Why We Lament, NOT Celebrate Nigeria @58?
Francis Anekwe Oborji

Not an irony!

Why we lament, NOT celebrate Nigeria at its 58th Independence Day Anniversary:

“How deserted she sits,
The City [nation state] once thronged with people!
Once the greatest of nations [African Giant & Hope],
She is now like a widow [laughingstock of the world].
Once the princess of states,
She is now put to forced labour [Its citizens scattered around the world like a sheep
without a Shepherd - A good number of them, freely submitting themselves to a new
form of slavery, the severe anti-immigration laws of racism in the West and the Asian
giants;
The Nigerian State and leadership is nowhere to be found].” – (cf. Lamentations 1:1).

1. Can you see why we lament, NOT celebrate Nigeria @58:

Yes. This day, October 1, 2018, the 58th Anniversary of Nigeria’s political Independence from
Britain, we have decided in the present article, to lament, and NOT celebrate the Independence
Anniversary Day! Our reasons for this decision will be clearer to you as we proceed.

A British creation, indeed, Nigeria was! But what it is today can hardly be attributed only to the
British. What Nigeria is today is the making of Nigerians themselves. It is the failure of
leadership, as the Chinua Achebe, the doyen of African literature once wrote in his little booklet
in 1983, entitled, "The Trouble with Nigeria".

I mean the failure of leadership of the Nigerian elites, politicians and, especially, the ex-military
generals of ’66 Class who have been piloting the affairs of the country since independence in
1960 till date. These so-called leaders, or rather miss-leaders are responsible, 100% for the
suffocation, Nigeria and its citizens are suffering today.

Yes. Nigeria was a British creation 58 years ago. But Nigeria was left at the hands of Nigerians
to manage themselves for the past 58 years. What have we to show the younger generations of
today and those yet to be born as the fruit of how well Nigeria has been managed by its elites and
political class for the past 58 years? Of course nothing tangible, except, the story of bloodshed of
innocent citizens, ethnic-hate, religious bigotry and miss-management of the country. The
"managers" of the Nigerian State since independence to the present dispensation, are responsible
for the nation’s failures and woes we lament @58 independence anniversary of Nigeria today.
Again, if the ex-colonial masters are still through the back-door, controlling the affairs of Nigeria state after independence in 1960, the fault is not theirs but surely that of the so-called Nigerian leaders that allowed it to happen. Therefore, the colonial mentality of the Nigerian Leader is the reason why we have decided to lament and NOT celebrate Nigeria @ 58.

Nigeria as a nation state was not God’s creation. Nigeria is a British colonial creation. Like everything colonial, it has colonial trappings, which we have not yet, as a nation state been liberated. That is one of the failures of the Nigerian Leader since independence in 1960 till date, the permanence of colonial trappings in the post-independence Nigeria.

Yes. Nigeria's independence from Britain came almost on a "platter of gold." Again, like anything acquired without much long struggle of pain, suffering, denials, deaths and even martyrdom of some of its key founding statesmen and women at the hands of the oppressors, Nigerian state was a trap. The British never created Nigeria to succeed as a modern and veritable African nation state that would cater for the needs of Nigerian citizens. The new nation Nigeria, a priori, was created by the British to continue to serve their British colonial interests and agenda in Africa, and to perpetuate in power, their preferred ethno-religious group - the local spinoffs, who have continued to serve British neo-colonial project as indirect-rule agents in Nigeria today.

You now see why we lament, NOT celebrate Nigeria @58?
Again, the problem with Nigeria is not that its Independence was acquired on a platter of gold, but that the Nigerian leaders who inherited the country from the British and all those who parade themselves as patriotic Nigerian leaders from 1960 to the present dispensation, never saw things differently. They always think and act by proxy, taking instructions from the former colonial masters and their allies. The Nigerian Leader has continued to govern the country through the lens and remote control machinery of the British neo-colonial project and agenda in Africa. Even when the ex-colonial masters are not interested in the affairs of Nigeria, the Nigerian Leader gets them interested and involved.

2. There is something in a Name:
This is why we have decided to lament, NOT celebrate Nigeria @58.

For instance, look at the name, "Nigeria"!
The Nigerian Leader has never asked how that name "NIGERIA" came about!
Why has the Nigerian Leader continued to find it difficult to change the name "NIGERIA", like his counterparts in Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia, etc. have done in their respective countries? Why can't Nigeria get a name chosen by its own citizens and leaders? Why must Nigeria continue with its colonial name? The Nigerian Leader does not know that there is something in a name, and in how your name come about.

