

Protest Voice and Narrative of Ethno-nationality Identity: Ken Saro-Wiwa's Autobiography

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Abstract

*The tradition of autobiographical 'self-telling' cultivated by opposition elements against oppressive regimes in Africa gained prominence during the turbulent days of colonial resistance, where most of the key anti-colonial politicians took to the practice of narrating their encounters as nationalists and patriots in the national liberation struggles. The post-independent era did also brew new flavours into non-fictional literary menus, especially in Nigeria, where military elites and coupists capitalised on the autobiographical platform as creative non-fictional resource for building posterities for their 'corrective' roles and exploits in the service. In such stories, the narrators project their gallantry and patriotism in effecting change of regimes or in warfare during the nation's civil war, fought in the later 1960s. But the depressing account of Ken Saro-Wiwa's life-narrative: *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary* (1995), departs from the earlier traditions, and rather follows in the temerity of Wole Soyinka's prison memoir, *The Man Died* (1967), and depicts the politics and conflicts of ethnic-nationality exclusion with the paradoxes that characterise postcolonial/post-independent Nigerian state, where ethnicity, rentalism and new-fangled 'divide-and-rule' practices, violent uprisings, totalitarianism in governance and criminal impunities of the ruling elites have brought the nation to its present state of developmental disarray. With Achebe's *There was a Country* (2005), a classic rendition in the non-fictional genre, which explicates Nigeria's disintegrative tendencies, was bequeathed to African non-fictional narrative culture. This paper examines the utility of Saro-Wiwa's autobiographical account as veritable medium of engagement with the complexities of ethno-nationality identity configurations and the health of Nigerian state.*

Keywords: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Ogoni eco-system, Sani Abacha, ethno-nationality crisis, autobiography

Introduction

On 2nd November 1995, the Ogoni-born Nigerian writer, television producer, businessman and, above all, environmental activist and mass mobiliser, Ken Saro-Wiwa, alongside eight fellow Ogoni leaders, was hanged by the then military regime in Nigeria. This globally condemned act was executed under the watch of the late Nigerian brutal ruler and military dictator, Gen Sani Abacha. Saro-Wiwa's unbendable and bold protest stance against the former's draconian state power became his tragic undoing. Sani Abacha watched with aloofness as the coalition of multinational oil prospecting and mining syndicates particularly Shell, Chevron, Mobil, most viciously devastated Ogoni ecological landscape and other spheres of the mineral-rich Niger Delta region with reckless abandon. The post-Abacha Nigerian history is awash with revelatory involvements of Abacha in the oil-resource roguery that went on, especially with the mindboggling 'Abacha loot' that may not ever be fully accounted for by the country in a foreseeable future. The circumstances surrounding Saro-Wiwa's death further complicated Nigeria's tinder politics of ethno-nationality tension with its characteristic imbalance and disintegrative tendencies (Alagoa 2011). It is self-evidence and globally acknowledged that the communities that host the reservoir of petro-dollar resource and mainstay of Nigeria's economy has suffered neglect. The accruable gains of oil resources have been taken to develop other parts of the country while the host communities are left in abject neglect and humiliation. Roberts aptly avers that "This apparent neglect is made more politically salient by the perception that the resources derived from oil in these communities find investment in development projects in non-oil mineral producing areas of the country" (4) to the dismay and disillusionment of the ethnic minority delta creeks people. This is part of the issues that set the motivation for Saro-Wiwa's narrated protest for justice, equity and political rights for the oppressed Ogoni indigenous people.

Since the 1950s when mining activities commenced in Ogoni land the communities have suffered ecological consequences of those earth-breaking operations in the region for decades without caution for environmental impact situations, neither on human life nor to aquatic and atmospheric safety. The communities have been left to grapple with the vulnerable and dire condition they have come to find themselves. The protest for justice and equity in the region did not begin with late Ken Saro-Wiwa. During the civil war in the 1960s, Isaac Adaka Boro the Ijaw-

born Nigerian revolutionary tried to mobilise the ethnic minority communities for redress, but this attempt was quelled and short-lived although the consciousness to the injustice and violations persisted. Boro remains today celebrated as among “the pioneers of minority rights activism in Nigeria” (Ayakoroma 3). But the unpleasant situation he fought to correct persisted decades after. It was in the midst of this anger and helplessness that Ken Saro-Wiwa, in the spirit of Isaac Boro, emerged to press for justice, resource equity and national inclusion. Tanure Ojaide, the versatile eco-conscious writer pays tribute to the two activists as “Homeland Warriors” (Usanga 251) in his poetry. The continued neglect and suppression of the minority ethnic nationality peoples of Nigeria by the major ethnic-conscious power brokers has caused the country several bloody irruptions.

