



ISSN: 0975-833X

## REVIEW ARTICLE

### HOW TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF RACIAL STEREOTYPES IN NIGERIA

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#### ARTICLE INFO

##### Article History:

Received 28<sup>th</sup> January, 2013

Received in revised form

14<sup>th</sup> February, 2014

Accepted 19<sup>th</sup> March, 2014

Published online 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2014

##### Key words:

Ethnicity,  
Sub-ethnicity,  
Language use,  
Racism, Unity.

#### ABSTRACT

In this paper, we examine the use of racial stereotypes by one ethnic group against another in Nigeria and the data used were drawn from participant observation, recordings of spontaneous utterances and interviews with some travellers who returned from crisis-ridden places in Nigeria. We, however, focus on Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá, the three major ethnic groups because the population of the three outnumbers the population of other ethnic groups and if the three are united, then, such unity will serve as a good reference point for other ethnic groups and the survival of the country can be assured. We argue that racial or language stereotypes are common occurrences in Nigeria and that the use by an ethnic or a sub-ethnic group against another cuts across nearly all ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria. We show also that since independence, successive governments in Nigeria have been conscious of the need to promote unity, peace and oneness among the various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria but that much is still desired to promote the indices of oneness and that such indices include the removal of ethnic or sub-ethnic bias, quick resolution of conflicts if there are and national acceptance of Nigerians wherever they may be in any part of the country and to achieve these there should be emphasis on inter-marriage, appointments of non-indigenes into each of the states' cabinet, review of the Nigerian constitution such that any Nigerian born in any state can be regarded as the indigene of the state among others. We conclude that racial stereotypes are just products of pride, self-esteem, self-deceit and self-ego and that from all sincerity are artificially created and the use should be discouraged by every well-meaning Nigerians so as to have a racism-free Nigeria.

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#### INTRODUCTION

A stereotype, according to Turnbull (2010:1169), is “a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but which is often not true in reality”. But, we are of the view that Turnbull's (2010:1169) meaning of stereotyping may not be true in all cases especially in the area of language use and sound production. For example, when there was a disagreement between the descendants of Ephraim the son of Jacob and other descendants of the other sons of Jacob, the descendants of the other sons of Jacob were able to identify the descendants of Ephraim for destruction because the descendants of Ephraim would pronounce the alveolar sound [s] instead of the palato-alveolar sound [ʃ]. Instead of the word “Shibboleth” the descendants of Ephraim would pronounce “Sibboleth” (see Judges 12:6). Studies conducted by Labov (1968) and Ìkòtún (2008:76, 2013:66) reveal that what is the case with the descendants of Ephraim is similar to some other ethnic groups in the world and that such groups are labeled with social or linguistic stigma because of their biological or linguistic deficiency in sound or word production. However, we endorse Turnbull's (2010:1169) meaning for racial

stereotypes - the focus of this paper, because they are based on colour, misunderstanding, political marginalization, hatred, land dispute and disaffection to mention a few. Like what obtains in some parts of the world, there are two types of perennial crises in Nigeria. While one type is based on land dispute and which may not involve the use of racial or language stereotypes, the other is based on ethnic domination, misunderstanding, political marginalization, hatred, religion, traditions, beliefs/system, envy and disaffection which have all resulted in the use of racial or language stereotypes as it is the case between Hausa and Yorùbá, Hausa and Igbo and Igbo and Yorùbá. The crises that are based on land disputes remind one of the crises between Aguleri and Umuleri in the East, Ife and M dákeke in the West, Erìn-Ilé and Offà and Tiv and Jukun in the North to mention a few.

In addition, language stereotype or derogatory language, which results from racism, is a common occurrence in some parts of the world also. For example, in Rwanda, the calling of the Tutsi people as cockroaches by the Hutu led to the genocidal killings of several Tutsi people in 1994. In fact, from the Rwanda experience, we can say, in some cases, that racial stereotypes involve the use of derogatory words about the addressed and that a racial stereotype is a feeling of superiority

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towards the addressed. We can also say that racial stereotyping is a socio-psychological mechanism that involves ethnic discrimination as well as instills inferiority complex on the addressed. A racial stereotype is a negatively fixed opinion about the addressed or an ethnic group. Sad enough, the negative opinion remains indelible even when there is empirical evidence that the misconception against an individual or an ethnic group is based on hatred or disaffection. In this paper, we however stress that racial or language stereotypes are common occurrences in Nigeria and that the use by an ethnic or a sub-ethnic group against another cuts across all ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria. But, we focus on Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá, the three major ethnic groups in the country. This is because the population of the three major ethnic groups outnumbers the population of other ethnic groups and if the three ethnic groups are united, then such unity will serve as a good reference point for other ethnic groups.