For instance, in Biblical traditions, when one assumes a new status or rather assigned a number function, he takes a new name to depict his new status and mission. E.g., in the Old Testament: - Abram becomes Abraham; and Sarai becomes Sarah, to depict their new status and mission as the father and mother of the coming new nation and new people of God.
In the New Testament, Jesus gave a new name, "Peter", to the Prince of the Apostles. He changed his name from Simon and Cephas to Peter, because of the new mission and life Peter has been commissioned by the Divine Lord and Redeemer to live. There are countless number of such examples both in Biblical traditions and in secular history, of how individuals or nations received new names at their moment of attainment of freedom as children of the Living God. The people of Israel got their name as Israel likewise.

The fact is that there is something in a name!

It is true that the name the Whiteman gave to one of the great Rivers that traverse the landscape of Nigeria, is River NIGER. It could also be argued that the term "NIGER" is the root from which the name Nigeria was taken by the colonial masters. However, we forgot that the African natives in Nigeria and elsewhere have their own native name for the River Niger before the Whiteman ever set his foot on the continent.

The question is, 'What stops the new Nigerian Leader in searching for the original African name of River Niger, and in choosing the African inspired name for the River? Why has the Nigerian Leader decided to settle, without skin-pain with the colonial name for the main River that traverses the length and breadth of Nigeria? Why is it that since Independence in 1960, the Nigerian Leader has never given a thought to this embarrassing fact of our living with colonial identity in Nigeria?

Let us not forget the Latin root of the word "NIGER" (and NIGERIA):

Have we in Nigeria ever asked ourselves why African Americans in the United States, till date, will never tolerate being called with such a terminology like "NIGER" (niga?). And even today in South Africa, you will be stoned by South African Blacks if you ever use such a terminology (niger) to their hearing?

The fact is that the terminology, "niger" is derogatory. This comes from its Latin roots. In Latin, "niger", means the following: dirty, evil, monkey, etc. Thus, to use such a derogatory terminology (niger/niga) today in America or South Africa is to remind African citizens of these countries of their painful past – that is, history of slavery humiliation and degradation of their human dignity they suffered at the hands of the White Supremists' government and individuals!

Unfortunately, in Nigeria, we have continued to live in that White Supremists' characterizations of the African Race with the word "niger". In Nigeria, we pretend not to know or bother ourselves with the fact that our country is still carrying a colonial name and identity even 58 years after our political independence.

In Nigeria, we pretend not to bother that the name of our country - our fatherland and motherland, bears till date, since 1914, was given to it by a German "prostitute", living with her British contracted mercenary lover, Lord Lugard in Nigeria. The name “Nigeria” was acquired when this German lover was in her libido mood with her lover, Lugard (a military mercenary who had been previously convicted when he was in South Africa, working with the Scout Movement). The German girl friend of a colonial mercenary was the person that first pronounced
that word "NIGERIA", as the name of our country. The Nigerian State has been functioning under this tainted image of a name since 1914.

Again, the man whose girl friend gave our country this infamous name, it must be remembered, started first as a member of the British Establishment Boys’ Scouts Movement that were founded purposely for the British colonial project in Africa. This becomes clearer when we remember that the Boys’ Scout Movement was created by the British Establishment as a Civil defence outfit, to defend the interests and privileges of the White Minority regime in the Apartheid South Africa. It was thereafter that Lugard was first contracted by the British Royal East African Company, and from there, was contracted later by the British Establishment and posted to West Africa. In each case, however, with the same objective of plundering and subduing the natives of the African continent and society for continued economic interests of the infamous British Empire.

3. The ‘sacrosanct’ Draconian Political Structure of Nigeria?

You can now see why we have decided to lament and not to celebrate Nigeria @58.

Is it surprising then that the Nigerian Leader who refuses to see a problem with the name his country bears, will see anything wrong with the draconian political structure of Nigeria? Can such a Nigerian Leader listen to the recent calls by eminent citizens and groups for political restructuring of the country? It is impossible to convince the Nigerian Leader that Nigeria as presently structured is NOT working and will never work. That Nigeria needs to be restructured into functional fiscal federalism with regional Autonomy, if we want really to save the nation from total disintegration.

The Nigerian Leader, in his myopic and lust for power, won't see this. Perhaps, he is waiting to be shown out of office or he himself to plunge the country into another genocidal war before he would see reason or hear people cry!

