the main finding of the Sociological Model of voting behavior is applicable to this present research of ascertaining the myth or reality of Igbophobia during the 2023 presidential and gubernatorial elections in Lagos, Nigeria.

According to evolutionary theories, moral inclinations, including xenophobic tendencies, are profoundly ingrained in the human psyche. Sociobiologists contend that “prosocial” inclinations like altruism and empathy, as well as what could appear to be “antisocial” tendencies like xenophobic fear and hostility, are behavioral qualities that early humans picked and passed on to succeeding generations because they were important for survival (Peterie, M. & Neil, D., 2020).

According to this viewpoint, modern xenophobia is a result of human psychology's intrinsically tribal nature, or of a fundamental propensity towards “groupishness” at the cost of “outgroups” or members of other “tribes” (Haidt, 2012: 151).

Methodology

The study adopts the documentary research method. Data were derived through a meticulous review of existing literature, both as hard copy and on social media, that

followed personal narratives of individuals who witnessed the intimidation of voters in Lagos during the 2023 presidential and gubernatorial elections.

Presentation of Data/Findings

1. Scanning for Traces of Igbophobia in the 2023 Presidential Election in Lagos State:

The 2023 Nigerian presidential election aimed at choosing the country's president and vice president took place in Lagos State, as elsewhere in Nigeria, on February 25, 2023. With 582, 454 votes, which was roughly 10,000 votes, or a 0.77% margin over his closest opponent, Peter Obi, the Labour Party's nominee, defeated Bola Tinubu, the former governor of the state and a candidate for the All Progressives Congress (who got 572, 606 votes), to win the state in what was a major upset in history (Oluwakemi & Nike, 2023). Atiku Abubakar of the Peoples Democratic Party got 75, 750 votes.

Despite the fact that Tinubu is from Lagos State, both Abubakar and Obi worked to make the state competitive by focusing on particular demographics and employing the back-of-the-line candidates of their respective parties to spearhead the direct grassroots campaign. The majority of Lagos State's native inhabitants are ethnic Yoruba because the state is located in Yorubaland, the homeland of the ethnic Yoruba, but over a century of internal migration resulted in a sizable minority of non-Yoruba non-indigenes.

Report One of Ethnic Sentiment, Precursor to Igbophobia: During the campaigns preceding the election, precisely on November 16, 2022, a Yoruba writer, Eniola Akinkuotu, in his report entitled, "Nigeria: Obi, Tinubu, Atiku... Will identity politics trigger electoral violence in 2023?" revealed that Tinubu, who is ethnically Yoruba, and his surrogates used ethnic Yoruba **identity politics** while running for office throughout the South West. He also noted that these various ethnic dynamics had a significant impact on the state's presidential campaign. He asks:

In order to gain political advantage ahead of the crucial Presidential election in February 2023, major contenders Atiku Abubakar and Bola Tinubu are using every trick in the book, including evoking ethnic and religious sentiments in the people. Will this trigger violence in a heavily divided country? (Akinkuotu, 2022) (Emphasis mine).

It is germane to bear in mind that this report came three months prior to the election. The ethnic sentiment ignited in the people through playing Identity Politics is a red alert towards confirming Igbophobia during the elections. This is in tandem with the Sociological Model previously explained. According to the model as aforementioned or as described by Haidt (2012: 151), there is the fundamental propensity towards "groupishness" at the cost of "outgroups" or members of other "tribes". In other words, the *existence of ethnic sentiment in a person creates the existence of anti-outgroup sentiment in the same person.*

Report Two of Voter Intimidation, Precursor to Igbophobia: During the campaign period preceding the election also, Ben Ezeamalu noted that opposition parties against the ruling party, APC, were worried over the history of voter intimidation in Lagos State. Reports from the LP and the PDP surfaced shortly after the campaign period started in September 2022 regarding persistent attempts at repression by attackers supported by the APC as well as partiality on the part of the state administration and local police (Ezeamalu, 2022). The state PDP campaign vehicle was ambushed in Badagry in October 2022, while free medical facilities affiliated with Obi's party, LP, were attacked in Eti-Osa in November 2022.

Report Three of Dirty Politics, Precursor to Igbophobia: LP and PDP both accused the state government and APC of destroying opposition banners and posters, attacking and intimidating opposition supporters, and continuing to forbid the use of billboards as the election in early 2023 drew near. The LP even claimed that the APC had infiltrated local INEC offices to throw out the Permanent Voter Cards of non-indigenes (Omobola, 2023).

Report Four: Igbophobia Case One: shortly before the presidential election, controversies involving INEC Resident Commissioner, Olusegun Agbaje, exacerbated the allegations of INEC infiltration; while some groups called for Agbaje to resign in response to his anti-Igbo statements on Channels TV. According to reports, the REC explained why residents of the Okota and Oshodi Local Government Areas could not obtain PVCs, He made it obvious that they cannot receive their PVC since many of them were from the South East region of the country, and so were only immigrants. The majority of the criticism directed at him was also because of his choice to use the Lagos State Park and Garage Management Committee to transport election materials and personnel on Election Day (Nwachukwu, 2023).

