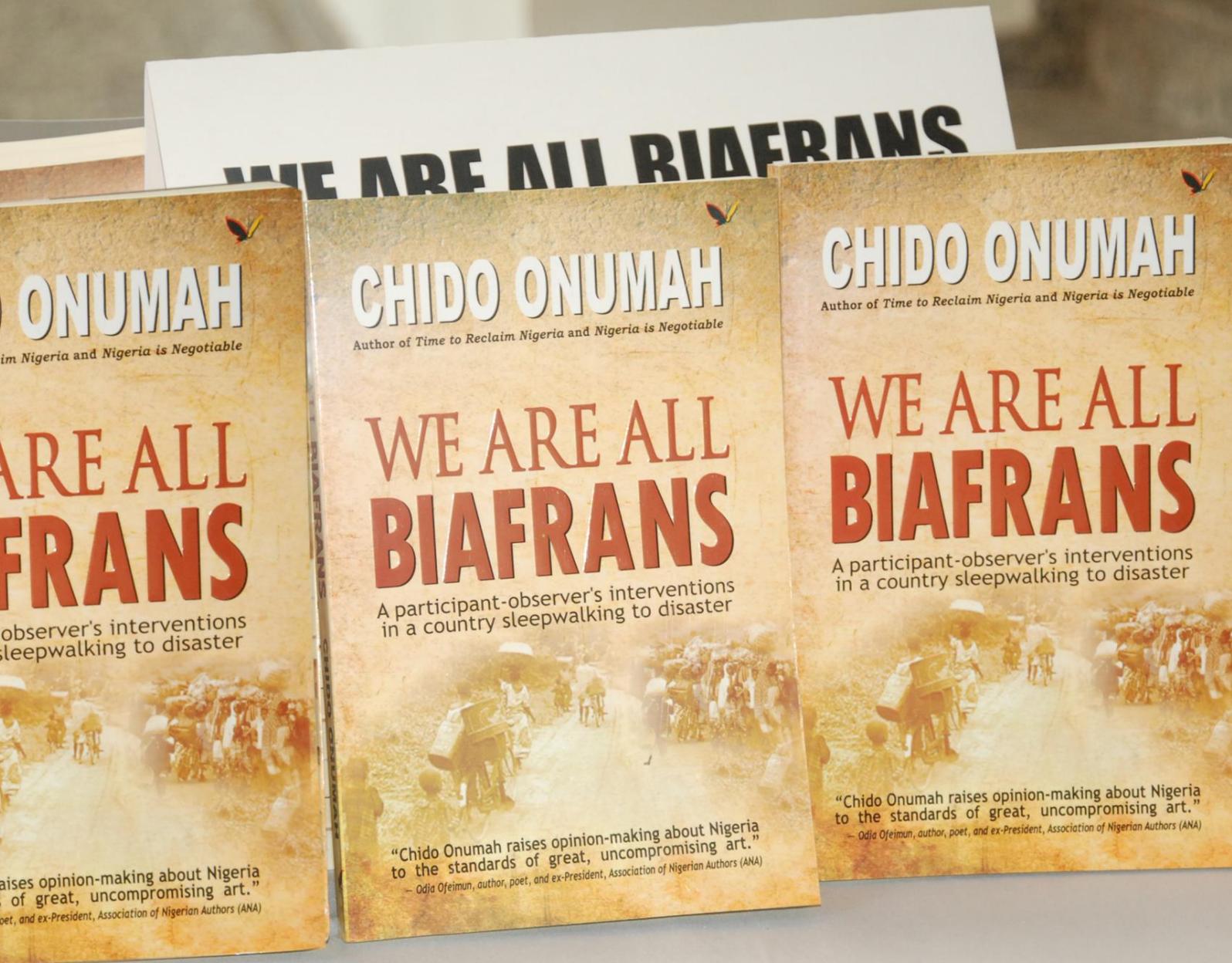


COMMUNIQUÉ

WE ARE ALL BIAFRANS



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June 2, 2016

We Are All Biafrans

PREAMBLE

1. On Tuesday, May 31, 2016, Parrésia Publishers Limited and the African Centre for Information and Media Literacy, in partnership with the Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation, with support from Nextier Advisory, hosted the public presentation of Chido Onumah's "**We Are All Biafrans: A Participant-Observer's Intervention in a Country Sleepwalking to Disaster**". The event that was moderated by Patrick O. Okigbo III, Principal Partner, Nextier Advisory, featured a speech presentation and two discussion sessions on Nigeria's federalism. The event was held at the Yar'Adua Centre in Abuja, Nigeria.
2. **H.E. Atiku Abubakar**, (two-time Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) was the Chairman of the event and presented the keynote address. Patrick O. Okigbo III engaged the former Vice President in a discussion about contemporary issues in Nigeria including the structure of the federating states, conflicts in the North East, South East and South South regions of Nigeria, and suggestions on how to rebuild Nigeria's economy.
3. The discussion was followed by a review of the book by **Dr. Chidi Odinkalu** (Head, Africa Programme, Open Society Justice Initiative). Patrick O. Okigbo III moderated a panel discussion featuring **Dr. Oby Ezekwesili** (co-founder, Transparency International), **Dr. Jibrin Ibrahim** (former Director, Centre for Democracy & Development), **Nnimmo Bassey** (Executive Director, Health of Mother Earth Foundation), and **Tope Fasua** (CEO, Global Analytics Consulting Limited). The discussion covered a broad range of topics covered in the book.