### Nigeria as a Country

Historically, Nigeria is a conglomeration of several ethnic and sub-ethnic groups (see Òkédìjì and Òkédìjì, 1970, Akíndélé and Adégbìtè, 2000, Babájídè, 2001, Oyètádé, 2001 and Ìkotún, 2013). However, before the amalgamation of 1914, all ethnic and, in some cases, sub-ethnic groups could be referred to as individual nations with differences and similarities in culture, political organizations and languages (see Àjàyí and Espie, 1965, látúnbosún, 1979 and Obaro 1984). After the 1914 amalgamation, the country was divided into three regions namely the North, the West and the East. In the North, the ethnic groups include, among others, Hausa, Fulani, Tiv, Idoma, Yorùbá Kwara, Bariba, Kanuri, Igala, Epira, Jukun, Nupe, Biron, Anga, Bachama and Bassa. The ethnic groups in the West comprise Yorùbá, Bini, Izon, Afemai, Isoko, Urhobo, Itsekiri and Bendel Ibo while Igbo, Efik, Ijaw, Ibibio and Kalabari belong to the Eastern region. Similarly, some of the Nigerian ethnic groups such as Yorùbá, Igbo and Hausa have sub-ethnic groups. The Yorùbá sub-ethnic groups include Òyó, Ìjè à, Èkítì, Ifè, Ìjèbù, Ègbá, Èkó (Lagos), Ìláj , Àkùré, Oñdó, Ìgbómìnà, w , Àkókó, Ìkále, Owé, Okun, Ìbòlò and Ònkò (see Johnson 1921, Ìdòwú 1962, Òkédìjì and Òkédìjì 1970, Yémitàn and Ògúndélé 1970 and Vidal 1986). Notable among the Igbo sub-ethnic groups are Aguleri, Umuleri, Awkunanaw, Omuma, Onitsha-Ado, Uburu Ekwe, Ukwuani, Umuoji and Umuokpara to mention a few (see also Uwalaka, 2001). Hausa speakers of Kano dialect also see speakers of Zaria and Bauchi, Sakkwatanchi, Kastinanchi, Arewanchi, Arewa and Arawa and Bankanchi dialects of the Hausa language as speakers of the sub-standard Hausa language. As it has been shown in the introductory section of this paper, the sub-ethnic groups especially Yorùbá existed as independent groups before the incursion of the British and church missionaries into the south-western part of Nigeria (see Johnson 1921, Ìkotún, 2013:2). Although the three regions have been compressed into thirty-six states with Abuja as a Federal Capital Territory, in most cases, the political and ethnic decisions are still drawn along the old regions.

Linguistically, although the Nigerian languages or dialects are also referred to by the names of the ethnic or sub-ethnic groups, the linguistic speech forms have been classified into

different linguistic families (see Greenberg, 1963). Again, although linguists are divided on the number of languages spoken in Nigeria, there are three major African language families. They are Afro-Asiatic, Nilo-Saharan and Niger Congo language families (see Greenberg, 1963, Hansford, 1976, Bendor-Samuel, 1989 and Yusuf, 2006). But as we continue this discussion, we will show that every ethnic or sub-ethnic group is still loyal to its language or dialect after 100 years of amalgamation and that the ethnic or language loyalty is responsible for the use of racial stereotypes among the different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria. In the area of religion also, empirical evidence has shown that Christianity had been introduced into the area called Nigeria before the different regions were amalgamated in 1914. For example, Ìkotún (2013:65) reports that:

The introduction and acceptance of Christianity in Yorùbá-dominated areas of Nigeria were also traceable to the desires and efforts made by the Yorùbá slaves that were granted freedom from England and America after the abolition of slave trade in 1772.