Report Five: Igbophobia Case Two: The musician Brymo made harsh remarks towards the Igbo people towards the presidential election. At first, he implied that the Igbo people were not ready for the presidency and that Peter Obi should keep to leading the eastern region where he is originally from. A few days after making this remark, he responded to a deleted tweet by screaming, "Fuck The Ndi Igbo!! To Hell With It!!" before making another Igbophobic remark. This led to a petition on change.org against his candidacy for Song Writer of the Year at the All Africa Music Awards. After issuing an apology, he continued to post the same divisive remarks on social media. Brymo's nasty remarks received a lot of applause from ethnic nationalists, who frequently backed the APC (Online Tribune, 2023).

Report Six: Igbophobia Case Three: in a news report by Obi Nwakanma, he revealed: On the eve of the Presidential election, Igbo voters were warned to vote the APC or not vote at all. Failure to vote the APC would, their adversaries warned them, result in dire consequences for the Igbo in Lagos. Those who keep point on all this recall the threat once made by the Oba of Lagos, that he would drive the Igbo population into the Lagoon in 2015, if they did not vote his preferred APC candidate.

On election day, Of course, a party thug called MC Oluomo was recorded on video threatening Igbo voters, about the dire consequences of not voting the APC. This brazen act, inside a polling booth, in the presence of a Law enforcement officer has not elicited any response by the authorities. They called it a joke. Of course, that threat was ignored by the Igbo in Lagos and by many other Nigerians, including the sophisticated Yoruba, who defied Tinubu's goon brigade, and voted massively against the APC in Lagos, and turned the party into ass-swipes in their so-called domain. That defeat stung. They had to quickly cook the numbers to reduce the extent of their loss. (Nwakanma, 2023)

2. Scanning for Traces of Igbophobia in the 2023 Gubernatorial Election in Lagos State:

There are numerous pieces of evidence for Igbophobia from the build up to and during the gubernatorial election in Lagos on March 11, 2023. The emergence of an Igbo, Peter Obi, as the presidential flagbearer of the Labour Party and his defeat of Tinubu in his stronghold of Lagos seemed to have fueled the feeling which peaked during the gubernatorial election. Igbos were reportedly identified, beaten and warned not to come out to cast their votes in the belief that they supported the Labour Party Gubernatorial candidate, Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour, who is part Yoruba (from his father's side) and part Igbo (from his mother's side).

Report Seven: Igbophobia Case Four:

Igbos in Lagos were forewarned by Bayo Onanuga to refrain from "interfering" with Lagos state affairs. Onanuga, the All Progressives Congress Presidential Campaign Council's director of media and publicity, sent out the alert via a tweet on his official Twitter account: @aonanuga1956. He wrote, "Let 2023 be the last time of Igbo interference in Lagos politics. Let there be no repeat in 2027. Lagos is like Anambra, Imo, any Nigerian state. It is not No Man's Land, not Federal Capital Territory. It is Yoruba land. Mind your business."

The tweet, which was left in place despite the uproar that followed it, has been criticized for being uncalled for and for being a threat to both the harmony and survival of the country (Nigeria, 2023).

Report Eight: Igbophobia Case Five:

In his report, Obi Nwakanma (2023) reveals:

The governorship election was something else. The APC prepared for this, as if they were going to war. It was in fact war. On the eve of the election, they telegraphed their resolve by burning down a major Igbo spare parts market in Lagos. On election day, they sent an armed militia into the streets; they called out the Oro; they

macheted, beat up voters; they scaled up the violence, and they stole the elections at gun-point. They did not end there. Following the elections, they have mounted a campaign of terror against the Igbo, and those who look like the Igbo in Lagos.

Report Nine: Igbophobia Case Six:

Numerous anti-Igbo sentiment tweets and live videos confirming the existence of Igbophobia exist on social media. On March 26, 2023, the researcher joined in a twitter audio conference entitled, “Igbophobia: Myth or Reality. What are Before Ndigbo?”. The researcher opposed the existence of Igbophobia in a bid to force participants to generate evidences during the twitter conference. Some participants confirmed being warned not to come out to vote during the gubernatorial election because they were Igbo (Igbo History and Facts, 2023).

Some of the anti-Igbo tweets found during this research, which are still visible on the handle of their owners include the following:

1. From Kemi O. Magaji with the handle @MagajiKemi:

Labour Party recruited Gbedebo Chinedu Rhodes-Vivour (A.K.A. GRV) to hijack Lagos for the Ibo people. GRV is their governorship candidate. GRV mother is NKECHI, an Ibo woman, GRV wife is Ifeyinwa also Ibo from Anambra state. Yoruba youths please resist this Igbo ulterior motives.