THE BOOK

4. Like Chido Onumah's two previous books (*Time to Reclaim Nigeria* and *Nigeria is Negotiable*), "**We Are All Biafrans**" is a compilation of essays published by the author in various newspapers in the last three years (2013-2016) focusing on the crisis of nationhood in Nigeria.

THE AUTHOR

5. Chido Onumah is a journalist, blogger, human rights activist and Coordinator of the African Centre for Media and Information Literacy.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

6. In his keynote address titled, "**Restructuring for Nigeria's National Unity**", H.E. Atiku Abubakar explained that Nigeria's current structure encouraged practices that impede the economic and political development of the country. He called for a reduction in the size and responsibilities of the federal government, autonomy of the component states, a tax-centred revenue base, diversified economic activities, an end to the indigene-settler dichotomy, and finally, state police to augment the central police. He concluded his speech by listing some of the benefits that could accrue to Nigeria from a fundamental restructuring of the relationship between the federal government and the federating states.

BOOK REVIEW

7. In Chidi Odinkalu's review of "We Are All Biafrans", he asserted that the title of the book could mislead the casual observer into thinking that it is an advocacy for a break up of Nigeria; rather, it is a prognosis that most Nigerians feel that the state does not work for them. He quoted the author, saying "In a sense, the Biafra experience could be a metaphor for the many unresolved problems that confront us as a country."

KEY OUTCOMES

8. **Biafra as a Metaphor:** It was reiterated throughout the discussions, and especially by Dr. Ibrahim, that the author meant "Biafra" as a metaphor to describe the marginalisation of Nigerians by a handful of political elites.
9. **Nationwide Agitations:** Some parallels were drawn across the various insurgencies and agitations in Nigeria. Some common threads of environmental degradation and economic hardships were identified. Mr. Fasua stated that these root causes had to be addressed in order to find lasting resolutions to the conflicts.
10. **Reconciling Nigerians:** Dr. Ezekwesili revealed that Nigerians could find a common rallying point in the fight against corruption, if they were able to see the connection between corruption and poverty.
11. **Federal Character:** The discussants acknowledged the original intent of the Federal Character provisions but also advocated an assessment to ascertain whether it is still working in the best interest of the country. Dr. Ezekwesili admonished that quality should not be compromised in the pursuit of diversity in governance.
12. **Leadership Should Learn From Past Errors:** H.E. Atiku Abubakar explained that Nigerian governments continuously neglected to learn from past mistakes. He admonished that the Federal Government of Nigeria should pay attention to approaches that have failed in the past, and seek innovative solutions to the nation's problems.
13. **The Change Agenda:** The performance of the Buhari administration was discussed with H.E. Atiku Abubakar urging Nigerians to exercise more patience with the administration as this is still just the first year in a four-year tenure.
14. **The Niger Delta:** The current political, socioeconomic and environmental state of affairs in the Niger Delta featured heavily in the discussions. H.E. Atiku Abubakar shared that he believed a possible solution to the youth restiveness in the Niger Delta was to invest heavily in its development. He explained that 10 percent of the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation could be sold, to raise funds for the development of economic infrastructure in the region. Mr. Nnimmo Bassey cautioned that the current militarisation of the region in response to the resurgence of militancy could exacerbate the problem and "create more Biafrans."
15. **The North East Development Commission:** A number of the panellists agreed that creating a Commission for the development of the North East may not be the most optimal approach. Dr. Ezekwesili cautioned that the Commission could become another "monstrous bureaucracy that does not deliver anything."

CONCLUSION

16. At the end of the discussions, there was a consensus that the status quo in Nigeria was not delivering the best results. Some adjustments had to be made to ensure that Nigeria was on the path to sustainable and inclusive development. The event was brought to a close by Chido Onumah.

RESOURCES

Keynote Address (H.E. Abubakar): Follow this link [“Restructuring for Nigeria’s National Unity”](#)

Book Review (Chidi Odinkalu): Follow this link [“We Are All Biafrans: Review”](#)

Opinion Piece (Nnimmo Bassey): Follow this link [“The Bite of Biafra”](#)

Event Photos: Follow this link [#WeAreAllBiafrans](#)



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