Ìkotún (2013: 66) further claims that “the 1960s and 1990s saw the expansion of the European or established Churches and the emergence and proliferation of the newly founded autochthonous Nigerian Churches in the Yorùbá-dominated areas of Nigeria”. We want to add that what the case is in the Yorùbá-dominated areas of Nigeria is now the case in most parts of Nigeria. Similarly, the introduction of Islam to Nigeria predates the introduction of Christianity as well as the amalgamation of Nigeria (see Balógun 1971:53, Clark 1982:106 and Doi 1985:110). This historical position is also supported by a Yorùbá song below:

Ayé la báfáWe met the Ifá oracle in the world  
 Ayé la bámoléWe met the Islamic religion in the world  
 Osángangan nìgbàgbo dé Christianity emerged suddenly  
 At present, Islam is dominant in the Northern and some parts of Western Nigeria. However, what is of relevance to this work from the two religions is that the two preach peace and oneness (see Qur’an 16:125-128, 21:107, Matthew 7:12 and I Peter 3:10-11). But, in this paper, we submit that, although most Nigerians are either Christians or Muslims, the use of racial stereotypes against each other or one another is still a regular occurrence even when there are no conflicts or wars.

### Some Related Works

The use of linguistic or racial stereotyping by members of a sub-ethnic or ethnic group against members of another is common in studies conducted on proverbs and religion in some countries of the world (see Zenner, 1970, Òjóádé 1980, Awólàlú 1983, Kizyanowski 1987, Srivastava 1987, Upadhyaya 1987 and Sheba 2001). However, in Africa, Sheba (2001:1) reports that the socio-economic statuses, intra – communal relations, biological composition and social attitude of members of a sub-ethnic or ethnic group which become common knowledge to members of another sub-ethnic or ethnic group as a result of contact between the former and the latter serve as bases for the use of stereotyping and that such

contacts may result from trade, religion or politics. According to Sheba (2001), the perceived negative aspects of members of a Yorùbá sub-ethnic group like the Ìwó Yorùbá sub-ethnic group or ethnic group like Hausa, have served as bases for the composition of some Yorùbá proverbs and the use is meant to depict derogation or stereotyping to the addressed. Similarly, Awólàlú (1983:17) recounts a conversation between two Britons, Edwin Smith and Emil Ludwig and claims that the whites pejoratively brand the blacks as being bestial, savage and fetish. According to him, the two Britons were mortified to realize that the European missionaries at that time were teaching the Africans about God. He submits that one of the Britons, Ludwig, in his perplexity, was quoted as having remarked in this way: "How can the untutored African conceive of God? ...How can this be? ...Deity is a philosophical concept which savages are incapable of framing". Awólàlú (1983:17) argues that this derogatory remark from a white man to his black counterpart underscores a misconception which the western world has about the black race and that the western world feels that Christianity or the teaching about Jesus Christ is the exclusive preserve of the whites.

We agree with the previous researchers and we want to also argue that stereotyping of whatever form is age-long. It is closely tied to the existence of every nation. But, it is rather baffling that most of the facts relating to ethno-linguistic/religious stereotyping, apart from the proverbs that have been identified, are not in written form but are mostly oral and handed from one generation to another. Undoubtedly, stereotyping has become something of a phenomenon, a stigma that clings to almost every ethnic group like a leech. From whichever angle one views this phenomenon; it is a fact that stereotyping is a common tendency inherent in the sub-consciousness of every human being irrespective of race, language or religion. Stereotyping is both divisive and disruptive. Wherever it exists, it is to be expected that unity as well as development will be elusive. The presence of this monster may not be unconnected with the unrest that has characterized not only the African countries but also across the globe. Today, fierce internecine warfare has literally torn nations against each other. And, since peace and unity are critical to the development of any nation, it is logical therefore that any society that is enmeshed in stereotyping is most likely to be at the base of rapid development. In this paper, however, we are of the opinion that the use of linguistic/racial stereotyping among Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá against one another is a common phenomenon and that unless it is addressed the repeated calls for peace and unity in Nigeria like the National Confab will be a mirage.

### Data Collection

This study, which is descriptive, deals with the use of stereotypes among Nigerians. This study covered the use of racial stereotypes among Nigerians before, during and after the crisis of the counter coup of 1966 and the political crisis of 2010 (between 1966 and 2010). Two methods of data collection were employed. The first one was informal while the second one was formal. The informal method involved audio recording of spontaneous utterances by a number of different

ethnic and sub-ethnic members who were either traders or travellers especially during disagreements or quarrels and fighting. In other words, the recordings were done without the knowledge of the speakers. This is to pre-empt any ethnic considerations so as to get a true picture of the language situation in the country. The recordings of the spontaneous utterances were done at motor-parks, markets and open places in some Nigerian cosmopolitan cities. The formal method involved interviews with travellers or people who returned to their states of origin on visits or during ethnic clashes in some parts of the country. It also involved listening to some travellers while narrating their tales of woes from crisis-ridden areas in the country.

