



MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER
...a sober reflection

CONFERENCE REPORT

May 25, 2017

Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation

Memory and Nation Building – Biafra: 50 Years After was the first national convening with participation of the Federal Government on the issue of Biafra since the end of the war. We believe a shift from a confrontational to conciliatory approach to current challenges will facilitate meaningful conversations on national cohesion and nation building going forward.

The Yar'Adua Foundation is proud to have made this important contribution to the growth of civic spaces in Nigeria. We remain committed to providing platforms for dialogue that foster a prosperous and inclusive nation.





Jacqueline Farris
 Director General
 Shehu Musa Yar'Adua
 Foundation

I am pleased to convey the Yar'Adua Foundation's sincere appreciation to the Ford Foundation and Open Society Initiative West Africa (OSIWA) for supporting *Memory and Nation Building – Biafra: 50 Years After*. The Foundation is indebted to the many friends and partners who contributed to making the conference a success.

The 50th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra offered a unique opportunity for sober reflection on a number of issues, including lessons learned that may be useful in dealing with contemporary internal conflicts. As in the Civil War, the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast has resulted in millions of internally displaced people – including children – most of who are threatened by famine.

Despite efforts at reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation, the effects of the bitter civil war – fought over the attempted secession of Biafra in 1967 - still linger. In the Southeast, agitation led by MASSOB and IPOB has opened old wounds and resurrected long-held grievances. Remarks by

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo and Chief John Nwodo provided an effective counter-narrative to calls for succession and offered options for peaceful reconciliation.

We were honoured to have the Acting President, Prof. Yemi Osibanjo, SAN, GCON and key actors during the war address the conference. Dynamic post-war generation voices advocated the teaching of history in schools and the adoption of technology as a strategic tool for consensus building.

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Jacqueline W. Farris

The Unfinished Bridge symbolizes the life of Shehu Musa Yar'Adua and stands as a reminder for the need to continue to build bridges of peace and unity in Nigeria.

CONFERENCE MODERATOR



Pat Utomi
Professor of Political Economy
Pan African University

Our different experiences form part of the bonds of our country. How we make these experiences our strength is how our history is built.

INTRODUCTION

May 30, 2017 marked the 50th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra. *Memory and Nation Building – Biafra: 50 Years After* was an attempt to take advantage of this important milestone to revisit the narratives of events and actions taken before, during and after the Civil War with a view to spurring conciliatory conversations and learning lessons that could be useful in addressing lingering grievances.

The conference featured four segments – an opening ceremony, two panel discussions and a cultural night.

24⁴ Segments
Speakers
400 Participants
from all parts of Nigeria



WELCOME REMARKS



Chief Dubem Onyia
Board of Trustees
Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Foundation



Mr. Innocent Chukwuma
Regional Director West Africa
Ford Foundation

Shehu Musa Yar'Adua's diary provides an important insight into Yar'Adua's mind during the war. Interesting to note is that he was often frustrated by atrocities committed. The entry on January 6, 1968 captures his anger at the burning of villages by Federal soldiers.

Chief Dubem Onyia's welcome address established the connection between the objectives of the conference and the mission of the Yar'Adua Foundation. His remarks illustrated how the pursuit of national unity was consistent with Shehu Musa Yar'Adua's legacy.

He stated that Yar'Adua's slogan, "Neither North nor South, East nor West: One Nigeria", was demonstrated by his support for the presidential bid of late Chief M.K.O. Abiola.

Chief Onyia noted that Shehu Yar'Adua fought in the Civil War as a commander on the Federal side before spending the rest of his life building bridges across Nigeria's ethnic and religious divides. He reminded the audience that it was for the cause of enthroning inclusive democracy in Nigeria that he paid the ultimate price. It was therefore fitting that *Memory and Nation Building – Biafra: 50 Years After* was organised by the Yar'Adua Foundation.

Chief Onyia challenged the government to adopt outputs of the conference to tackle issues relating to recurrent agitations for secession or separation in Nigeria and other countries on the continent.

We should recommit ourselves to doing everything we can to build a just and inclusive nation so that individuals, groups and nationalities would find more reasons to remain under a united Nigeria than agitate to leave.

In his welcome address, Mr. Innocent Chukwuma set the tone for the conference by encouraging speakers to be conciliatory in addressing issues raised about the Civil War and its aftermath. He made important recommendations for promoting national reconciliation and healing and challenged participants to rise above divisive narratives, listen to each other and find common ground in moving Nigeria forward.

Mr. Chukwuma noted that this was the first national conference on Biafra since the end of the civil war that featured the full participation of the Federal Government. He commended the Acting President for showing courage by attending the event.

He recommended that the government decriminalise public discussions about the war and allow citizens to gather and memorialize their experiences without fear of harassment by security agents. He further suggested that a national memorial be built in Abuja and every geo-political zone in Nigeria to memorialize citizens that died on both sides of the war in order to promote the concept of "Ozoemena", an Igbo word that means "May it never happen again."

SPECIAL GUEST OF HONOR



Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCON
Former President
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Nigeria must mean something for everyone of us. If we don't see any reason to hold on to Nigeria, to love her, wish her well, then there is not much that could be achieved.

His Excellency, Olusegun Obasanjo addressed the conference on the "Implementation of the 3Rs." He highlighted events that occurred during the war and measures carried out by the Nigerian Military to reduce civilian casualties. He also shared the concept that informed the 3Rs and its implementation and advised participants on the need for national unity.

President Obasanjo stated that Nigeria's leaders at independence placed more emphasis on progress than on unity and suggested that unity is a necessary starting point. He explained the position of the Nigerian government during the war to reunite, reintegrate and reconcile the region known as Biafra. This was why the term "police action" was used to describe the war.

