

# Fraud Incorporated

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*By Okey Ndibe*

Nigerians owe a debt of gratitude to two activist reporters and TheNews magazine for exposing the fraud that is Andy Uba, President Olusegun Obasanjo's erstwhile senior special assistant for domestic matters. The cover for this week's issue of the magazine is titled "Andy Uba: The Face Of A Fraud". The cover's subtitle reads: "How He Fooled OBJ For 7 Years". Written by the irrepressible Sowore Omoyele and the quietly sinewy Ikenna Ellis-Ezenekwe, the investigative story reveals that Uba, far from holding a doctorate degree, does not even possess an earned first degree.

Omoyele and Ellis-Ezenekwe's thorough approach is everywhere in evidence in their report. The cover's introduction pointedly asked: "Who is Andy Uba, the man campaigning to be governor of Anambra State?" Then they offered this damning answer: "New revelations show that the favored boy of President Olusegun Obasanjo has been living a deceptive life, fooling the President and parading a chain of academic degrees he does not have."

To read the story is to realize how unimpeachable is the investigative work that went into it. Its authors went at their task with an assiduity and painstakingness rare in the Nigerian press. Rather than vend a series of hearsays and unsubstantiated innuendoes, the duo dug deep, delving into their subject with the fastidiousness

and dispassion of forensic sleuths. They wrote, with deadpan factuality, that Uba "had been parading titles and credentials he does not have." Then, with characteristic directness, they underlined that "Andy Uba's educational background showed he does not have a Bachelor's degree in Geology from Concordia University—a Canadian institution he claimed to have attended from 1984."

Whence came their information? You bet: from the university itself. "Official records at Concordia University in Montreal, Canada indicate that (Uba) dropped out prior to completing the requirements for a Bachelor's degree. The university's alumni office of records said Concordia University has no record of Uba ever graduating from the school. A spokesperson for the Advancement and Alumni Relations Office in Concordia University said: "We have searched our record for Mr. Emmanuel Nnamdi Uba (Andy) and he does not seem to be listed in the Alumni Banner System."

If Uba never received a first degree, then what must we make of his claim to holding a Master's degree? Sowore and Ellis-Ezenekwe blew that canard to pieces. "Our investigations," they wrote, "also revealed a wrinkle in Uba's claim to having obtained a Master's degree from California State University. The official records obtained from California State University indicated that the former

presidential aide never earned a Masters from there. In fact, he was never a graduate student of the said institution.”

Improbable as it may sound, the picture gets more farcical, since Emmanuel Uba has been passing himself off as a holder of a doctorate degree. A man who has fibbed about his first and second degrees inspires no trust when he proclaims himself a possessor of a doctorate. The report by Sowore and Ellis-Ezenekwe echoed this verdict. Besides, they discovered that Buxton University is less a university than a phantom of sorts. It is “an unaccredited online degree-awarding institution with some notoriety for awarding bogus degrees to clients willing to pay a set fee.” Derisively dubbed a “diploma mill,” the so-called university claims to exist in England, but has its address in Portugal.

One expert described Buxton as “a business that caters to vain clients who desire to buy hollow insignia of knowledge without facing the rigor of academic work.” As Sowore and Ellis-Ezenekwe reported, “Yet another source put it bluntly: ‘If Uba is claiming to have a Ph.D from Buxton, then he is simply flaunting an overpriced, worthless piece of paper he purchased with cash.’”

Even if Emmanuel Uba were not seeking public office, his lies regarding his academic credentials would still strike us as revelatory of a profounder flaw in character. Given his profile as one of Obasanjo’s most trusted confidantes, and his active pursuit of an ambition to “rule” Anambra, his certificate scandals serve as warning of a far graver defect in the man. If the man’s certificates are non-existent; if his diplomas are fraudulent; if, indeed, he has deliberately misrepresented his

educational attainments, then we are entitled to entertain the question whether, upon scrutiny, any aspect of the man’s life is likely to hold up. In other words, is there anything remotely authentic about this man’s public persona, or is he, quite simply, fraud personified?

I am willing to hedge my bets on the latter proposition. On the strength of Uba’s response to the expose in *TheNews*, there is ample reason to hold him in suspicion. Invited by the magazine’s editors to authenticate his certificate claims, Uba waffled. Unable to rise to the weekly’s challenge, he chose to launch a preemptive offensive that exploited the gullibility and greed-driven corruption of some Nigerian reporters. He decided to plant stories, dripping with jejune persecution claims, in several newspapers.

