

**BOOK REVIEW BY CHIEF CHARLES UWENSUYI EDOSOMWAN SAN : ON JUDICIAL INTEGRITY:
LEGAL ESSAYS AND MATERIALS IN HONOUR OF HIS LORDSHIP.HON.JUSTICE S.O.UWAIFO**

It is an honour to be assigned the task of the book reviewer in today's presentation of the book "On Judicial Integrity

Legal Essays And Materials In Honour Of His Lordship, The Honourable Justice S. O. Uwaifo, CON, KSC". It is a collection of papers and essays by the celebrant himself and others who are seasoned law specialists. The strength of the faculty in this work which displays a motley banquet of legal issues could be gleaned from the Table Of Contents (pages xvii to XX). A cursory glance at the list of contributors which is on pages XXXI - xxxiii, aside the celebrant and the editors, would show up recognisable credible names of the law calling in Nigeria like Mike Ozekhome, SAN, Prof Lawrence Atsegbua, SAN, Prof Emeka Chianu, the forgone Justice Ojo, formerly of the Edo State Customary Court Of Appeal; Justice Benedict Bakwaph of the. National Industrial Court and many others whose names and works in the Law community are not obscure. Any one of the faculty involved as a contributor in this work is in no doubt in eminent intellectual company as the names of the contributors imbue this work wrought to honour an icon of Law in Nigeria, with intellectual integrity. It also has come to my notice that an overwhelming number of the contributors are of the University of Benin Law School. This in a sense makes a laudable statement on law studies in this University that has demanded and secured her place by the sheer rigour and gruel involved in the prolific output of highly visible credit worthy alumni over the comparative, short time of its existence. I am proud just as others who went through this university to have studied law in the great institution.

Equally richly variegated is the broad spectra of areas of Law from which the issues tasked in the work by the contributors are drawn. Issues have been drawn from Public Law (Part 2, Section 1 @ pages 119 - 264), Business Law (Part 2, Section 2 @ pages 265 - 362), Private and Property Law (Part 2, Section 3 @ pages 363 - 424), International Law (Part 2, Section 4 @ pages 425 - 482) and. Natural Resource Law (Part 2, Section 5 @ pages 483 - 504). Under these chapters materials (statutes and cases) for deep comparative analyses have been drawn from all over the world from the UK, the US, South Africa, the EU courts, etc. These could be seen in pages XXI - xxix.

All these areas of law bear imprint of Justice Uwaifo's indelible foot prints on the seamless coast of Nigerian law and therefore apposite as suitable well springs from celebration materials of him are

drawn. The essays are also top draw, written in readable prose marked by clear diction.

THE BOOK

In its outward presentation, one finds the book to be of very good production quality comparative to any produced by presses from technologically advanced places. The hard cover encases a sturdy book of well over 500 pages of clear character print with a cover jacket bearing a stately portrait of the celebrant in his Supreme Court ceremonial robes that does whoever the photographer is a load of credit in his craftsmanship for bringing out prominently Justice Uwaifo's patrician mien in a simple portrait. It is indeed a befitting cover for a book intended to celebrate a distinguished Justice Uwaifo. The jacket in its front inner sleeve gives a brief bio of Uwaifo while the back inner sleeve has brief but impressive tributes from some distinguished legal practitioners. The back of the jacket in turn briefly introduces the book and both editors showing their academic and professional plumages.

THE BOOK STRUCTURE

There is a formal side of the book as well as the substantive side. The formal parts .comprise:

1. The Forward;
2. The Preface,
3. Acknowledgement,
4. Table of Contents,
5. Table of Statutes and. Conventions cited,
6. Table of Cases,
7. Notes on Contributors and,
8. Index.

The substantive part of the book was rendered in a bouquet concept that has speeches and papers penned and delivered by Justice Uwaifo himself between 1979 and 2005 at different fora as Part One while Part Two comprises the offerings of the various contributors with a chapter marking a separate offering of each said contributor

In its formal aspects, the book's organisation is faultless and the editors are to be commended on their work in that respect.