He further stated that the Nigerian Military was instructed to abide by the Geneva Convention and thought the war would end in three months, though it took the Federal side three years to prosecute a war that it almost lost.

As part of reconciliation efforts, Biafran soldiers who surrendered or were captured during the war were sent to the Nigerian Defence Academy to be re-trained as officers of the Nigerian Army. Easterners were recruited into the civil service and diplomatic corps. The election of an Igbo man as Nigeria's Vice President validated reconciliation efforts by the Nigerian Government to reunite after the Civil War.

Speaking on reconstruction, he highlighted the repair of the Niger Bridge, refineries, universities and roads in the Eastern region as part of efforts of the Nigerian Government to rebuild areas that were destroyed during the war.

He frowned at what he termed the "politicization of issues" and challenged participants to see reasons to hold on to Nigeria, love and promote her unity above all else. He further advised groups agitating for secession to do so in peace and appealed to the government to initiate negotiations with them in order to find lasting peace for everyone.



CHAIRMAN OF THE OCCASION



Alhaji Ahmed Joda, con
Former Permanent Secretary
Ministries of Information,
Education & Industry

The challenges of the militants and of Boko Haram in the Northeast, as well as other destabilizing incidents around the country, need to be studied more carefully and more diligently than we appear to be doing at the moment.

Alhaji Ahmed Joda narrated the sequence of events that led to the Civil War. He further explained the position of the Nigerian Government during the war and efforts made to end the war in the shortest time possible in order to rebuild lives that were destroyed.

He noted that the Civil War was a result of a chain of events beginning with the constitutional crisis that could not be resolved peacefully to the military coup d'état in 1966. The crisis led to the creation of twelve states in 1967 and declaration of a State of Emergency throughout the country by General Gowon in order to control events.

He highlighted the position of the Federal Government as well as efforts to re-establish, reconcile and reintegrate Nigeria and Nigerians, leading to the formation of the policy of the 3Rs.

Alhaji Joda noted that the return of Igbos to Northern Nigeria and other parts of the nation was swift and without incident. He stated that in less than a year, many were occupying key positions

of the Federal Cabinet as there was no policy excluding Igbos in the Federal Public Services. He defended the Federal Government's efforts to promote the country's unity through massive programs including:

- Universal Primary Education, which allowed every Nigerian child born from the end of the Civil War to have primary education.
- The creation of many federal educational institutions across the country.
- Establishment of the National Youth Service.
- Immediate employment in the reconstruction of roads, schools, medical facilities and other public works.

In his view, these policies united the nation and created genuine and fair conditions aimed at promoting and maintaining a strong Nigeria. However, he noted that recent agitations for secession, the challenges of Boko Haram in the Northeast and other destabilizing incidents across the nation need to be studied carefully and more diligently.



GUEST SPEAKER



Professor John Stremlau
University of Witwatersrand
South Africa

For national development and international cooperation in Africa and beyond, strong leaders must be matched with strong institutions.

Professor John Stremlau addressed the conference on the “International Politics of the Civil War.” His speech provided a global perspective on the Nigerian Civil War and explained how the unique nature of the conflict influenced the approach of international institutions to humanitarian emergencies.

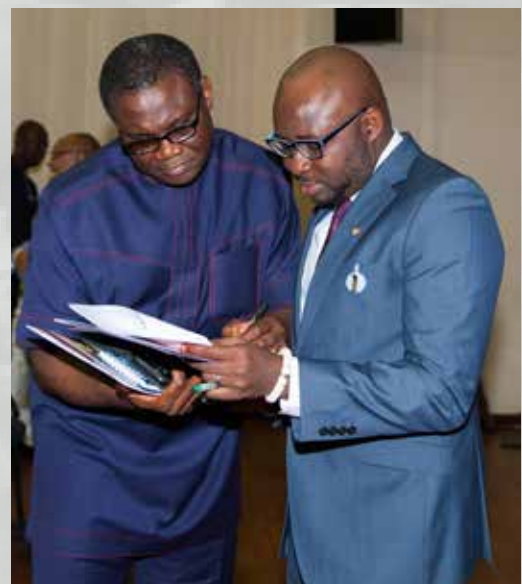
Professor Stremlau highlighted the role that weak institutions at the national and regional level played in the mismanagement of the conflict and made important recommendations for promoting national development and international cooperation in Nigeria and Africa at large.

According to Professor Stremlau, the Nigerian Civil War was the world’s first “complex emergency”. The sheer number of casualties, scale of human suffering and the fact that it was broadcast on international television ensured that it received more attention from the west than any other

previous African emergency. The experience of Biafra taught the world how to better provide and coordinate assistance to those affected by conflict-related humanitarian crisis.

He noted that the conflict escalated because the Federal Government was fragile and institutions at all levels were weak. This was evident in the decision to look inward for solutions rather than seek help from international allies. He stated that the Civil War was a man-made disaster because it resulted from the inability of leaders to adapt and make good decisions.

In conclusion, he charged the next generation of Nigerians to build a greater and more inclusive Nigeria by transforming diversity into a strength, building an identity based on shared values rather than competing interests and promoting equality for all citizens and ethnic groups.



OBSERVATIONS



Chief John Nnia Nwodo
President General
Ohaneze Ndigbo

We must negotiate our way out of a sense of national despair to a new national consensus that unlocks our possibilities.

In a passionate, nuanced speech that resonated with scores of Nigerians around the world, Chief John Nwodo presented a counter-narrative to the agitation for secession and made a strong case for building a united and reconciled Nigeria.

He began his observations by recounting incidents that led to the war and expressing his appreciation for the opportunity to collectively remember, reflect, hope and chart a path that avoids mistakes of the past.