### Data Presentation

In this section we present racial or language stereotypes that are used by Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá against one another. The data are grouped into racial stereotypes that are used by Hausa against Yorùbá, Yorùbá against Hausa, Hausa against Igbo, Igbo against Hausa, Yorùbá against Igbo and Igbo against Yorùbá. The racial or language stereotypes are as follows:

#### Hausa against Yorùbá

berebe  
berebe banza

#### Yorùbá against Hausa

molà  
aj góórò  
Hausa lásánlàsàn

#### Hausa against Igbo

iyamiria (pl) or iyamiri (sgl)

#### Igbo against Hausa

ndi gw

#### Yorùbá against Igbo

m na  
ajòkútámámumi  
ìkòbòkòbò

#### Igbo against Yorùbá

nkpati nkpati  
ofe-man

### Data Analysis

We have shown in the introductory section of this paper that the use of derogatory or racial stereotypes is a common occurrence among different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria. We have also mentioned that the focus of the paper is on Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá because they are the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria and that if the three groups promote the ideals of oneness, there is the possibility that the survival of Nigeria as a united nation will not be threatened. However, the analysis below indicates that the data are in two categories. The address forms in the first category actually connote insult or racism and such words include 'berebe', 'berebe banza', 'Hausa lásánlàsàn', 'ajòkútámámumi' and 'ìkòbòkòbò'. The words in the second category do not connote insult or racism but because of the users' reactions or attitude or mood when such words are used, they are regarded as racial stereotypes. Such words comprise 'nkpati nkpati', 'ofe-man', 'iyamiria' (pl) or 'iyamiri' (sgl), 'ndi gw', 'm na', 'molà' and

'aj góórò'. The racial stereotypes used by the Hausa for the Yorùbá include 'berebe' or 'berebe banza'. However, when there is no crisis or conflict, 'berebe', in some cases, will be adopted as a form of address, but if there is a crisis then the form of address is 'berebe banza'. What informs the use of 'berebe' as a form of address for the Yorùbá is that the Hausa see the Yorùbá as people who can swallow anything including coins. The belief that the Yorùbá can swallow anything including coins has a long history. The belief is hinged on the fact that when the Hausa whose eating habits had been guided by the Islamic injunctions came in contact with the Yorùbá Ì rin who were mostly traditionalists with different eating habits not endorsed by the Islamic injunctions the Hausa named them 'berebe'. This derogatory address form still continues to be used not only for Yorùbá Ì rin but for all other Yorùbá people despite the acceptance and spread of Islam in some parts of the Yorùbá land.

Similarly, the word 'banza' which means 'illegitimate' or 'bastard' reminds one of the historical records of the origin of the Hausa. According to the history, there are 'Hausa Bakwai' and "Banza bakwai". The 'Hausa bakwai' which means 'Hausa seven' and which are also legitimate, include Daura, Kano, Katzina, Zaria (Zazzau), Gobir, Rano and Biram cities and their founders were sons of a Queen and their father was the Hausa founding father Bayajidda. The history also traces the lineage of the Banza bakwai' or 'bastard seven' to a concubine of Bayajidda-the Hausa founding father. The bastard seven consist of Zamfara, Kebbi, Yawuri (Yauri), Gwari, Kwararafa (Jukun State), Nupe and Yorùbá (Ì rin). Again, at present, from the evidence available to us, the word 'banza' (bastard) is not only an address form for the Yorùbá Ì rin but for any other Yorùbá person. On the other hand, one of the racial stereotypes adopted as forms of address by the Yorùbá for the Hausa is 'molà'. Etymologically, the word 'molà' is derived by the non-literate Yorùbá people from the word 'mallam' and the word 'mallam' means, from the Arabic language, a teacher who imparts knowledge to others though Qur'anic injunctions. Racially, the non-literate Yorùbá people ignorantly use the word 'molà' to refer to any person of low socio-economic status. At present, the word 'molà' is not only the racial stereotype used by the non-literate Yorùbá people, but by every Yorùbá person. Another racial stereotype used by the Yorùbá for the Hausa is the word 'Aj góórò' (eaters of kola nuts). The word 'aj góórò' is derived from the Yorùbá sentence 'ni tó máa j góórò' (A person who eats kola nuts). The name 'aj góórò' is derogatory because the Yorùbá do not value the kola nut like the other variety called 'obì àbàtà' (original kola nut). Although, the Yorùbá produce the two in large quantities, they nonetheless believe that the Hausa are the major consumers of the 'góórò' variety (kola nut) because of its less social value. Hence, eaters of 'góórò'- the less prized variety-are believed to be people of low socio-economic value. The Yorùbá do not know that the Hausa eat and export 'góórò' to other countries of the world. The type called 'obì àbàtà' is used for several purposes such as marriage, naming, ritual and divination purposes among others and is much more valued than 'góórò'. Another racial stereotype used by the Yorùbá for the Hausa is 'Hausa lásánlāsàn' (worthless Hausa). The Hausa people are addressed as such because a reasonable number of them who live in the Western part of Nigeria engage in wood