The *Sunday Sun* (of December 10) was one of several newspapers that fell, sadly, for the bait. The paper, whose editors should be more vigilant, carried a bizarre headline: “Fresh plot against Uba uncovered”. Riddled with grammatical gaffes, the report opened in a mode that betrayed its provenance: The “intrigues that are associated with politics in Nigeria have continued to play out just few months to the general elections. One of those at the receiving end of this kind of intrigues is of Andy Uba, the former Senior Special Assistant on Domestic Affairs to President Olusegun Obasanjo.” Quoting a fictional “National Association of Anambra Indigenes,” the paper alleged there was a campaign by Uba’s “detractors” to “tarnish his image ahead of the 2007 gubernatorial election in which he is a leading candidate.”

Then this: "However, the (Uba) group is alleging that there are fresh plots to link Andy to an insurance scam in the USA. This is in addition to the allegation that Andy did not complete his secondary school education and therefore, has no certificate. The coordinator of the Andy Uba Support Group confirmed that 'there are plots to rubbish Andy in the media.' According to him the allegations making rounds that he did not complete secondary education is false. Azubuko noted that the governorship candidate completed his education up to the Ph D, which is well known by all. He said the group was in custody of all the education certificates of Dr. Andy and that it would make it public whenever the need arises."

It was vintage Uba, this faith that a lie can be made into a truth if reporters are bribed enough to print or broadcast it. Alas, neither Uba nor his men could furnish the magazine with incontrovertible proof that he is, academically speaking, the man he claims to be. Instead, he resorted to the desperate measure of buying the magazine's entire print-run to ensure that Nigerians did not read about his certificate fraud. Bayo Onanuga, the magazine's editor-in-chief, alerted readers to "the disappearance of the current edition of TheNEWS magazine from the newsstands." He explained that "all the copies of TheNEWS meant for distribution nationwide were bought off the distributing agents by some men working for Andy Uba. We suspect that those copies must have been destroyed." In exposing Uba's lies to public gaze, TheNews has done a patriotic service. Nigerians are now alerted to the character of the man the president entrusted with his dearest domestic affairs. Thanks to the weekly magazine, Nigerians know that

their president craves the company of frauds and poseurs. Armed with the president's blessing, presidential jets, inexhaustible cash (of questionable source) and the intimidating arsenal of mobile police and thugs, Uba last week "won" his party's governorship nomination with 97 percent of the votes. But Uba's emerging portrait is more tattered than anybody ever suspected. There is no way the people of Anambra will accept such a certifiable impostor as their governor. Not even with all of the ruling party's rigging skills at his service. As one Anambra politician told me a few days ago, "If Obasanjo likes the man he named Andy so much, he's welcome to employ him to run his farm. But he won't smell Anambra's governor's seat."

## Readers' Favorites

1. Nigeria's savaged children
2. The war we ordered is here
3. What I saw in Nigeria
4. Murder Incorporated
5. No Longer at Ease
6. My Vote for Andy Uba
7. Achebe, Soyinka, and the Nigerian Mess
8. My Biafran Eyes
9. My Father's English Friend
10. A female speaker's manly vices
11. The education of Umar Yar'Adua
12. The triumph of barbarism
13. Achebe's apt censure
14. Andy Uba Goes to War (1)
15. Andy Uba Goes to War (11): What OBJ taught Uba
16. Why I Take It Personally
17. Andy Uba's highest bid
18. The folly of the Nigerian elite
19. Fraud Incorporated
20. Etiaba's father, not mine
21. Our laughing president
22. Fayose and God's response
23. My 419 Call
24. A feud of three bulls
25. More reasons to ignore Soyinka
26. Who does Obasanjo work for?

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### About Okey Ndibe



Okey Ndibe is a novelist, poet, political activist from Yola, Nigeria. He is the author of *Arrows of Rain*, a critically reviewed novel published in 2000. Ndibe relocated to the United States in 1988, where he founded *African Commentary*, a magazine described as "award-winning and widely acclaimed." Ndibe is also a published poet, and a former associate professor of English at Bard College at Simon's Rock. He currently teaches fiction and African literature at Trinity College in Hartford, CT. Okey Ndibe is finishing his second novel titled *Foreign gods, incorporated*.

### Speaking Engagements

To discuss a speaking engagement, please contact Okey Ndibe by e-mail ([okey@okeyndibe.com](mailto:okey@okeyndibe.com)) or by phone (860.306.7843).

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