He paid homage to sacrifices of victims of the war, noting they all shared a common hope of emerging from the war to build a nation devoid of oppression. He reminded the audience that those who survived the war and those who came after inherited these sacrifices and therefore had the duty to honour victims by striving for peace and justice.

While recollecting the grave injustice Biafrans suffered during and after the war, he credited the resilience of survivors and the generosity of millions of Nigerians for the most remarkable post-conflict people-to-people reconciliation and reintegration in modern times.

In making the case for a united Nigeria, he reminded the audience that before the war, national unity was the norm. He gave several examples of people who were elected to public office in parts of the country other than their regions of origin. He postulated that pre-war national integration contributed to the rapid economic development experienced by every region at the time.

He recognized the elaborate constitutional, political and administrative efforts the nation had made to ensure unity in the fifty years after the

war, but warned that unity should not be pursued as an end unto itself. He stated that the best way to sustain unity was to apply it to achieve a higher objective – nation building.

Responding to the contention by agitators that Nigeria was not working, he conceded that the country faced existential social, political and economic challenges. He also acknowledged that youths were justified to express fears and anxieties about the future. He went on to lament the fact that those who fought the war are still in control of Nigeria – frustrating youth with the same rhetoric and culture that fueled the war. He however reminded Nigerians that nations are not sustained by street warfare and that war was the primary instrument of military dictatorships, whereas the essential ingredients of civilian democracies are negotiation and compromise. He therefore encouraged agitators to embrace negotiation.

Chief Nwodo posited that although every part of Nigeria could survive as an independent country, the resultant entities following a break up would be no more than small enclaves compared to the capacity of a united and reconciled Nigeria. He therefore challenged Nigerians to look beyond their section of the country and commit themselves to building a nation that is fair to all.

In conclusion, Chief Nwodo called for leadership that would restructure Nigeria into a flexible federation – strong enough to guarantee our collective defence and individual rights; agile enough to react to emerging tensions and threats; yet expansive enough to allow each state room to develop at its own pace. He stated that our categorical destination is a Nigerian Nigeria under the collective hegemony of the people of Nigeria and pledged the commitment of Ohaneze Ndigbo to its achievement.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS



Professor Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, GCON
Acting President
Federal Republic of Nigeria

Individual affections and friendships we forge, some even deeper than family ties, must remind us that unity is possible, that brotherhood across tribes and faiths is possible.

In his speech titled “Greater Together Than Apart”, the Acting President struck a conciliatory note that represented a remarkable departure from the confrontational stance adopted by the Federal Government on the issue of Biafra. Acknowledging that Nigerians should fully exercise the right to discuss and debate the terms of our existence, he urged citizens to ask themselves hard questions in order to transform the lessons of the past into the wisdom of the future.

Recalling his own personal memories of the war, including the loss of loved ones, he questioned if the tragedy of the war and the loss of millions of lives could ever be justified. He wondered if the nation would not have been better off had the resources used to prosecute the war been applied to forge unity. He concluded that the spilling of blood in dispute was hardly ever worth the losses.

Addressing the agitations for secession, the Acting President conceded that no nation was perfect and that many nations continue to experience similar intra-national discontent. He reminded the audience that nations across the world were made up of different peoples, cultures, beliefs and religions and that Nigeria was not unique in this regard.

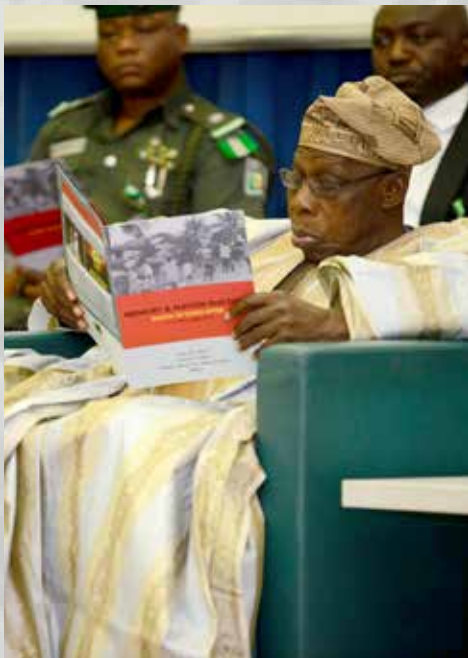
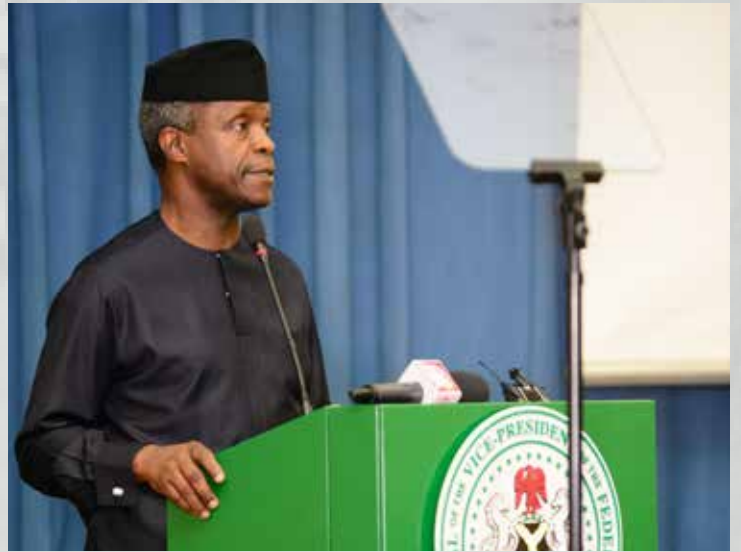
He contended that there were groups in Spain, Belgium, the United Kingdom and even the United States of America who considered their various countries “mere geographic expressions”. He however stated that these pockets of discontent did not prevent countries from forging a more perfect union. He encouraged Nigerians to emulate the example of successful nations whose peoples have reached across ethnic divides and forged unity in diversity.