At the age of 58 years old as an independent state from Britain, Nigeria has not been able to conduct a credible census - head-count of its populations. The last credible census of Nigeria was in 1921, prior to independence in 1960. Subsequent census, were doctored and rigged in favour of the colonial most favoured ethnic-group and region, and later by the independent Nigerian state. This was in preparation to perpetuate their hold unto power in the country by the colonial masters after they might have gone. This is the colonial census and political arrangement that is still been used in governing Nigeria. It has been operative since colonial Era after 1921 census to this day.

This is why we lament, NOT celebrate Nigeria @58: The Nigerian Leader in order to perpetuate himself and mediocre leadership, is an expert in rigging, not only of the population census, but especially, political ELECTIONS in the country. A classical example of how clever and arrogant the Nigerian Leader is with rigging elections, was the insensitive manner he carried out the first post-independence rigging of elections in the country, in the defunct Western region.
The Nigerian Leader, in a bid to plant his spinoffs in various regions of the country, then decided to rig the regional election in the Old Western region of Nigeria in favour of his self-appointed spinoff and local agent he wanted to plant in that region.

This was the beginning of first-class, first election rigging in post-independent Nigeria. It was indeed a costly rigging, which the Nigerian Leader didn't care much about. Because, the military took advantage of that rigging in the Western region to launch the nation into the bloody coup of 1966. In a bid to respond to the insensitivity of the Nigerian Leader, the young army officers who came from different parts of the country, decided to take the law into their hands, thereby plunging the nation into senseless killings of prominent politicians and innocent citizens through a military coup. The wound of which is yet to heal.

Unfortunately, instead of the Nigerian Leader to acknowledge his mistakes, he ran to his former colonial masters, who with the help of their BBC media machinery and propaganda, decided to give the military mutiny and coup an "ethnic" colouring. This led to the 1967 counter coup and the pogroms against the Igbo in Northern Nigeria and other parts of the country. This is the genesis of post-independence bloodshed and senseless killings of innocent citizens before the watch of the Nigerian state inept and mediocre leadership.

The result was the three-year Nigeria-Biafra war [1967-1970], and its continued consequences of Biafran pogroms. The political instability of Nigeria planted since then is what the present day Nigeria Leader, remnant of the perpetrators of the 1966/1967 coups and the pogroms, are incapable of providing the needed leadership for the healing the country needs most today.

Though, the civil war combatant is said to have come to an end in 1970, the way Nigerian State has been treating the victims of that war leaves much to be desired. It all shows that the war is now in its new metamorphosis of economic, political and developmental marginalization as well as militarization of the former Biafra enclave [especially, South Eastern region].

So, you can see why we lament, and do not celebrate Nigeria @58!

The Nigerian State that has failed to acknowledge that something happened, that it did some wrong to a segment of its people, cannot be expected to organize even a befitting burial to the victims of the Biafran war. Neither can it have the moral courage to erect a national cenotaph of international standard in honour of those victims of state sponsored war and terrorism.

We can now see why the Nigerian State never cared at the end of the civil war, to look for those Biafran children inflicted with kwashiorkor, caused by the federal government blockade of Igboland during the civil war. The Nigerian state never cared whether the refugees of the war that were airlifted to some African countries at the heat of the war, returned or did not return to the country after the war ended in 1970 to the present-day. Rather, the first action of the Nigerian state and leadership immediately the war ended in 1970, was to frozen all bank accounts of Ndigbo in the country!

Moreover, the Nigerian State and leadership, immediately the war ended in 1970, decided, not only to stripe the victims of the war their economic power, but also, nationalized all foreign
companies and government parastatals immediately the war ended. This was at the time the victims of the war hadn't the economic muscle to participate in the competition for the buying of the auctioned foreign and governmental parastatals in the country.

We are talking of the Nigerian State, which instead of playing the role of a mother of succour for the victims of the war, decided rather, to visit them with political and economic impoverishment and exclusion in the scheme of things in Nigeria through a lopsided government, like the one we have today in the country. Today Nigeria is under a government that divided the country between 5% and 97% of those that voted for or against it into power. This is the formula with which the country is been governed since the present federal government came to power in 2015.

4. The Nigerian State that does not Honour Victims of Violence:

This is why we have decided to lament and not to celebrate Nigeria @58!

The Nigerian State and leadership is yet to atone for the blood of the innocent it shed during the Biafran pogroms and the civil war. Any wonder Nigeria appears today as a country where the lives of its citizens are worth nothing.

