



**NIGER DELTA UNIVERSITY
WILBERFORCE ISLAND,
BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA**

28TH INAUGURAL LECTURE

**“MOPPING THE WET FLOOR WHILE
OVERLOOKING THE LEAKING ROOF”:
RETHINKING PEACE BUILDING
IN THE NIGER DELTA**

**BY
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DEDICATION

This inaugural lecture is dedicated to my wife (Grace) and children (Ayibaemi, Ayibanoa, Ayibatari and Ayibatokoni

PROTOCOL

The Ag. Vice Chancellor

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)

Other Principal Officers of the University

Fellow Deans

Directors

Professors

Heads of Department

Other colleagues and friends from the academia

The non-academic staff of the University here present

My Chief mentor (Professor Kimse Okoko)

My Wife, Children and family members

My friends in other fields of endeavour

Brethren of The Gospel Christian Assembly (TGCA)

The Management and Staff of Belary Schools

Distinguished guests

Students of the faculty of Social Sciences and other
faculties

My Lords, Spiritual and Temporal

Ladies and Gentlemen

PREAMBLE

Ag. Vice Chancellor sir, I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts with the university community and the public. An Inaugural lecturer is expected to do many things including, but not limited to, defending his chair or educating the audience on an aspect of his discipline (Asuka, 2014); declaring what he/she professes by sharing research findings and major contributions to knowledge or sharing something fresh with the audience (Ademola, 2008). I have therefore chosen to share an aspect of my research with this audience. As a political scientist, my area of specialization is development studies, and within this discipline, my research focus on peace, conflict and security studies, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Over the years, I have done extensive research on the Niger Delta and this lecture seeks to highlight an aspect of my work in this area. I have entitled it “*Mopping the Wet Floor While Overlooking the Leaking Roof: Rethinking Peace Building in the Niger Delta*”

Acknowledgement

Ag. Vice Chancellor sir, please permit me to begin this lecture by acknowledging some individuals who have contributed to the development of my career. First is my maternal uncle, Chief Elliot Kalaoru of Obunagha community who supported my decision to acquire university education when I got admission to study Political Science at the unique University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT).

At UNIPORT I met several lecturers and scholars. Young lecturers who then were Assistant Lecturers, including but not limited to Dr. John Boye Ejobowah, Dr. Steve Onyeiwu, Dr. N.T. Enyia, Professor Aja Akpuru Aja, Professor Henry Alapiki, Professor Steve Okodudu, Dr. Asuquo Edem, Professor Johnson Nna and late Mr. Francis Ewuruigwe raised my motivation to become a Social Scientist. The middle-aged ones such as now Professor Omenihu Nwaorgu and Professor Steve Orupabo (now Steve Tamuno) led me to the virtues of acquiring skills and knowledge, while those who then were the oldest or elders such as Professor Kimse Okoko. Professor W.J. Okowa, Professor Olatunde Ojo, and Professor S.W.E Ibodje, drummed the value of “need for achievement” into my consciousness. But of all the lecturers and scholars I met, Professor Okoko had the most profound impact on my career development.

Professor Okoko was not only my dissertation supervisor, but took special interest in nurturing me to take strong interest in academics. In addition to being his student, I also worked with him as his Research Assistant when he consulted for the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC). As his student and Research Assistant, Professor Okoko held no knowledge back from me. Unlike other students who only learnt the theory of politics from him, I had the rare privilege of learning both the theory and practice. He taught me to know very early that to be a good

academic you write for recognition and not for promotion. I learnt from him the virtues of hard work and dignity of labour. He groomed me to know that as a lecturer you do not exploit or destroy your students through the compulsory sale of books/ handouts and sale of examination grades. Sir, I am pleased to let you know that I have kept these lessons and instructions. I want to thank you immensely for the training that did not only help to take me to my present height, but also made me to stand out very early in my career.

Mr. Ag. Vice Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I was an Assistant Lecturer when the Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) invited me and several other academics to an oil seminar at the Hotel Presidential in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. It was break time and I was having a dialogue with three other young colleagues when we were interrupted by an old Professor from the now Rivers State University. After asking to know our status, disciplines and affiliations, he counselled us on how to grow as academics. He had left us but returned to ask if we were married. All of us, except one, answered in the affirmative, and he went on to ask why he asked the question. He replied, “because you are all men, let me warn you, a bad wife can undermine your career development” ... He added, “bad children too”. Going by the thesis of this old Professor whose name I unfortunately have forgotten, it is logical to conclude that I have attained this height in my career because I have a good wife and good children who by their conduct have not only supported me but have created an enabling environment for my studies. I sincerely thank my wife Grace, and children, Ayibaemi, Ayibanoa, Ayibatari, and Ayibatokoni for their love and invaluable contribution to my academic growth. May you can guess my wife's contributions, but what about my children? They are my Research Assistants; with my guidance, they regularly source for data and literature for me from the internet, and draw charts for my studies.