Professor Osinbajo encouraged citizens to aspire to the Nigerian Dream, defining it as the enthusiasm to create a country that provides reasons for its citizens to believe in it; a country that does not discriminate, or marginalize in any way. He expressed optimism that Nigeria had a strong chance of advancing in that direction. However, he cautioned that those who use the media as platforms to spread divisive messages filled with hateful rhetoric could derail this Nigerian Dream.

Professor Osinbajo maintained that unity is possible, that brotherhood across tribes and faiths can be achieved and that debate and disagreement are fundamental to democracy. He urged participants to focus on uplifting and inspiring stories rather than narratives of division, to learn from the past and make the best of the present. He advised the younger generation to use social media as a tool to promote national unity, see their diversity as a strength and not allow current socio-economic conditions to affect their unity.

The Acting President was optimistic that a new generation could take a different and more ennobling path than its predecessors. He called for leaders – not just political leaders – to take responsibility for leading Nigerians in this direction.

Finally, he encouraged citizens to hold the country's leadership to the constitutional standards of providing just and fair institutions; ensuring a secure and safe environment for people to live and work in peace; avoiding and discouraging discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, beliefs or any other parochial considerations and; providing a vision and pathway to a more perfect union.



PANEL

RECONCILIATION, REHABILITATION AND RECONSTRUCTION: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The panel brought together scholars and thought leaders to analyze how effectively the Reconciliation, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (3Rs) programme introduced after the Civil War addressed problems that led to the 1966-70 crises. Discussion focused on how the underlying principles and lessons learned from the implementation or non-implementation of the 3Rs could be relevant to current challenges facing Nigeria.

PANEL CHAIR



Honourable Nkoyo Toyo
Special Adviser
Governor of Cross River State

Nation building is not an event but a process.

Hon. Nkoyo Toyo set the tone for the panel by encouraging speakers to reflect on the 3Rs. She challenged them to propose new ways we can reinvent ourselves as a nation in order to promote national healing.

She stated that the declaration of "No victor, No vanquished" informed the Federal Government 1970 – 1974 national development plan that

signalled the rebuilding of the nation and pointed out that these efforts were made to ensure that the people of Biafra did not feel victimized or marginalized in the country.

She charged participants to explore new ways to remake themselves in order to avoid a repeat of the Civil War and build a great future.

RECONCILIATION



Dr. Hakeem Baba Ahmed
Chief of Staff to
The Senate President

There is enough depth and breadth in the Nigerian nation to survive these challenges, but it will be dangerous to be complacent.

Dr. Hakeem Baba narrated events that led to the war, the role of the military and its continued effect on our democracy today. He highlighted the role citizens played in reconciliation efforts and made recommendations to improve national cohesion, tolerance and youth integration in order to create a new legacy for the country.

Highlights from *I Am Biafran* include:

- The military has left a damaging imprint on the nation's democracy, stunting the growth of institutions and democratic values.

- For the nation to find solutions to the recent Biafra phenomenon, it has to understand these challenges from a position of national consensus and political will.
- We should build a better legacy for the nation by re-integrating younger Nigerians into the vision of the nation founded on democratic principles and the rule of law.



RECONCILIATION



Professor T. U. Nwala
University Of Nigeria
Nsukka

Shehu Musa Yar’Adua was a sincere leader and democrat who believed in a greater Nigeria and genuinely sought to find the correct path to national healing and development.

Professor Nwala narrated events that led to the war and illustrated the lack of genuine conciliatory efforts by the Federal Government after the war. He suggested ways in which the nation can work together in pursuit of national unity.

Further to this, he noted that:

- Human rights violations against Igbos were not sincerely addressed as part of

post-war reconciliation efforts.

- The National Youth Service Corps was initiated by Biafrans as a tool to forge national reconciliation and promote national integration.
- Biafra is our collective guilt and for us to move forward as a nation we must understand our differences and renegotiate the basis of our existence as a nation.

RECONCILIATION AND RECONSTRUCTION



Professor Etannibi Alemika
Professor of Criminology and
Sociology, University of Jos

If we want a solution to today’s problems, we need to build a consensus across regions, ethnic groups and religions.

Professor Alemika established the connection between reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts of the Federal Government after the war. He noted the lack of empathy in Nigerians, which did not allow for proper consensus on what needed to be done after the war and made recommendations on ways to build empathy as a tool to pursue national unity.

Highlights of his presentation include:

- Progress made in the area of reconciliation and rehabilitation was short-lived in the 1980s.

- The loss of seniority within the Igbo ranks left them invisible in the politics of the 1980s during which the nation was under military rule. That is where the current genesis of marginalization seems to have increased.

- To solve today’s problems, we need to build empathy and form a consensus across all regions of the nation regardless of religious backgrounds.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS Contd.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?



Chief Ayo Adebajo
Afenifere Chieftan

Anybody opposed to restructuring and a federal system of government in Nigeria is only paying lip-service to our unity and is an enemy of the nation.

Chief Adebajo described events that led to the nation's independence, including the development of the constitution by our founding fathers. He reaffirmed the importance of true federalism and stated that recent events have clearly demonstrated that government cannot afford to ignore the call to restructure the nation.

He highlighted challenges and potential solutions to the current crisis facing the nation and noted that:

- The military had a damaging effect on the nation's democracy.
- The question of Biafra and other related matters is not an issue of living together but the question of how we want to live together in peace and on agreed terms.
- We can only have peace if our constitution appreciates the various communities that have come together to live as one nation.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?