Think of the ongoing kidnappings, ritual and extra-judicial killings of innocent citizens! What of the activities and killings being perpetuated on daily basis by the two dreaded terrorist groups, Boko Haram and the Fulani herdsmen militants? Why the present Federal government of Nigeria is keeping silence, or rather doing nothing tangible to stop all the carnage, an open and well documented crimes against humanity taking place in Nigeria today through the terrorist activities of these two terrorists groups, beats the imagination of any relatively conscious person?

The question is, ‘Where is the presence of the Nigerian state in all these plights of ordinary citizens of Nigeria at the hands of the Fulani herdsmen terrorists?’ That means in all these yearnings of ordinary citizens over the killing sprees, perpetuated against them on daily basis by the Fulani herdsmen militants, Nigeria state @58, is nowhere to be found. What an irony!

You now see why we lament, and do not celebrate Nigeria @58: Just the other day, on the Eve of Nigeria’s 58th Independence Day Anniversary, a good number of innocent citizens were once again, massacred in the State of Plateau by the same terror group that carried out similar killings of countless innocent citizens in the same Plateau State in the month of June this year. Yet. The Nigerian State was nowhere to be found.

At the beginning of the New Year 2018, the same terror group had carried series of massacres of innocent citizens in Benue State, and other states in the Middle Belt and Southern parts of the country. Yet, the perpetrators have not been called to book by the Nigerian State.

The question remains: ‘Why has the Nigerian State not been there to protect the lives of its ordinary citizens?’ This is the one billion question on the month of all people of goodwill as Nigeria clocks 58 years of its existence as an independent African State from former British colonial masters! In the midst of all these things, where is the Nigerian State?
The poor, helpless peasants, villagers and citizens of all classes in rural and urban areas are maimed and massacred on broad daylight on daily basis by well known terrorist group, by name Fulani herdsmen militants; the 4th most dangerous terrorist organization in the world according to the UN International Index ranking of world terrorist organizations. Yet. The Nigerian State is fond of defending this 4th most dangerous terrorist group in the country, allowing them to move about with AK47 and their “sacred cows”, sometimes, with military protection. What an irony!

You can now see why we have decided to lament and NOT celebrate Nigeria @58: The Miyetti Allah, the National Umbrella Association of the Cattle Breeders in Nigeria, which had time without number, through its public statements proved that they coordinate the activities of the terrorists herdsmen, have never been arrested by the government and its security agencies! What an irony!

For the past three years alone, when the killings of innocent citizens by the Fulani herdsmen militants assumed the highest proportion ever in the history of Nigeria, none of the perpetrators (Fulani herdsmen militants or officials of Miyetti Allah) have been arrested or called to book by the Nigerian State. No wonder, people are beginning to conclude that the Miyetti Allah is perhaps, the Cabal that controls this Nigerian government. What a fate of once a great nation?

Unfortunately, the Grand National Patron of the Miyetti Allah is no other person than the current President of Nigeria @58. And the Supreme Leader of the Miyetti Allah is no less a figure than the most revered, Supreme Religious Leader of all Muslims in Nigeria and West Africa, the Sultan. You now see why both the Miyetti Allah and their foot-soldiers, Fulani herdsmen militants are treated like sacred cows by the present Federal government of Nigeria. What an irony!

What is more, you can now see very clearly, why in Nigeria today, the life of a cow worth more than that of ordinary citizens from the Middle Belt and Southern states of Nigeria. And since majority of people from the Middle Belt and Southern states are Christians, only a naive person would pretend NOT to see the religious undertone in the whole affair, the direction the present federal government of Nigeria is taking the country since it came to power in 2015. To deny there is a grand plan by the present Federal government of Nigeria to accomplish their long desired total Islamization of Nigeria, is like calling devil a saint?

But, it is only a leader of mediocre intellect and memory will think that he will ever succeed in unleashing a Jihadist dynasty in a complex, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural country like Nigeria. No type of Islamization agenda will ever succeed in Nigeria. To think any person or group of persons could achieve that is to ignore the history and reality on the ground - the type of sophisticated populations and individuals that inhabit that land space called Nigeria! No type of Islamization agenda will ever, be achieved in Nigeria.

5. MY PRAYER OF LAMENTATIONS FOR NIGERIA @58:

This is the reason why, like the prophets of the Old, we lament, NOT celebrate Nigeria @58:
Our lamentations for Nigeria @58 is our prayer to God to please, come to the aid of Nigeria in distress. Oh God, may the prayers of your people in Nigeria, in the face of the present failed Nigerian state and leadership, not be in vain.