Sani Abacha’s regime of which Saro-Wiwa specifically pitched his activism against dealt a devastating blow on the unity of Nigerian state, but most specifically on the oil-rich delta ethnic minority group, never like any other in Nigeria’s fragmented history. This regime was marked by intolerance, torture of whoever crossed the path of ‘the powers that be’ then, and human rights violations with frequent eliminations of perceived enemies. To further ventilate the historical landscape narrated in Saro-Wiwa’s detention diary, Kunle Amuwo and Daniel Bach, posit that “The Abacha military regime that ruled Nigeria from 17 November 1993 to 8 June 1998 could well be summarized as a government that was involved in a perennial, if uneven, struggle with civil society organizations and the international community that wanted a rapid return to civilian and democratic rule”, and they go further to capture the general perception of the brutal regime by stating that “What Abacha lacked – and deservedly so – was the power of the ‘kiss’, that is, the capacity to create obligations; to inspire loyalty, respect and commitment from a citizenry in search of a new lease of life” (1).

But beyond this, Nigeria’s multi-ethnic nationalities were never as sharply divided among themselves, especially between the north and the south, since the civil war. There was this glamour for sovereign national conference to discuss the fate of the nation. Successive regimes since Abacha have continued to grapple with the seed of national discord that the dictator’s regime sowed in Nigeria’s body politics. It is this very behaviour of state impunity and repressive responses to grievances that gingered the tradition of “combative reactionism...in the Niger Delta”

(Emuedo and Emuedo 1). Nigerian writers in every genre and platforms continue to tow the adversarial path to vent their disapproval of the mistreatment of the minority ethnic nationality peoples of the Niger Delta and elsewhere in the country. But despite state repressive stance against voices of dissent, the aggrieved have always found a voice in moments of dire need, especially from among writers, activists and committed intellectuals. The natives of the ecologically degraded region had witnessed with trepidation the reckless exploitation and plunder of their nature-endowed resources until they could no more bear in silence but began to cry out to the world for intervention. Ngugi Wa' Thiong'o asserts that "the oppressed and the exploited of the earth maintain their defiance: liberty from theft" but guided by "creative culture of resolute struggle" (3). The narrated struggles of the oppressed, cheated and suppressed minority ethnic communities of the Niger Delta Nigeria continue in different forms to press for justice, equity, absence of true federalism, resource control to ensure fairness in the political economy of Nigerian state.

The non-fictional political narrative of Ken Saro Wiwa opens up fresh vista in the messy narrative of a people's recurrent struggle against state violence and repressive regimes that each time manifest new-fashioned divide-and-rule that characterised colonialism. Uzoечи Nwagbara, corroborating Nwosu 24, Kukah 16, aptly paint an unpleasant picture of the failing health of Nigerian state as a result of successive poor leadership and imbalance that create conflicts in the following extract:

Nigerian history since colonial incursion is awash with political violence, crude use of power and deepening socio-economic crises. The principal factors that shaped this tradition are couched in hegemony, capitalism and politics of exclusion...which underpin the logic of imperialism. Fundamentally, this pattern has left an aftertaste of lingering State violence, which is an epiphenomenon of this culture clash. Simply put, imperial violence and its concomitants are replicated in Nigeria's postcolonial State violence and political culture. The tyrannical State violence replicated is a function of colonial administrative subterfuge, which was modeled upon administrative convenience—even when the colonialists have left the Nigerian political space (122).

Because of the pervasive nature of repressive, ethnicity-driven sectional and antagonistic regimes of which the minority ethnic groups continue to be on the receiving side, national cohesion has remained more of illusion than visible in the postcolonial Nigerian experience. The minority ethnic nationalities in Nigeria as a result continue to struggle in a consciousness of ethnonationalism or subnationalism, pressing for significant space in “the sub-national resentment of national ideals by ethnic groups which are forced to remain in a political union, whose structure they consider inadequate” (Afolayan 11). The communities of intelligentsia, humanists and visionaries have not ceased using diverse platforms to point out to the pervasive anomalies that continue to restrain the state from significant progress and development by deploying every form of “intellectual militancy” (136) towards bringing about the much needed meaningful change in the governance system. These actions are serve to rattle the hegemonic power regimes, the ethnic bigots, chauvinists and self-serving ‘cabal’ and wielders of authority that have been holding the nation to ransom since independence. Ken Saro-Wiwa’s account of his encounter with power cabals in Nigeria runs ‘a bird’s eye-view’ across Nigeria’s jinxed historical landscape with its successive ill-fated leadership and regimes. Saro-Wiwa’s self-narrating story chronicles some aspects in the landmark events and circumstances of the narrator’s experience as a campaigner for true nationhood, socio-economic justice and human cohesion.