hewing, well dredging and begging. Even now that some Yorùbá people compete seriously with the Hausa in these professions, the old negative impression the Yorùbá have about the Hausa still persists.

The case between Hausa and Yorùbá is also common between Hausa and Igbo. The Hausa, derogatorily, address the Igbo as 'iyamiria' (pl) or 'iyamiri' (sgl) though the correct form should be 'nyem mmiri kam g a ' (give me water to drink). The word 'iyamiria' (pl) or 'iyamiri' (sgl) as a form of address reminds one of an account of how some Ibo civilians who requested for water to drink from some Nigerian/Hausa soldiers during the Biafran war in the late 60s. The Ibo, who very badly needed water to drink, would say 'nyem mmiri kam g a ' (give me water to drink), but the Hausa soldiers thought they heard 'iyamiri'. Though, the Hausa people thought they heard 'iyamiri', they created the singular and the plural forms of the word. Since late 60s, the word 'iyamiri' (sgl) or 'iyamiria' (pl) has continued to be used by the Hausa as a racial or derogatory address form for the Igbo. The Igbo too believe that the Hausa land is not plain but mountainous and therefore adopt 'ndi gw ' (people whose land is full of mountains) as a form of address for the Hausa. The two words 'iyamiri' and 'ndi gw ' are racial because the use connotes racism and disaffection when adopted as forms of address.

Still on the use of racial stereotypes among Nigerians, for example, the Igbo name for 'father' is 'nna'. The word 'nna' (father) can be adopted as a form of address for one's biological father and elderly male persons. It can also be used as a greeting form for any male person to show love and affection to the addressed. However, the Yorùbá people observe the frequent use of the word 'nna' by the Igbo who live among them and they therefore derogatorily refer to every Igbo person whether male or female as 'm na' (children of father). The Yorùbá also bastardize the pronunciation of the word 'nna' and pronounce it as 'na'. In addition, the Yorùbá racially refer to the Igbo as 'ajòkútámámumi' from the Yorùbá sentence 'eni tó j òkúta tí kí mumi' (somebody who eats stones without drinking water). This is because the Yorùbá observe that the types of foods the Igbo people eat are very hard and tough. For instance, the method which the Ibo adopt to prepare their 'ebà', 'akpu' or 'fufú' is different from that of Yorùbá. While that of the former is always stone-hard and tough, the latter is always mild and tender. Yet, the Ibo man still eats this stone-like delicacy with accustomed relish to the astonishment of his Yorùbá counterpart, hence the branding of every Ibo person as 'ajòkútámámumi'. The illiterate Yorùbá people also call the Igbo 'ìkòbòkòbò' because the Igbo language is unintelligible to them though linguists argue that Igbo and Yorùbá languages are genetically related.