I have been very lucky in my career. From the very beginning I came across fine academics who were (and are still) always willing to share knowledge with me. The likes of Dr. William Ehwareme (Delta State University), Professor Andrew Owona (Delta State University), Professor Augustine Ikelegbe (University of Benin), Professor Jimmy Adegoke, Professor Michael Watts (University of Berkeley, California United States), Jennifer Giroux, Dr. Cyril Obi (Social Science Research Council in the United States), late Professor Welford-A.L. Izonfuo, Professor Nabofa, Professor Edet Abasiokong, Professor R.K. Udoh, Professor Chris Opukri, Professor Tuemi Asuka (former Deputy Vice Chancellor of the Niger Delta University) and Professor Chris Ikporukpo (former Vice Chancellor of the Niger Delta University). These distinguished academics motivated me and taught me lessons that aided my academic growth. For example, Dr. Ehwareme strengthened my resolve not to pay to publish. He sowed the idea of the conference I convened in 2008. Professor Ikporukpo believes that you can excel as an academic no matter the challenges of our environment. For him, no excuse is tenable not to be a successful academic. He taught me the skills I needed to publish in reputable international journals. He would always ask me this question whenever we met, “what are you researching on now? I always gave an answer and because he was following my progress keenly, he always knew when I spent too much time on a research and would insist I finish and move on to another.

I remember like yesterday when late Professor Izonfuo called me into his office in January 2005, just a week after my PhD convocation. He had invited me to school me on how not to be an academic. He said, “some young fellows like you decide to rest for a while after the PhD and never get out of the rest”; he advised that I should not follow their footsteps, noting that in this system “you publish or you perish” and “you can only publish if you constantly

engage in research” I thanked him and left. Surprisingly, exactly one year after, Professor Izonfuo called me back into his office to ask for a progress report. I told him, and he replied, “you can carry yourself”. Thereafter, he at any given opportunity encouraged me to work harder. May God bless his soul. Mr. Ag. Vice Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, it will be an uphill task to mention one by one what all these senior colleagues did individually and collectively to motivate me. I would only say thank you and pray that God would bless them abundantly.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, there were others who motivated me without knowing. In this category are Professor John Buseri, (first Vice Chancellor of the Niger Delta University), Professor Humphrey Ogoni (the immediate Vice Chancellor) and Professor Kinsley Alagoa (former Deputy Vice Chancellor of the Niger Delta University). Vice Chancellor sir, each time I interact with these Professors I have just mentioned, they, by their humility, assure me that I am a worthy colleague. Professor Alagoa would stop by to offer an Assistant Lecturer (as I was then) a lift or ask to know what has happened to my vehicle if he found me stranded. As Vice Chancellor, Professor Buseri would sit side by side with an Assistant Lecturer on a boat ride from Yenagoa to Amassoma or vice versa. He would ask to know your status, and if you tell him you are an Assistant Lecturer, he would go on to ask to know if you were pursuing the PhD Degree. Thereafter, he would tell you, “if you do not have a PhD you are not a Lecturer”. For some, he was arrogant for making this statement, but for me it was the tonic I needed to motivate me. Thank you, sir, for this and the humility I have learnt from you.

The list of persons to thank is very long and I cannot possibly mention all here. But I cannot fail to mention my siblings; Mrs. Alae-ere Anderson Sele, Miss Beatrice Ibaba, and brother-in-law Dr. A.P. Sele, Professor Samuel Gowon Edoumiekumo (the Acting

Vice Chancellor of the Niger Delta University), Professor Ambily Etekepe, Dr. Ogban Ogban-Iyam, Professor Stanley Okafor, Professor Olajire Olanira, Dr. (Mrs.) Dorcas Bawo, Dr. Ukoha Ukiwo, Dr. Fidelis Allen, Professor Johnson Nna, Dr. Aaron Kiikpoye, Dr. Dawari George, Dr. Eliot Sibiri, and Mr. B.G. Ibani. Others are Dr. Philips Okolo, Professor Steve Tombofa, Professor (Mrs) Abiodun Adeyemo, Professor Innocent Aprioku, Professor Michael Y. Nabofa, Reverend (Dr.) S.T. K. Appah, Professor Hassan Saliu, Professor Shola Omotola, Dr Freedom Onuoha, Dr. Gerald Ezirim, Mr. Anthony Okoye, Pastror Alex Apere, Pastor (Mrs) Doumo Apere, Pastor Allen Amatari, my friend Mr. Amos Oweifighe, and last but certainly not the least, my hardworking and visionary Research Assistant, Mr. Tarila Ebiede of the university of Leuven in Belgium. Others to thank include all the non-academic staff that have worked with me, particularly in the Department of Political Science, Halls of Residence, and Centre for Niger Delta Studies of the Niger Delta University. I am also thankful to all my friends in the Non-governmental organizations sector and my brethren of The Gospel Christian Assembly. I may have missed out some persons inadvertently and do apologize if you were not mentioned.