Ogoni impasse as metaphor of an ailing State

The writer’s autobiographical narration of his personal encounter and the mistreatment of minority Ogoni ethnic nationality tribe in Nigeria, highlights how the people from whose soil the resource that sustains Nigerian State have suffered persecutions and punishment for daring to ask questions that are fundamental to their survival and for the survival of their ancestral heritage-their land and environment. Sequel to the situations recounted in this heart-rending narrative, the region, nay, Nigeria has remained in a parlous state as the situation that birthed Saro-Wiwa’s nationalism remains unabated. What has remained a lasting legacy of decades of misrule, is the condition of stagnation, frequent ethno-religious irruptions and confusion that continue to bug the country. The burning issues of minority question in a country that runs a federation has remained unaddressed. The resurgence of militancy, serial killings, vandalism, oil theft and kidnappings with all manners of atrocious acts going on in the region (Simon et. al 2014), still begs for redress. The drama

filtering down to the bloody results of state grandstanding in the Niger Delta issue has left more questions than answer to the vexing discourse of Nigeria's national unity, integration, sustainability and survival (Bida 2018).

The discordant terminologies emanating from the Niger Delta ecological and political crisis resulted in a kaleidoscope of coinages such as 'ecological refugees', 'carbon emission', 'gas flare', 'acid rain', 'environmental clean-up', 'resource control,' 'sovereign national conference,' militarisation of the Niger Delta, 'Ogoni Bill of Rights', 'Ogoni 9', 'the Niger Delta Question', restructuring, IPOB, MOSSOP, MEND, NDPVF among others, that characterise contemporary political narrative in Nigeria in its recent history. The above insight does not in any way suggest that Niger Delta is the only sections of the Nigerian state that is broiling with tension, frustration and threat. This unhealthy condition then and presently spreads across the ethnic communities around the country and the situation keeps festering, thus making scholars and pundits, local and international, to reason that the giant state may disintegrate in a predictable future (Ibietan and Segun 2013, Kinnan et. al 2011). The ferocious political atavism of ethnic nationality discrepancies and the more recent bloody temperaments of religious extremists and herders' bloody outings with the concomitant multifarious crises in the nation's experience leave no glimmer of solution in the horizon, especially with the apparent display of inertia and disturbing attitude of reluctance on the part of the leadership. Ken Saro-Wiwa's detention diary streams from the same crisis of leadership deficit, internal conspiracies and blind accumulation of oil wealth, coupled with the insidious roles of greedy external opportunists and profiteers who are busy commandeering the patrimony, while creating a situation of indigenous re-colonisation and neo-imperialism.

Whether it is termed memoir, historiography or autobiography, personal stories of significant historical import, serve as important vehicles for creating and re-creating experience as alternative media of historical inquiry. It becomes more intriguing, pedagogic and momentous when an outstanding voice, standing for a collective cause, renders self-account in a 'life-and-time' trope. Thus, Johnson Sheehan states of memoir that "People write memoirs when they have true personal stories that they hope will inspire others to reflect on intriguing questions or social issues. Readers expect memoirs to help them encounter perspectives and insights that are fresh and meaningful"(48). Paul Gready throws more light on

autobiographical narrative of imprisonment that “the word is a weapon that both inflicts pain and secures power” for such captive intellectuals thus implying that writing self remains that least option left for the prisoner of conscience or politically suppressive narrators. Exemplifying the apartheid condition of restrictiveness which is not dissimilar to the situation recounted in Saro-Wiwa’s encounter with brutal state power in Nigeria, Gready states thus that, “Prisoners write to restore a sense of self and world, to reclaim the ‘truth’ ..., to seek empowerment in an oppositional ‘power of writing’ by writing against the official text of imprisonment. Autobiographical prison writing is the most comprehensive articulation of this oppositional ‘power of writing’” (489).