The Igbo people too derogatorily address the Yorùbá as 'nkpati nkpati' and 'ofe-man '. According to them, the Yorùbá are fond of saying 'ní ìgbà tí' (when) in their utterances. The phrase 'ní ìgbà tí' (when) can become 'nígbà tí' in fast speech after the deletion of the vowel 'i' with the low tone and contraction between 'ní' and 'gbà'. It can also become 'gbà tí' in connected speech after the deletion of the vowel 'i' with the low tone and the vowel 'i' from the word 'ní' minus the high tone and contraction between 'ní' and 'gbà'. The high tone will

transfer to the syllabic nasal sound 'n'. The Igbo people realize 'nìgbà tí' or 'gbà tí' as 'nkpati'. They also, derogatorily, reduplicate it so that it would serve as a form of address. The word or phrase 'ofe-man' as a form of address for the Yorùbá simply shows that the Yorùbá use too much red oil in preparing soup unlike the Igbo people that hardly apply red oil in their soup. The word or phrase 'ofe-man' as a form of address connotes racism because it is only adopted as a form of address for the Yorùbá and the use is a portrayal of disaffection.

### Implications for Unity and Development

There is no doubt that since independence, successive governments in Nigeria have been conscious of the need to promote unity, peace and oneness among the various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria. In order to achieve the laudable objectives or vision of the successive governments in Nigeria, programmes such as the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), cultural festivals, sporting activities, inter-ethnic marriages that are endorsed by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC), establishment of Federal or Unity schools across the nation and ethnic balancing in Federal establishments among others have been put in place. The inter-ethnic marriages among corps members are supported by the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) with financial rewards. The essence of such marriages is to foster unity among corps members as well as among Nigerians. Although the relevance and importance of the desires and aspirations of the successive governments cannot be underrated, we are of the opinion that a lot more is still needed to promote development and harmonious relationship among the various ethnic groups in the country.

In this regard, one of the ways by which we can complement the efforts of governments in ensuring peace, oneness and harmony in the country is to emulate Mr Rájí Fásh lá, the present Governor of Lagos state, who appointed non-Yorùbá into his cabinet. At present, some Igbo indigenes who reside in Lagos state are now appointed either as commissioners or Special Advisers by Governor Rájí Fásh lá of Lagos State. This is a welcome development and it will let the Igbo people who reside in Lagos State and outside the place to have a sense of belonging in an area that is not theirs. Other state governors can borrow a leaf from Fásh lá's exemplary leadership style and create portfolios for non-indigenes who reside in their states after all, a reasonable number of Nigerians domicile in the states that are not theirs. Such appointments will promote peace, unity and harmony among members of the different ethnic and sub-ethnic groups in Nigeria.

Similarly, since a reasonable number of Nigerians live in the states that are not theirs, the use of the three major languages namely Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá can be considered necessary at least for dissemination of news on state radio and television houses. In fact, the Unique Radio Station at Ilé à in O un State deserves commendation in this respect as the broadcasting outfit reads its news in Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá in order to reach out to a great majority of Nigerians in its handling of O un State matters as well as matters of common interest to all and sundry. The management of other private and state-owned radio and television stations is advised to see the Unique Radio

Station at Ilé à as a reference point and air programmes that will present other Nigerians as equally important.

It is also important to review the Nigerian constitution in such a way that any Nigerian born in any state of the country can be allowed to claim the state as his or her own. In other words, every Nigerian, regardless of where he/she is born, should be allowed to enjoy equal social, economic and political status. This practice is not new in developed countries like Britain and America because in those countries, children of foreigners that are born there automatically become citizens of such countries and they are not discriminated against when it comes to enjoying the dividends of good governance which the real natives enjoy. It is even on record that some Nigerians, instead of travelling to the west or north or east in Nigeria to give birth to their babies, travel to Britain or America so that their children will become citizens there. If this practice is upheld in Nigeria, the air of disunity, disaffection and name calling that has been endemic in the country will evaporate. Another area, we think, that can be given prominence so as to check disunity and guide against the use of racial stereotypes among Nigerians is inter-marriage. Ethnic inter-marriages should be encouraged and emphasized in our constitution. Parents should be discouraged from asking their children questions like:

Hausa: Wai ma a sa zaka je ka aura Hausawa tin da baka gan Yorubawa?

(Is there no eligible Hausawa out there that you now contemplate marrying a mere Yorubawa?)

Hausa: Wai ma a sa zaka je ka aura Hausawa tin da baka gan Iyamiri?

(Is there no eligible Hausawa out there that you now contemplate marrying a mere Iyamiri?)

Igbo: choro igwan na h ghi enye Igbo Iga-alu b r n di nkpati nkpati na mmadu n'ile bi n'uwa?

(Is there no eligible Igbo out there that you now contemplate marrying a mere nkpati nkpati?)