2. From Iyanuoluwa Bolarinwa with the handle @Bolarinwaiyanu

“I was told to go back to Anambra! How does Bolarinwa sound like an Igbo name? I was rough handled, beaten and sent out because I look Igbo? Because I was not going to vote APC? This evil fire will burn you and your generation!”

3. From Dr. Olawale Ogunlana with the handle @olawalesmd:

“I was harassed today at the polling unit, told that I looked like an Igbo person. It’s obvious that the ruling party plans to use intimidation, tactical disenfranchisement, violence, thuggery and tribal bigotry to hold on to power. This is not an election. This is a crime scene”

According to a column by Nwabuikwu in *This Day* newspaper:

Over the coming days, weeks, months and perhaps even years, there will be attempts to disprove, discredit and play down the facts and significance of what took place last Saturday in many parts of Lagos during the governorship and state assembly elections which are captured in the searing tweets above.

(Nwabuikwu, 2023).

Report Ten: Igbophobia Case Seven:

Immediately after the Gubernatorial election, the Igbo were attacked at Abule Edo (Odunsi, 2023). The anti-Igbo sentiments became violent and resulted in blockades and threats against Igbo people from accessing the businesses they owned (Raphael, 2023).

Analysis of Data/Findings

The ten reports above confirm that anti-Igbo sentiment is a reality. From the reports, it can be inferred that the brazenness of the propagators of Igbophobia is clear, and their unwillingness to desist from their preconceived notion against the Igbo ethnic group is real. The findings obey the Sociological Model and throw up the factor of clannishness as the fuel instigating identity politics. That the anti-Igbo sentiment exists in tweets, video and audio interviews, with no attempt to erase them shows the vibrancy of the existence of Igbophobia, though running mostly in subaltern level and making bold appearances during socio-political contests such as the presidential and gubernatorial elections in Lagos in 2023. The findings may serve as references to historians analyzing the elections for anti-Igbo sentiment.

Recommendations

The recommendations of former President of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo and the President-General of Ohaneze Ndigbo, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu, could serve as antidotes to anti-Igbo sentiments. Obasanjo, who spoke in Awka during the one-year anniversary of Governor Chukwuma Soludo's administration in March 2023, said people should strive to be friendly with those who are afraid of them.

Obasanjo revealed that, while he was president, someone was not happy that he employed two Igbo people in his government, Prof. Charles Soludo as Governor of Central Bank, and Prof. Okonjo Iweala, as Minister of Finance. According to that person, the economy of Nigeria would be ruined. History has shown that this did not happen; rather the Nigerian economy received a boost by the talents of the duo. Obasanjo saw the action of this person who came to him as Igbophobia. He asserts in a recommendatory tone:

I don't know why he said that, except for what I can call Igbophobia, and I don't take that lightly. It remains, it persists. But when you have that type of thing that was said to me and the type of thing that you know is going on, as I have just called it, what do we do with it? I believe we have to go back to the scripture, which says we must conquer evil with good. And whoever you are, wherever people are afraid of you, you must make yourself friendly to those who are afraid of you and earn

their friendship by being good to them, and that is what we have to do. (Ujumadu, 2023)

Also during the one-year anniversary of Governor Chukwuma Soludo's administration, Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu called those promoting anti-Igbo sentiments in Lagos "political rascals". He said there was no controversy between the Igbo and Yoruba (Ujumadu, 2023).

This study recommends that voting behaviour should be based on rational choice as an antidote against Igbophobia fueled by ethnicity and religion. The researcher also recommends the following antidotes to Igbophobia:

1. Education and awareness: Educating people about the Igbo culture, history, and contribution to Nigeria can help to break down stereotypes and misconceptions that fuel Igbophobia.
2. Political and legal measures: The government can enact laws and policies that protect Igbo people from discrimination and marginalization. Political leaders can also speak out against Igbophobia and work to promote unity and inclusion.
3. Dialogue and engagement: Encouraging dialogue and engagement between different ethnic groups is necessary to build understanding, respect, and camaraderie between them.
4. Media representation: The media can play a vital role in shaping the public narrative by focusing on positive stories about the Igbo people and their contributions to society, rather than perpetuating bias and prejudice.
5. Human rights activism: Protecting the rights of people through advocacy and activism can help curb any form of Igbophobia in various forms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Igbo embody a sense of greatness that is deeply rooted in their history, culture, and traditions. Their sense of community values, respect for their ancestors, by which their traditions are passed down from one generation to the next, entrepreneurial and innovative drive and a reputation for being resilient and, though being the very qualities that incite discomfort in their neighbours, are the self-same qualities that enable them to thrive in difficult economic conditions and to succeed in a variety of fields, including business, medicine, and academia, despite facing numerous challenges throughout their history. There is no need to hate the Igbo. What is needed is to understand them.

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