Deeply, I appreciate the editors - A.O. Omonuwa Esq, SAN and Dr I.O. Omoruyi for finding me worthy to write the Forward to this book in honour of a man that has since my childhood been of heroic significance and a mentor. They have gone further to specially mention my name in the Acknowledgement section for my small part in the book Forward. This touches and overwhelms me for the sheer charity of their thoughtfulness for, to be part of any project to celebrate Uwaifo is an honour and yet I played no major part other than write the Book Forward. More credit should go to the editors themselves for mid-wifing such honour with a convocation of worthy contributors to its substance..

SUBSTANCE

On the substance of the book itself, the sincere thing to say as a reviewer, is that having gone through same (though speedily given the shortness of time available for the task), it is a befitting tribute to Uwaifo, a man for whom no quantum of praise would be too much for his strength of character, moral uprightness, deep learning, courage, a strong back for hard work and a remorseless stickler for doing justice. A full blown review is often times a needless annoyance at time-bound events as this book presentation and I shall therefore not court this distinguished audience's annoyance by attempting that. It should however suffice to say that the issues treated in this book by the various contributors are ones that should pique the collective attention of all of us. The issues include our federalism, civil liberties relating to rights and constraining responsibility on free Speech, graft, corruption and governance, customary law succession, International Law and the frontier area of the emerging regime of International Humanitarian Law; and much more. Fitting is the fact that the celebrant in his journey as a jurist left strong impressions in all these areas of Nigerian law. However, most important is the freshness that the book's concept brings into tributes like this. Most works that celebrate judges merely compile judgements of the subject (however uninspiring many may be), flattering them with colourful phrases like "Landmark", "Ground Breaking" etc. when indeed such

works may be otherwise average at best or outright mediocre. Rather, a sense of valuable history has through this book been brought into the public domain when outside of his judgments which in many cases helped forge progressive judicial policy for our collective benefit as in the example of the entronement of the superiority African Charter on Human Rights over the Abacha junta's draconian decrees. For the civil liberties assurances for Nigerians. Uwaifo spoke for himself in the collection of his papers showcased here in the various chapters of Part One thereto..

In chapter Two of Part One of the book, Justice Uwaifo in his 1986 Report as chair of the Special Investigation Panel that investigated the overthrown President Shagari and Vice President Ekweme for possible triable offences, deploying deep learning in civil liberties and history, showed great courage in. declaring, on the sparse evidence proffered against both Nigerians, that there were no justifiable reasons outside mere suspicion why they should be subjected to the trauma of criminal trials and further incarceration. His report ran against the tide of the public perception of the NPN and its leaders including Shagari and Ekweme as utterly corrupt. A lesser man would have balked. A lesser man would have pandered. A lesser man concerned about populist views could have closed his eyes to justice and needlessly sent those men against whom no cases for committal had been made to face the ordeals of needless criminal trials and possible long jail terms. But none of these lesser-man qualities would do for Uwaifo who, drawing deep into the history of France's republican struggles with particular reference to Mirabeau's trial and Justice Marshall, CJ's (US) address to the Virginia Convention in 1788, allowed Law and Justice to prevail over fickleness and recommended that both Shagari and Ekweme be set free.

That is the sort of redemptive history that is amongst the load of good offerings that this work brings to us.

RESERVATION

The only reservation that I have on this book arises from my conception of judges and their courts (being essential parts of the political structures of organised society), as being much more than mere judicial institutions and functionaries. Beyond the compartmentalisation of government depArtments into Executive, Legislative and Judicial arms, judges and courts in the special roles the play in society,

help forge their milieu, just as the other departments or arms do. That said, assessing their works or celebrating them should not be the exclusive business of lawyers, judges and law faculties only. Historians, philosophers, journalists and social scientists who should be able to relate the impact of their (judges' and courts') works on the polity, through the prisms of the objective (not subjective) biases of their special trainings, should also be involved.

In sum, I would recommend this book for students of Nigeria's constitutional law and history, legal practitioners, law teachers, and anyone in search of real examples of strengths of character, courage in doing the right thing, moral probity, a sterner stuff constitution that is the sturdy persona of a well born Bini; and much more good stuff that the Uwaifo personality as exemplified in his works, drips of..

Thank you for your patience and kind attention.

Charles Uwensuyi-Edosomwan,SAN

Obasuyi of Benin