Oh God, today, many of your people living in that geographical expression called Nigeria, have lost fate in their nation state, especially in its present leadership and political structure. May You, Oh God, help your people in Nigeria to rebuild their lives once more, and to have a nation state they can really, call home again!

Oh God, many citizens of Nigeria, have either mentally or physically, left the country. Many Nigerians are remembering the 58 years of its political independence without feeling of any emotional link with the Nigerian State and leadership. Please, Good Lord, give your crying people in Nigeria, a Leader according to your heart!

Oh God, the state of things for the life of your people in Nigeria today leaves much to be desired! Please, Good Lord, come to their aid and be their leader yourself. In normal circumstances, the state exists to protect and promote the life and welfare of its citizens. In Nigeria today, Oh God, it is the other way round: 'the Nigerian State appears to have been created, structured, and governed to kill and destroy the indigenous populations of the country.' Nigerian state as it is functioning presently, presents the life of a cow as more important than that of the human person, the people of indigenous ethnic populations of the country.

Oh God, how can you allow things to continue to deteriorate to this level in Nigeria. Please, God, come to the aid of your helpless people in Nigeria. You are their only hope Oh Lord. Don't leave or abandon your people to the merciless heart and hands of the wicked!

This is because we know, Oh God, that you did not create us humans to be killed like fowls. Neither did you allow us to build our own nations, only for you to abandon us at the hands of wicked and tyrannical dictatorship as leaders of destruction and hopelessness. Oh God, show us that you are still the leader of your people, and deliver us from the hands of the wicked.

How can you Oh God, leave your people at the mercy and hands of a wicked leadership that values the life of a cow more than that of a human being. Show us Oh Lord, that you are the source of our life and that Human Life is the most important thing you hold dear of the things You have created on the face of the earth. Show us Oh Lord that human life is Supreme.

For this, we come to you, Oh God, pleading, that with this Nigeria @58 Independence Day Anniversary, we shall see your face and saving mercy on all your people living in that country. That from now onwards, Nigeria will say ‘bye-bye’ to bad and evil leadership. We have had enough of it in history of this country, Oh God.

God, please come to the aid of your helpless people in Nigeria. Show them that you are alive and that you are still in control of our human destiny. Oh God, show your face, kindness and mercy to your helpless children in Nigeria.
If not for anything else, OH GOD, let us know that the blood of all the innocent children and citizens shed by the Nigerian State since the Biafran pogroms, including the blood of the innocent victims of the Fulani herdsmen and Boko Haram terrorists killings, won't be in vain. Oh God, in Nigeria we have witnessed a lot of bloodshed of innocent citizens, carried out by the Nigerian state and terrorist groups! We don’t want to witness again the killings of innocent people in Nigeria. We have had enough, Oh God!

Sometimes, these state sponsored killings of innocent citizens are carried out in the name of 'keeping Nigeria one.' Please, Good God, come to our aid and help us to realize that human life comes first before the so-called Nigerian unity that has never been there.

OH GOD, in Nigeria, the state has for long made the words 'unity and faith' a sacrosanct (e.g., Nigerian coat-of-arms), forgetting that thieves can come together, get united among themselves for the purpose of committing armed robbery. And that one may instead of putting his faith in God, decide to repose such a faith in a fetish idols.

So, please God, help us as a nation state to realize that @58, we need to reflect and change Nigeria's ill-conceived coat-of-arms of 'unity and faith' to some other sublime virtues like justice, truth, freedom, equity and honesty. These are sublime virtues, unlike ‘unity and faith’, that cannot in anyway be turned into something undesirable.

Oh God, for long time, the Nigerian Leader, has in the name of promoting unity [without right political structure on the ground], committed a lot of atrocities and genocides against your people living in that country, Nigeria! From these blood sucking rulers and regimes, OH GOD, deliver us. Amen. May God save our land and people from the hands of those wicked leaders who hold the Spirit captive in Nigeria today! Amen

May God bless and protect all of us, and our land from the hands of blood-sucking, ethnic-irredentist, tyrannical regimes and leaders. Amen.

This is my prayer or rather lamentation for Nigeria @58, and for all us. Happy Independence to whosoever finds reasons to celebrate!

Happy survival for all those who survived in recent times, the invasion of their ancestral lands by the dreaded terrorist groups, Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen.

Happy survival to all the recent and former victims of military and police brutality, impunity and recklessness in Nigeria.

May God save and bless His suffering people in Nigeria! Amen.

Francis Anekwe Oborji, a Roman Catholic priest, is Professor Ordinarius of contextual theology at the Pontifical Urbaniana University, Rome.