Professor Eghosa Osaghae
Vice Chancellor
Igbinedion University, Okada

Post-civil war reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation are not entirely an Igbo question.

Professor Osaghae discussed the effectiveness of post-war reconciliatory efforts and noted that the war might have been prevented if help had been sought from our international allies. He made important

recommendations to promote national integration.

- Efforts should not be one-sided or imposed but must be mutual, negotiated and inclusive.
- We must address fundamental issues of equity and justice, which were central to the Civil War.
- Appropriate compensation has to be paid to Igbos and minorities of the former Eastern region and the Mid-West who were victims of the program.
- Restructuring must be based on a national consensus of the regions.



DISCUSSANT



Professor Chidi Odinkalu
 President
 Unity Schools Old Students
 Association

It is our desire to honour every part of our narrative and not create the impression that one part necessarily trumps another part.

Professor Odinkalu queried the effectiveness of the implementation of the 3Rs because of its failure to recognize and rehabilitate women who played a role in the war and its lack of significant attention to inter-generational conversations about the war.

- We educate the younger generation on our history so that they do not inherit the hatred that consumed their ancestors.
- The success of citizen engagement with government depends on the creation of effective tools and strategies.

He suggested that:

- Citizens learn more about the people who invite us on social media to fight with one another.

He closed by challenging participants to stop propagating unidimensional stories and encouraged them to embrace multi-dimensional narratives as a way to appreciate the complex nature of our history.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS Contd.

POST-BIAFRA GENERATION: SECURING OUR FUTURE

The session featured a host of emerging leaders from the post-war generation. Discussions focused on the inter-generational gaps in narratives about national cohesion and explored the role of technology and the diaspora in influencing national conversations. The session concluded with nation-building imperatives for the next generation of leaders.

PANEL CHAIR



Honourable Chudi Offodile
Author, *The Politics of Biafra*
and *The Future of Nigeria*

Nigeria's future growth and development face two broad challenges – our constitutional structure and foundational philosophy.

Hon. Chudi Offodile set the tone for the panel by stating that the problems of our past continue to recur. Nearly fifty years after the end of the war in 1970, Nigeria is still grappling with the Biafra dilemma.

He suggested that recent agitations for Biafra might not have originated from events of the war, but rather events occurring after the war. Addressing problems in the country today, he noted that the military has had a negative impact on the country as we

have inherited their centralised structure of the federation that has failed to provide development to the nation, including the Southeast.

He charged speakers to explore new ways to drive national conversations about our future in order to promote national development and unity and suggested that the Biafran idea of participatory democracy, found in the Ahiara Declaration, be adopted by the nation.

POLITICAL ECONOMY



Mr. Nnanna Ude
Agon Continental Limited

We cannot continue to leave politics to those who do not have the capacity to take the right decisions.

Mr. Ude discussed Nigerian governance flaws, compared the economy of the nation before and after the war and

recommended that for us to move forward we must enforce a process based on evidence.

Highlights included:

- Our focus should be on the quality of decisions we make as a nation and the capacity of the people we choose to lead us.
- The younger generation needs to develop an active interest in politics and engage with the political system at all levels, even beyond elections.



TECHNOLOGY AND
THE DIASPORA

Ms. Chioma Agwuegbo
Founder, TechHer

Wars are no longer fought on the battlefield, they are fought in the minds and hearts of people. Biafra today lives on Facebook with over 500,000 in one Facebook group. It lives on Twitter and on different websites across the world.

Ms. Agwuegbo noted the resilient broadcast technologies with which Biafra Radio propagates its messaging. She explained how technology and alternative facts have helped the spread of IPOB propaganda. According to her, government should recognise that interdiction is pointless and the solution is rather to deploy effective counter-narratives. She also made important recommendations on inclusive governance and encouraged the younger generation to engage government in order to create a desirable future.

Further to this, she noted that:

- Ethnic echo chambers on social media facilitate the propagation of secessionist messages. We are not fighting a single person but a behemoth of technologically driven people.
- We need to ask questions of our governors and make them accountable for their actions.
- We must foster an increased sense of ownership of governance at all levels and develop organized structures to push our demands in order to foster an increased sense of ownership in the nation.

EDUCATING NIGERIA'S YOUTH



Ms. Ndidia Nwuneli
Founder, LEAP Africa

We have to change our curriculum; it has to include the undiluted truth about Biafra. We need our history told.

Ms. Nwuneli used her own personal experience to illustrate the bias Igbo people face in Nigeria. She suggested that the memory centre being built in Enugu to give everyone a sense of hope could be replicated as a national memorial in Abuja to immortalize those who died during the war.

She further pointed out that:

- We have the responsibility to change the negative stereotypes of Biafra. Prejudice can be changed when facts are shared.
- There is a need to tell the undiluted truth about Biafra so as to avoid single stories about the war.
- The younger generation are struggling to identify their roots and we owe it to them to guide them to those roots.
- Nigeria could learn from the example of Rwanda, Germany and the United States, who have been through brutal wars and went on to achieve success in unity.
- We are proudly Nigerians and together we can create a great nation.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS Contd.

RELIGION & THE RULE OF LAW



Ms. Saadatu Fali Hamu
Legal Practitioner
Curator, Global Shapers

The relationships I have built over time, that have defined me over time, are not my religious identity or my ethnic identity but my national identity.

Ms. Hamu discussed the need for a new national identity, a Nigerian identity that is void of religion, tribe or status. She suggested that the rule of law has always played an important role in national development and urged participants to have a stronger public voice and see our diversity as our greatest strength.