Given the social backdrop explicated above, the life-story of Saro-Wiwa cuts a banal picture of an atomistic nation, a nation that is perpetually at war with itself, where the strong and powerful undermine the welfare, security and fundamental of the vulnerable of that society. The narrative chronicles a culture of repressive leadership; it is the testament of a people that are always united in difference, that have failed to utilize abounding potentials for greatness, due to unbridled politics of ethnicity, seething corruption of the ruling elites that filters down to the ‘man in the street’; it weaves a stereotype of postcolonial socio-political sphere where political leadership persistently progress in self-contradiction. This condition has been the general characteristic of “leadership problem... with particular reference to Nigeria” (Okunade 7) that promised continental leadership at independence but has been stymied by visionless leadership.

The glaring manifestations of these negative indicators demonstrate a steady drift of the nation to the brinks. Mbodi thus states that as a race or people, the black world has consistently got “defeated in the world of competitions” (7). This is despite the great opportunities of human potentials and natural endowments. Saro-Wiwa’s revealing detention account set primarily at the Nigeria’s degraded oil-rich Niger delta ecological space. It reflects back on the various remarkable sites of the narrator’s encounters with repressive, hegemonic state power. It is the chronicle of the persona’s protest movement against the multinational oil companies working in collusion with the Nigeria’s federal state power that despoils the land, carts away the voluptuous resources accruable from the Niger Delta area. The torments recounted in the narrative symbolises the trauma that the people have had to grapple with in a long tortuous history of injustice and punitive reactionism of a nation’s state apparatus

that fails to respond to the plight and outcry of the voiceless and the underprivileged of its society. As a writer with a vision, and as a social crusader, politician and environmentalist, Ken Saro-Wiwa's moving account is a detailed, empathetic and enlightening epic movement for the liberation of his community. It exposes how the Ogoni community within the Nigerian state was torn apart by deliberate act of government through perfidy and infiltration in a typical 'divide-and-rule' style that saw the 'conquered' race of the delta sphere dangerously divided against itself and its people thrown into disarray.

Same Old Stereotype of 'Divide-and-rule'

The question of who owns the land and its resources is central to the conflicts prevalent in Nigeria's turbulent historical evolution. This is tied to the divisive hangovers of colonial administration and absence of nationalistic consciousness in the polity. The situations recounted in the story resembles the colonialist 'divide and rule' where communities were set at each other by the powers of imperialism, and rivalry was always fueled to set the people at each other while the resources of the land were being carted and plundered. Frantz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth* and Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* project the predatory strategies of colonial imperialism that persist in the present postcolonial Nigeria. Reflecting on the historical backdrop to the Niger Delta situation, Alagoa states that "with independence, the colonial buffer was removed, and the minority communities of the Niger Delta came under the direct control of their more populous neighbours" (23). He states that with the collapse of the traditional local control, a more radical youth resistance group that sort equity and fair distribution of economic resource and empowerment emerged. The first such serious youth movement came at the first military coup in 1966 from Isaac Adaka Boro with his 'Creek revolution' which merged into the Civil War in 1967. To sum up the socio-historical background to the narrator's detention diary with the protracted crisis in the Niger delta region as narrated in the autobiography of Ken Saro Wiwa, Alagoa puts it this way:

Crude oil exploitation had begun... in 1956 to become the corner-stone of the Nigerian economy. Rather than raise the profile and significance of the Niger Delta, this golden egg of the nation became a curse on the Niger Delta, bringing environmental degradation, loss of farmland and fishing grounds, depriving the people of the resources on which their lives depended (25).

Since the seed of armed protest sown earlier by the Isaac Adaka Boro that was undertaken as Algoa (above) states, “against the exploitation of oil and gas recourse in the Niger Delta by foreign multinational”, lasting peace has continued to elude Nigeria and particularly the Niger delta coastal region. The area has long remained a site of endless and bloody conflicts that have recurrently questioned the viability or sustainability of Nigerian nationhood.

