

# SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUAL TREATMENT

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## INTRODUCTION

We encourage social justice delivery programs and the creation of public support mechanisms/structures like social welfare program and unemployment benefits to reduce on poverty, misery, dissatisfaction, conflicts and local ethnic and regional tensions. Social justice promotes societal arrangements that induce equity, equality and establishment of institutions that pre-empt and prevent conflict.

Social justice guarantees basic amenities of life and living and periodic welfare support/reforms. It values human life above all material possessions by all (Sanctity of all human life and the inherent dignity of every human person). It gives preferential option for the poor and vulnerable; espouses ethics/principles of responsibility by providing for the guaranteed unemployed and those who lack through monthly welfare payments (whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me). It creates appropriate environmental conditions to support life thereby giving hope for economic egalitarianism (fairness and equal opportunity, equal level playing field, make the pie bigger to manufacture equality of starting line to outcome; society should be based on cooperation and not class conflict and competition). It allows for progressive taxation (tolerant and broadminded: those who earn more bear more burden); income restructuring for living wages and fiscal fairness, or even property redistribution. For all these to happen, there is the need for public policy reform in the areas of social justice and poverty eradication not just poverty alleviation, affordable access to health care, especially for low income households and families. A health insurance left to the mercies of rogue agents doesn't help the poor.

From research, 70% of Nigerians believe that social justice and equal treatment of all class notwithstanding was a serious issue requiring attention in Nigeria (DandauraSamu, 2012); indicating that the issues of social justice and equality are very palpable concerns amongst most Nigerians spanning across the different societal strata. 70% of Nigerians say it is an issue worth investing into to create an environment that would discourage wanton violence since most people will have something or some interests to protect (DandauraSamu, 2012). When social justice is exercised within a society among its various social classes, the principles of equality and solidarity, understanding and valuing human rights, and recognizing the dignity of every human being becomes the norm. This involves a greater degree of economic parity through tolerant taxation, the concept of a living wage, income redistribution, or even property redistribution. This says “if my fellow human is poor then I am poor till he is better off”. Or it

calls to mind the Ubuntu or uMunthu philosophy or worldview of Northern Cape, South Africa and Malawi which says "I am because you are" or "I am what I am because of who we all are." Archbishop Desmond Tutu offered an insight to this worldview in a 1999 book: A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, based from a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed (Tutu, 1999).

These principles can be achieved by the transformation or reconstruction of the present social Order. Start a basic welfare package for the unemployed: generate a more equitable distribution of the collective wealth; those who have jobs must be paid living wages. The unemployed who are above the age of 21 years should be paid some unemployment benefits. Guaranteed unemployment must be eliminated in the nation.

75% of Nigerians indicated that bad governance and corruption rupture societies and create all kinds of reactions from the governed thereby grooming violence of all kinds (DandauraSamu, 2012). 75% of Nigerians indicated that poverty, lack of jobs, guaranteed unemployment, poor youth engagement and empowerment have unequivocally contributed to the present security impasse (DandauraSamu, 2012). This disempowers youths and sends them after anyone who gives them any slight promise of a favourable future of happiness and equality whether in this life or the life to come. And so they feel justified and empowered to kill, maim and destroy to attain that utopian future. 65% of Nigerians believe that poor border control against illegal entry of immigrants has contributed to the fighting force of the ethno-religious violent groups and Boko Haram terrorists (DandauraSamu, 2012). The arrest on 2013, April 9th by JTF of 251 suspected illegal immigrants (Timeline Nigeria, 2013) at a busy market gives credence and evidence to this concern. Authorities were launching new immigration raids in the country as it faced threats from Islamic extremists. Christians have long been complaining of the influx of immigrants from the northern neighbours of Nigeria. They have all kinds of evidences to show that their killers during religious uprisings have been mostly by these immigrants. This has yet to be taken seriously by the government. It may be that more research still needs to be done in this area to ascertain the truth about the problem, number, impact and involvement of immigrants in the Northern Nigerian conflicts. However, for now, it is a very sensitive issue for Christians and Muslims since most of the immigrants are said to be Muslims. Because of this, 80% of Nigerians believe that ethno-religious dialogue need to be held immediately on all manifest and latent conflicts for sustainable peacebuilding. 90% Nigerians agree with the need for civic/national orientation/revival of values so that Nigerians can see themselves as a family, de-emphasizing statism and indigeneship; so the society can go from ethnicity to common nationhood. So Nigerians have a strong feeling of the need for a one Nigeria. Government can take advantage of this general feeling amongst the masses to build an advocacy program on patriotism and civic responsibilities to one another and the nation.

Pre and Post-election peacebuilding can be achieved by moderation and accommodation through post-election power sharing modalities not blinded by party affiliations instead of the winner takes all politics. Both ethnic and territorial stakeholders and forces at play must be taken into account in the conflict sensitive, more-inclusive federalization of vertical distribution of power at the different federal and state levels of government and their horizontal institutions. Electoral process need to be redesigned to reduce the cost of winning power at the centre in both national and state government elections. This will reduce on the stress of achieving the feat which necessitates the craving or yearning to dominate so as to recoup investments of time and resources.

## References

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