She noted that:

- Failure of the rule of law has led to inefficiencies in solving our current crises.
- Citizens should view their diversity as a strength and work together to move the nation forward.
- Globally, we are celebrating our unity as Africans and if Nigeria succeeds, Africa as a whole succeeds.
- Biafra resulted from socio-economic and political exclusion.
- Nigeria's unity is dependent on social and political inclusion of minorities, especially women and girls.

UNDERSTANDING BIAFRA



Ms. Simi Fajemirokun
Founder, R2S Africa

The beauty of our generation is that we are not afraid to depart from the past. We have no nostalgia about the past because when we were growing up, all we knew were problems.

Ms. Fajemirokun recalled that she learned most of what she knows about the war while in university in the United States. She questioned the fact that history is not taught in schools today and noted how disconnected the younger generation is from the country's history. She also recollected her personal interviews with members of MASSOB and IPOB as part of her research on Biafra.

Highlights of her presentation included:

- The most important thing about the post-Biafran generation is that they are not afraid to depart from the past as we can only move forward looking by into the future.
- The common theme that runs across all the narratives regarding Biafra is economic injustice.
- The younger generation should be encouraged to push their imagination so we become a nation of problem solvers.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGE



Dr. Chichi Aniagolu-Okoye
Country Director
Girl Effect

Having an open society and the chance to talk and share feelings is extremely important. We need to have counter-narratives.

Dr. Aniagolu-Okoye noted that recent agitations in the country are driven by the fact that Nigeria does not give Nigerians hope for the future. She stated that nation building is not just about creating opportunities but about giving people a sense of identity and hope that they can fulfil their dreams. She highlighted the role inclusive societies play in nation building and emphasized the need for a broader view of our problems in order to find solutions issues facing the nation.

Highlights of her presentation included:

- People will only have a sense of national identity if they do not feel marginalized.
- Nigeria has failed to give its people hope and provide them with opportunities to grow and be the best they can be.
- We need to revise our indigenization policy so citizens can have a sense of identity anywhere they are in the country.
- We need to start making Nigerians matter in Nigeria.

LEAD DISCUSSANT



Mr. Amara Nwankpa
Director, Public Policy Initiative
Yar'Adua Foundation

We must learn to welcome a multiplicity of ideas and opinions that we might not be comfortable with.

Mr. Nwankpa began by expressing optimism that the conference had resulted in real conversations about the future of Nigeria. He reaffirmed the need for greater citizen participation in the affairs of the nation and identified the importance of empathy as a tool to connect us with one another.

He encouraged government to create inclusive spaces that would promote true patriotism and said that the younger generation should remember that the civil war was only a single chapter in the nation's history. He challenged the next generation to transition the country from dependence on extractive values to additive value and expressed optimism that we could work together to build a better country as we all have a shared commonality.

Highlights of his presentation include:

- Citizens should work to improve our chances of competing favorably with the rest of the world.
- We must be more tolerant, build stronger relationships with each other and be more understanding of our differences.
- We must learn to care and empathize with each other so that when tragedy happens to any of us, we treat it as a Nigerian problem, not a sectional or ethnic problem.
- The lesson of Biafra should ensure that no other group in Nigeria suffers the same fate.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS Contd.



SUMMARY



Mr. Udo Jude Ilo
 Head of the Nigeria
 Country Office
 Open Society Initiative For
 West Africa

Our future should be about rebuilding bridges and strengthening networks that elevate our unity above our differences.

Mr. Ilo highlighted points made by speakers during the event. He advised citizens to accept their differences as a strength, be optimistic about the future and commit to rebuilding the nation.

Highlights of his presentation included:

- Biafra is not just about Igbo people. Rather it is a damning testimonial of what is wrong with Nigeria and an illustration of the danger that we face if we do not build an inclusive nation that gives every one of us a sense of belonging.
- We need to renegotiate the terms of our relationship and not be afraid of a conversation that can make us stronger.

CLOSE



Professor Ebere Onwudiwe

Prof. Onwudiwe commended speakers for their insight that will promote national reconciliation and integration. He suggested that the conference would un-ban use of the word "Biafra" to allow a discussion of our collective history in order to prevent a repetition of errors.

Highlights of his presentation included:

- To build Nigeria, unfairness and injustice must be resolved.
- The Federal Government should listen to those crying of marginalization and proffer solutions.

In conclusion, Prof. Onwudiwe noted that for the Federal Government to solve the problems of recent agitations, solutions should reflect equity, fairness, justice and promote national unity.



CULTURAL NIGHT

The conference concluded with cultural activities featuring various forms of art highlighting Nigeria's history, including memories of the Civil War.

Performance Poetry: *Made in Nigeria*

Dike Chukwumerije

Made in Nigeria is a fusion of theatre, comedy, dance, and poetry expressed through riveting performance. It tells the tale of our journey to nationhood from Amalgamation to Independence and beyond through human stories.

The show's first segment, *A Tale of Two Lovers*, portrayed the heartbreak of a young couple caught up in the crisis that preceded the Civil War. Dike Chukwumerije's energetic recreation of Nigeria's history riveted the audience and provided an emotionally rewarding experience.