Ken Saro-Wiwa’s detention account opens at a dramatic setting in an encounter of the protagonist with operatives of State Security Service (SSS) at a road junction in Port Harcourt in 1993. The narrator describes this scene thus: “It was my fourth arrest in three Months” (*A Month and a Day* 3). In this scene he project himself as a regular guest of state repressive apparatus due to his persistent voice against dictatorial, repressive state power. The reason for his travail is tied to his “activities on Election Day 1 June 1993” (5), of which under the aegis of the movement for the survival of Ogoni people (MOSOP), the people of Ogoni had mobilized against that national elections as a way of seeking redress for the mistreatment of the Ogonis in the scheme of things. The magnitude of such unprecedented movement is described in the narrative as “the mammoth protest march involving about 300,000 people that signaled the commencement of the non-violent resistance to our denigration as a people” (13). What is crucial to such magnitude of mass mobilisation stems from a direct response to or reaction against what Edward Said describes as “the loss of locality to the outsider” (cited in Deloughrey and Handley 6).

Within this social ambience, the protagonist builds a brilliant menu of self-revealing rendition in which he unravels how he pitched his camp with his disadvantaged Ogoni ethnic nationality people towards creating a critical mass for an effective movement for social justice and socio-economic inclusion. He narrates with captivating mood, the ploy that was manufactured to rattle the federal and even state authorities to pay attention to the yearning of the long-trampled Ogoni people and others in similar circumstances around the world, especially in the creation of the ‘Ogoni Bill of Rights’ that became the rhetorical springboard politically and intelligently articulated justify and rationalise the protest movement in the face of the existing global awakening at the time:

I did recognize that other groups were suffering the same fate as the Ogoin. To tackle the wider problem, I thought of

establishing organizations which would deal with the environmental and political problems of threatened peoples. And so were born the Ethnic Minority Rights Organization and the Nigerian Society for the Protection of Environment, both of which later merged into the Ethnic minority Rights Organization and the Minority Rights Organization of African (EMIROAF) (92).

If Gen. Ibrahim Babagida who handed over power to Gen.Sani Abacha set the fire of ethnicity crisis or North-South divide that climaxed in the annulment of June 12 elections of 1993, the brutal dictator Sani Abachi, poured the fuel that fanned the embers to the limits of aggressiveness and intolerability. The later worked with the multinational investors that jointly stoked the embers of divisiveness in the political economy of Nigerian state. The activities of the multinational are aptly described by Romanus Aboh in the 'Forward' to Imo Okon's anthology of poetry: *Echoes from the mangrove* (2016) that the act of "unending degradation of the region by oil exploiters who pocketed their humanity before landing in the Niger Delta"(iv) added to further dismember the Nigerian state during Abacha regime mostly. The disenchantment of Ogoni is that although Shell's oil pipelines crisscross the villages in the communities that burst often to destroy the environment ever since 1958 without any significant evidence of social accountability or remediation, they (Shell) should leave the region or give commensurate compensation. In 1993 the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) emerged to seek redress and save the situation by any means available. To situate how the Ogoni struggle was energised for decisive action, the narrator states:

There were enough films, magazine and books to show how environmentally conscious Shell was in Europe and America. The story in Nigeria was entirely different...I agree that Shell's behaviour in Europe and America was dictated by the pressure of environmental groups and the governments of the countries concerned. Given that experience, why did Shell take such great exception to my work and that of the MOSOP?... I challenge Shell to show the public what environment impact assessment studies it conducted in Nigeria prior to 1993. (*A Month and a Day* 166-167)

While the military rulers, because they were involved in oil theft and sundry sleazy deals in the Niger delta creeks, they were trying to nip the implicating situation in the bud. They were thus united to see to it that every voice of dissent was quenched by any means possible.

Gas flaring continues, the politics of the environmental clean-up has so far brought no discernible fruit to the Niger Delta landscape. Emmanuel Taiwo evaluates the situation by stating that:

The environmental devastation associated with the industry and the lack of distribution of oil wealth have been the source and/or key aggravating factors of numerous environmental movements and inter-ethnic conflicts in the region, including the recent guerrilla activity by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta. The effect of these inhuman activities, not just in our Niger Delta, but globally, is having untold consequences on mankind and the earth (127).