Igbo: choro igwan na h ghi enye Igbo Iga-alu b r n di ndi gw na mmadu n'ile bi n'uwa?

(Is there no eligible Igbo out there that you now contemplate marrying a mere ndi gw?)

Yorùbá: é o ò rí Yorùbá fe tó ó fe l fe Hausa ní gbogbo ènìyàn?

(Is there no eligible Yorùbá out there that you now contemplate marrying a mere Hausa?)

Yorùbá: é o ò rí Yorùbá fe tó ó fe l fe Ibo ní gbogbo ènìyàn?

(Is there no eligible Yorùbá out there that you now contemplate marrying a mere Ibo?)

Such questions, embarrassing as they are, have actually led many a bachelor or spinster to take wrong decisions in his/her bid to choose a life partner. There have been reports of young men and ladies who have taken the option of suicide to settle scores between them and their parents who have opposed their marriage to non-ethnic members. In fact, one question which sociologists should ponder on is: how many intra-marriages that have been contracted are actually successful?

Traditional rulers and governors should also meet separately and regularly to discuss issues that can move the country forward and educate their subjects rather than indulge in self-

conceit. Such meetings or foray should be rotational and indigenes of the receiving state should be mobilized to welcome them. One fact that is incontrovertible is that just as no one language is superior to the other, so is no one ethnic group superior to another. The earlier everybody realizes this banal truth, the better every Nigerian sees himself/herself as a bona fide member of a corporate and indivisible Nigerian entity. If this view is drummed into the ears of all of us then no Nigerian will see himself or herself better than another linguistically, socially and culturally.

Our politicians too should be guarded in their utterances or comments on national issues in their struggle for political domination of Nigeria. In fact, the massacre of some Youth Corps members in one part of the country during the 2010 presidential election is a sad reminder of the divisive tendency of racial stereotypes we have been discussing. Nigerian politicians should therefore educate their uninformed followers that election victory in one's ethnic area does not mean election victory in another non-ethnic area. Political gladiators in the country should not see the race as a 'do or die' affair. In the event of a loss of political power, violence and name calling must be discouraged. Loss of political power should not engender acrimony or bad blood.

We have also pointed out in the introductory section of this paper that most Nigerians are either Muslims or Christians and that in the areas of oneness and tolerance, all of them are still Church and Mosque goers and not practitioners of what the two Holy books, Qur'an and Bible teach in view of political, religious, ethnic and sub-ethnic crises that have been happening in the country especially since 1960 when the country was granted independence by its colonial masters. This therefore means that Muslim and Christian leaders should design ways by which their preaching can outlive the Mosque, the Church, ethnic and sub-ethnic confines at least for the purpose of inter-communal relations. Religious leaders should also inform their followers to always bring to bear the teachings of the two Holy Books when inconsistent historical stories about the tribal or ethnic origins that are not in agreement with the two Holy Books are being discussed. After all, we are all now united in God either through Christ or through Mohammed; consequently, the issue of legitimate or illegitimate child/children as it is the case in one of the stories of the origin of the Hausa people or any other ethnic group should not arise. We can conclude therefore that racial stereotypes are just products of pride, self-conceit, self-ego and arrogance. They are simply artificially created by ethnic or sub-ethnic groups to undermine other fellow human beings.

### Conclusion

In this paper, we examine the use of racial stereotypes among Nigerians especially among Hausa, Igbo and Yorùbá, the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria. We also show that before amalgamation of 1914, the ethnic and, in some cases, the sub-ethnic groups had remained as independent nations and that after 100 years of amalgamation, Nigeria still remains as it was before amalgamation as a result of racial stereotypes and derogatory language that are freely used by one ethnic or sub-ethnic group against another. We further reveal that the use of

racial stereotypes or derogatory language is evidence of false ethnic superiority that is based on pride, self-esteem, self-ego and self-deceit rather than on wisdom and biological facts. We submit that since independence, successive governments in Nigeria have not been indifferent to the cause of a united Nigeria. As a result, the past governments have put in place some measures to address the social problems of a united Nigeria but that much is still required. We therefore suggest that there should be emphasis on inter-marriage, appointments of non-indigenes into each of the state cabinets, review of the Nigerian constitution such that any Nigerian born in any state can be regarded as the indigene of the state among others and that until these measures are put in place, the hope of a strong, united and indivisible country will be a mirage.

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