Summary of my Argument

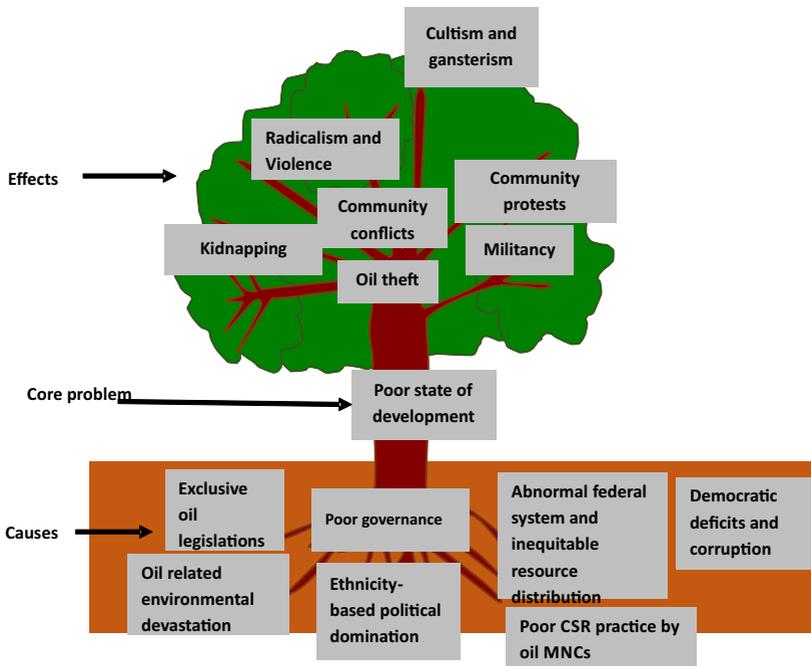
Vice Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, you may be wondering what a 'leaking roof' has got to do with peace building in the Niger Delta. For the uninitiated, you may also wonder what peace building means. This lecture addresses a question that has elicited several answers. The recurrence of violence in the Niger Delta despite several interventions by the Nigerian State, and the multinational oil companies has elicited concerns. The dominant

theme in the literature blames this quagmire on the country's perverted federal system that is yet to be restructured, ethnicization of resource allocation that has continued to drain resources from the Niger Delta, and unjust legislations governing the oil industry such as the Petroleum Act, Land Use Act, Oil Minerals Act, and Oil Pipelines Act, among others.

But these issues, despite being valid explanations for the seemingly unending conflict in the region, ignore many other that relate to internal contradictions in the Niger Delta. Significantly, these issues are fundamental to peace building in the region. First is horizontal inequalities (HIs) among the different ethnic nationalities in the region, and the resultant suspicion, antagonism and fear of domination of one group by another. The second point is the socio-cultural context of the region that has aided the total disregard and contempt for hardwork, dignity of labour and the public good, and the production of personality traits that undermine peace and security. Third is the crisis of leadership in the region, and the resultant poor quality of governance, service delivery, overt corruption and the consequent neglect of development. The fourth issue is overlooking the consequences of the violence such as the exposure of young adolescents and youths to violence and the subsequent neglect of behavior modification in the peace building process. The fifth point to note is the failure to integrate non-oil related but key conflict issues such as climate change into the peace building process.

Ag. Vice Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I assert that overlooking the issues noted above has created gaps in the peace building process. I therefore argue that overlooking these gaps is like “mopping the wet floor of a leaking roof while leaving the points of leakage in the roof unattended to”, noting that the peace

building efforts will most likely be futile, the same way the owner or occupant of a house will continue to mop the floor without getting it dry if the leaking roof is not repaired or replaced. Just as the man or woman in my village has not been able to keep his/her floor dry whenever it rains because of the failure to mend the leaking roof, the Nigerian state (at all levels – federal, state and local government) has for several years not been able to secure peace in the Niger Delta due to its failure to address the fundamental issues that created the violence and the consequences thereof. My argument does not acquit the present state of the country's federal system, the laws governing the oil industry and ethnic politics of the flaws in peace building, but insist that peace building initiatives in the region would most likely fail if internal contradictions and consequences of the violence are not addressed. Federal restructuring, resource ownership and control, and abrogation or review of the present laws governing the oil industry cannot stand alone to promote peace in the region. Treating them as stand-alone factors would mean not amending or replacing the leaking roof, and consequently the floor would continue to be wet; suggesting that the region would most likely be in permanent violence. The conflict tree analysis of the conflict (see figure 1) show that interventions by the Nigerian State has thus far focused on the effects and the core of the conflict; neglecting the roots and the fruits that have further grown into other conflicts such as inter-ethnic conflicts and the threat of ethnic terrorism in the region.



Source : adapted from : www .
<http://politybooks.com/ccr/contents/chapters/1.pdf>; [www.pjp-
 eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/7110680/](http://www.pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/7110680/)

The lecture thus suggests an inclusive peace building strategy that would capture these essential factors that threaten peace in the region.

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