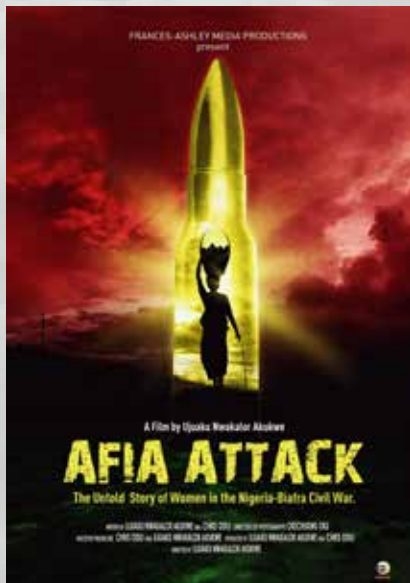
Screening: *Afia Attack* Ujuaku Akukwe

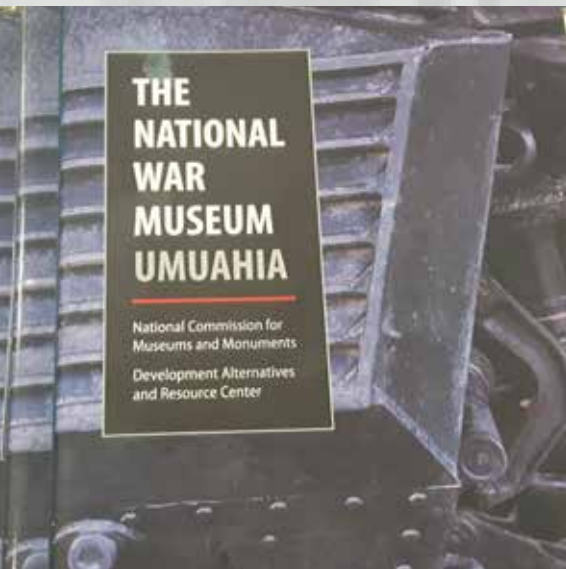
With the men shipped off to the war front, responsibility for sustaining the economy and providing essential supplies for children and the elderly fell to Biafran women. These women undertook dangerous journeys, going behind enemy lines to procure much needed supplies. Many women who participated in this war-time trade were brutalized or did not survive. *Afia Attack* (trading behind enemy lines) is a tale told by survivors of these perilous trade expeditions to sustain the Biafran war economy.

In a Q&A session with Amara Nwankpa after the screening, Ms. Akukwe emphasized the need to memorialize the courage and tenacity of these women, particularly those captured and sexually exploited. She highlighted tragic similarities with the plight of many female victims of the Boko Haram conflict.



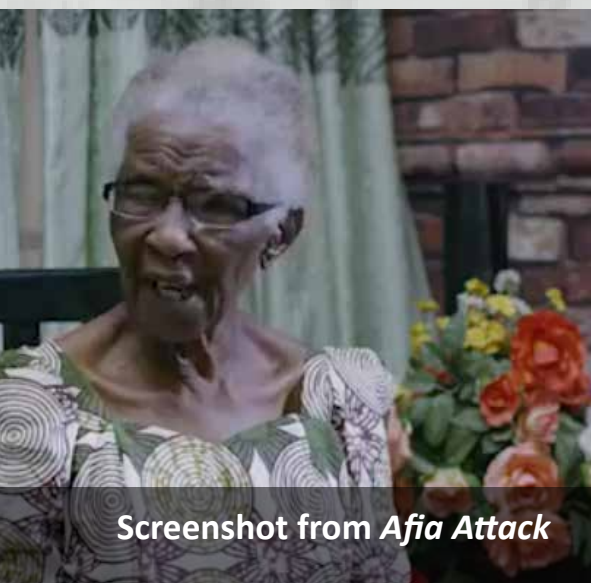
Abubakar Adam Ibrahim
Reading
A Year Of Astonishing Things





Thought Pyramid Gallery
Art Exhibition

National Commission for
Museums and Monuments
Presentation



Screenshot from *Afia Attack*





Nnanna Ude @nnannaude · May 25

Today, @SMYFoundation tore down the walls of cynicism, despair & hate and there was a loud voice in the hall: We're all Biafrans! #Biafra50



Mark Amaza @amasonic

Follow

The greatest achievement of today's #Biafra50 for me is how the -ve stigma around the word Biafra is being stripped away & decriminalized.

Retweets 7 Likes 5

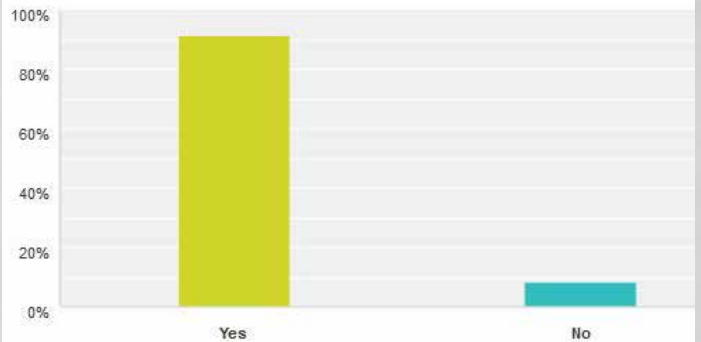
9:59 AM - 25 May 2017



POST-EVENT SURVEY

Did your knowledge of the Nigerian Civil War improve as a result of information shared at the event?

Answered: 96 Skipped: 0



Nigeria Newsdesk @NigeriaNewsdesk

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Nigerians have the right to discuss the terms of their existence – Osinbajo at #Biafra50 nnd.ng/PDtDk3 via @ynaija



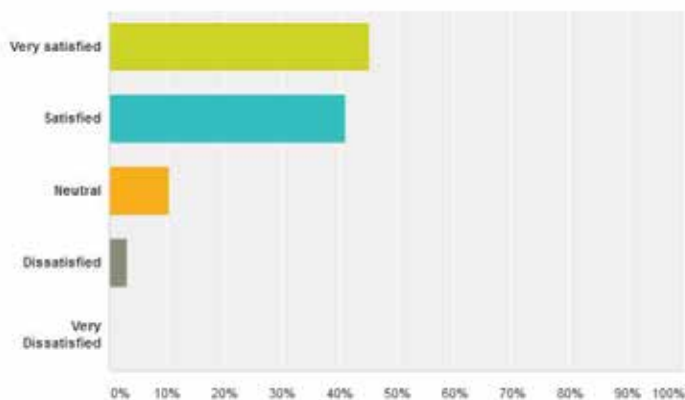
1:04 PM - 25 May 2017

28 Retweets 9 Likes

POST-EVENT SURVEY

How satisfied were you with information presented at the event?