The Ogoni struggle narrated in Saro-Wiwa's autobiography chronicles a recurrent narrative of a broken nation, torn apart by her rulers. It also highlights how openly the authorities both at federal and Rivers State levels tried to break the protest, criminalise its leaders and circumvent the movement for justice and equity in the Niger Delta. The story delineates how official media was appropriated by the absolute state power to negate a just cause through wicked propaganda and mere deceit. The incidence of state operatives' shooting of women who were unarmed protesters, but they deceived the public by accusing MOSSOP of the criminal behavior. This shows the limits of desperation that was the order of the day. Saro-Wiwa comments thus:

The Ogoni people were very traumatised by this situation... the MOSOP Steering Committee upset by this development and Mr. Ledun Mitee, Edwards Kobani and I were delegated to tour Ogoni to calm the people. Denied access to government radio, we sent letters appealing for calm to all villages through the chiefs... in the face of this tragedy, some Ogoni politicians and traditional rulers, the friends of Governor Ada George, issued another press release which was given wide coverage in the newspaper and radio, castigating MOSOP and its leaders over the shooting (*A Month and a Day* 157).

The movement from one police cell to another and from one confinement place to the other underscores the repressive atmosphere and the mean treatment of the protesting Ogonis in the hands of cruel state agents. The story also renders some accounts of the fatalities and agony that attended the experience recounted in the autobiography. According to the narrator, the high rate of fatality that marked the narrated struggle creates a suspicion of state plotted genocide against the Ogoni. As he recounts, Ogonis were tactically chased out of their ancestral land space by the agents of Nigerian state.

Gen. Sani Abacha who is the central adversary or anti-hero has been named across the African continent among the brutal rulers that Africa has produced. That Saro Wiwa was subjected to state torture and eventual gruesome murder is not strange in African postcolonial/post-independence leadership context. The gory narratives of Africa's post-independent encounter had given birth to the likes of Idi Amin of Uganda, Mobu Sese Seko of Zaire, and Jean-Bedel Bokassa of Central African nation, and many others (Meredith 2016). The street of Burundi have witnessed similar gory scenes of blood, skulls and broken limbs of fellow countrymen who rose against each other in mutual hate and bloody onslaught due to the incitement of bad leadership. Liberia's Samuel Doe is part of that bitter memory of Africa's many nightmares where the people had been set against each other by the leadership in the bid to perpetuate their brutal legacy of corruption and roguery in power. In the Sudan the henchmen of power who trade on hate, ethnicity and nepotism, oppress the weak and toiling compatriots and pitch them against each other, for reasons of greed and self-perpetuation just as they plunder the patrimony. This is the same self-glorifying footage that brought Sani Abacha and those like him in Nigerian history, whole ruled the nation with iron fist and plundered with reckless abandon, while setting the Niger delta people asunder as accounted in Ken Saro-Wiwa's detention account.

Conclusion

The personal story of Ken Saro-Wiwa serves as a revealing picture useful for posterity as revealer of one of the grim moments in Nigeria's chequered history of nationhood. The narrative retrospectively recreates a rear-mirror for perusing the diverse angles of knowing the hitches and grim story of Nigeria's journey in pursuit of true, just and egalitarian nationhood. The African writer, conscious of his/her socio-historical reality, is left with no option than to bring creative ingenuity and critical

potentials to bear on the scio-political milieu of reckless power structures that stifle progressive and egalitarian evolution of society. Saro-Wiwa's detention story is one of such contributions to memory that would linger for posterity to learn from and benefit. The envisioned society of justice, equity and progress has remained the primary thrust of the postcolonial authors in every genre of expression. The African story must be told and retold again and again as reminders of where lessons are to be learnt, and where errors that have truncated development and human uplift occurred and possibilities of remediation and correction. Saro-Wiwa's narration in his detention diary analysed in this paper exposes part of the paradoxes and contradictions of Africa's gruesome historical encounters, and this story could be duplicated for most parts of post-independence African states where the political elites continue to hold the citizenry to ransom, maim and kill for no justifiable reasons. Ethnicity, impunity of power, atrocious and self-serving, corrupt regimes and fiery rulers continue to tear African people apart and drag their societies behind time, rather than articulate vision for common brotherhood and progress for collective good. The narrated encounter of Ken Saro-Wiwa illustrates some salient aspects of leadership in post-independence African states that have given birth to avoidable martyrdom, where many vibrant potentials and compatriots have been subjected to all forms of indignities like in the days of colonialism, and senselessly wasted. Saro-Wiwa's narrative that ended in his brutal demise is a sad reminder of this post-independence, postcolonial Africa's unhappy legacy. This type of story may not be pleasant to recall, but let it serve as an important landmark that would propel scholars, thinkers, and scholar-critics to continually be inspired, encouraged and be reminded of the humanistic mandate of using every potential for exploring and exploiting opportunities for healing humanity of its many inabilities and cruelty of powerful men towards fellow men.

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