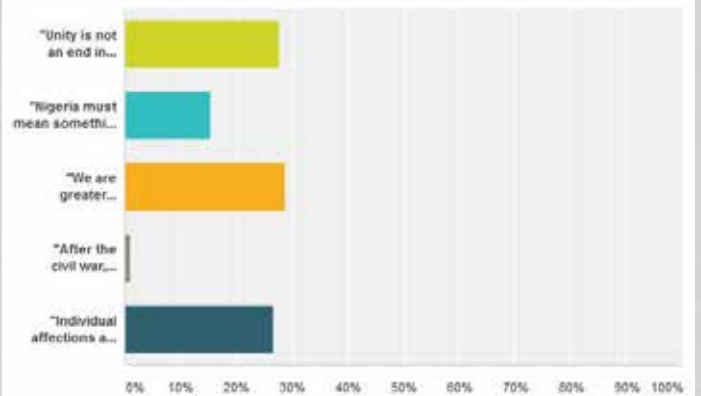
Answered: 95 Skipped: 1



POST-EVENT SURVEY

Which quote from the event resonated most with you?

Answered: 97 Skipped: 0



As a millennial from the South West, I didn't know much about the Biafran Civil War, so the conference was most educative and insightful. Thank you.

Post-Event Survey Respondent

PICTURES





VOXPOPS on Biafra and National Unity

Award-winning filmmaker, Ishaya Bako, took his camera to the suburbs of Abuja to capture candid responses to the following questions:

Do you think there is still animosity as a result of the Civil War?

Ever heard about IPOB? If yes, what are your thoughts?

It has been 50 years, do you think the issue of Biafra has been resolved?

What issue can every Nigerian unite around?



MEMORIES OF THE WAR

Professor Utomi presented a series of slides on the impact of the war on women and children, post-war reconstruction and parallels between the human toll of the Civil War and the current Boko Haram conflict.

THE WAR & CHILDREN



MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER

MAY 25, 2017 - YAR'ADUA CENTRE
9:00 AM



- Displaced children were more obedient and truthful, but more temperamental and less social than non-displaced children.
- As many as 22% had their names changed, losing their national and individual identities.
- 6 years after displacement children 12 years and older underachieved in all levels of education.

The United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child 1976



POST WAR RECOVERY (1970-1975)



40% growth in primary and post primary enrollment due to investment in **Education**



140% growth in capacity to deliver **healthcare** as a result of expansion of existing **medical facilities** and construction of new ones

- **Aba Textile Mill** rebuilt and expanded
- **Pepsi-Cola factory**, Onitsha replaced with higher capacity **Limca plant**



50% growth in **palm kernel** and **cocoa** output

NORTH EAST NIGERIA TODAY



**MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER**

MAY 25, 2017 - YAR'ADUA CENTRE
9:00 AM



- 54% of the 1,878,205 displaced persons are children. The United Nations estimates 450,000 will suffer severe acute malnutrition and without treatment, approximately 1 in 5 (more than 75,000) are likely to die.
- 80% live in host communities with little or no access to education. Over 1,200 schools have been destroyed and more than 500 teachers have been killed.

Save the Children 2017

www.yaraduafoundation.org/biafra50

1967-1970
CIVIL WAR



VS

2009-2017
**BOKO HARAM
INSURGENCY**



7 MILLION
threatened by
starvation



4 MILLION
malnourished
2.1 MILLION children
faced with starvation



1 MILLION
students had their
education disrupted



1200+ SCHOOLS
destroyed
500 teachers killed



2 MILLION
displaced



2.3 MILLION
displaced
54% are children



100,000+ MILITARY
personnel killed



10,000+ MILITARY
personnel killed



**MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER**
MAY 25, 2017 - YAR'ADUA CENTRE





SHEHU YAR'ADUA & THE WAR

As Adjutant of the First Infantry Battalion based in Enugu, Yar'Adua was given the job of evacuating men and material from the region in the lead up to the war - an order he would later criticize:

"Certainly if the federal government had troops that it could rely upon [in the region], there wouldn't have been a civil war."

Shehu Musa Yar'Adua - A Life of Service (p57)

MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER
 MAY 25, 2017 - YAR'ADUA CENTRE
 9:00 AM



SHEHU YAR'ADUA'S POST-WAR LEGACY

Yar'Adua's post-war legacy is one of an activist for participatory democracy. He believed that Nigeria's path to progress led through national cohesion and inclusiveness.

"He worked for a free, democratic, open society - a Nigerian society. That was his general position, where bridges are built across the frontiers - north, south, east, west."

Dr. Chuba Okadigbo
Fmr. Senate President - NTA People and Events (2002)

MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER
 MAY 25, 2017 - YAR'ADUA CENTRE
 9:00 AM



SHEHU YAR'ADUA & THE WAR

Federal troops had tried twice and failed to capture Onitsha. The third time the task was given to Yar'Adua who kept a diary where he logged troop movements & morale, supply of materials and his personal observations.

Shehu Yar'Adua's War Diary is on display at the permanent exhibition of his life of service at the Yar'Adua Centre

MEMORY & NATION BUILDING
BIAFRA: 50 YEARS AFTER
 MAY 25, 2017 - YAR'ADUA CENTRE
 9:00 AM





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www.yaraduafoundation.org

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