

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF NIGERIAN POLITICS

(OR HOW TO HOOK THE NAIJA MUGU)

A Manual for the new Politician



BY

A RETIRED GODFATHER

Chuma Nwokolo 2010



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This pamphlet is entirely a work of fiction. The characters in it, and the persons referred to in it are figments and bear no resemblance to anyone dead or living. Any resemblances are fortuitous.

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A Note from Me

As you will understand when you finish reading this small pamphlet, I did not actually *write* it.

I found a small, black notebook in the toilet cubicle as the plane approached Abuja airport. It clearly wasn't there when we left Lagos, yet nobody claimed the book when I waved it in front of the forty people on that flight. The owner probably thought I had read it already. That was when I realised the potentially explosive contents of the notebook. So I read it. Despite the curse on the first page, I read it.

Judging the contents to be of some public interest, I have decided to publish it, with the warning that I cannot vouch that anything in these pages are true. The notebook was signed by 'Goddy'... which may be short for Godson, Godwin, Goodluck, Godfrey or even Thankgod. Personally, I think it stands for Godfather.

But then again, I might be wrong.

Chuma Nwokolo

The First Page of the Small, Black Book

Even the child in the womb knows that the crisis in the world's economy is causing all sorts of problems everywhere. People who used to eat very well before are now on 'special diet'. Even the Maitama Club, which used to land two or three American *mugus* every month has spent the last six months waiting for a single hit.

They are still waiting.

This manual has been written only for the eyes of The Maitama Club. If you are not a member, please stop reading now. It is by reading things that don't concern them that many men have lost their manhoods. You have been warned.

Goddy.

Dedication

*This manual is dedicated to the memory of
Chudi (Ice Water) Diobu
(may his soul rest in peace).*

Introduction

Chudi (Ice Water) Diobu used to be the secretary of the Maitama Club. After five months of the *mugu*-drought, even the cost of diesel for his six cars and five generators began to give him hypertension. So he broke Maitama Club's unwritten rule and tried to 419 a Nigerian. The *mugu* was the Ijaw owner of one of the largest lace shops in Sapele. He successfully duped her quite alright, and didn't worry about the cost of diesel for many weeks.

But Ice Water had only replaced his high-blood-pressure problem with a no-blood-pressure problem. On Christmas day, who was to enter the same lift at the Hilton Hotel with Ice Water but the Ijaw businesswoman? Of course she recognised him. What was even more unfortunate was that the woman's husband was an army officer. To cut a long story short, he did not survive the beating. It was at Ice Water's wake-keeping that the Maitama Club begged me to write this manual for them. They were all shaking when they saw the broken body of their former secretary, where he was lying-in-state. None of them was getting younger, and this life of running up and down like headless chickens was getting too much for them.

They wanted to retire from 419 business, but they had been doing this work for 20 years now. For instance, Femi (Puff Puff) Ashiru was a pharmacist quite alright, but he hadn't even seen a carton of Codeine since he graduated in 1988. As for Ebi (Fine Boy)Osaze, who graduated in English from Uniben twenty years ago, even to teach pidgin English now will be hard for him. All of them were

‘chairmen’ of many businesses from supermarkets to transport companies, but they were all Better-Life-for-Rural-Women kind of businesses. Once you remove the hand you’re using to hold them up, they will just fall down.

So they needed a very good retirement job, these Maitama people, unfortunately, the only thing on their CV for the past 20 years was this 419 of a thing. It was not as if a bank job at UBA or something was waiting. There was only one thing they were qualified to do with their background. I told them that straightaway.

‘We don’t like politics,’ said Bonaventure (Emergency) Osuala, who was the chairman of the Maitama Club, ‘in our kind of business, we have to stay behind the scenes. We don’t like to put our faces on posters for policemen to see.’

‘And duping Nigerians is highly dangerous,’ added Puff Puff, ‘look at Ice Water now. If it was a British woman she would have just phoned the police. Even to shout will hard her. We Nigerians are like Rwandans. We are too fast with machetes.’

‘Plus, I don’t like Naira businesses,’ said Isa (Girls-magnet) Yerima, ‘I like the kind of money I can multiply by one-fifty.’

‘Or two-fifty,’ said Fine Boy, who specialised in pound sterling *mugus*.

So I laughed and drank a little more Gulder. They drank with me, and I explained to them how Nigerians, with all their *gra-gra* and the speed of their machetes were the biggest *mugus* in the world, and how a pipeline pouring Naira into your bedroom was better than one or two pound sterling deals that sometimes takes six months to mature.

They liked what they heard and by morning they had given me this contract: to use my fifty years experience as a... well, consultant, to write a manual for their safe retirement from 419 to Politics. They wanted a solid instruction manual containing the Ten Commandments of Political Success in Nigeria that their new members can read after taking their oath of membership.

But they are not paying me to share the secrets with the whole world, so, for the last time, if you are not a member of the Maitama Club, I'm warning you, just stop reading now.

The Ten Commandments

1

Don't Hit the Big People. Hit the Little People

Ice Water's problem was that he hit a Big Woman. That was a big mistake. To succeed in Politics, you must never hit the big people. Always focus on the little people, the Naija *mugus*. Although the little people are much more powerful, they don't know it. So it is safer to scam them, as politicians have been doing for more than fifty years now. Hit a Nigerian big man once, and he will send an assassin to your house. Hit Nigeria's little people from now till Jesus comes back and they will still be hailing you as their chief.

I know your second question: *what's the point?*
After all, little people have no money.

Wrong. Last year, 19 billion dollars entered the federal account of 140 million Nigerians. Go and multiply that. That is not a small amount of money. The year before they budgeted 4 trillion Naira to take care of this same 140 million little people. Do you know how many zeros are behind that four? I see. Your job as a politician is to position yourself between that money and the 140 million *mugus* that own it.

Look, government is the biggest 419 business around. You have to build your own conduit pipe from the national budget to your clubhouse. You are right to be afraid of the anger of 140 million people. If they all get angry at the same time, you should be very sorry for yourself. It doesn't take many hands to lynch a thief and it is a very danger-

ous thing to steal from a street of only twenty people, how much more from a country of 140 million people. But Nigerians can only talk. Believe you me, their anger finishes at the door of the beer parlour. If they ever riot, it will be to kill themselves. They will never rise against politicians. They are stupid. You are safe. Take it from me, I am talking with more than fifty years' experience.

But the problem is how to become an elected politician, not so? Easy.

2

Clinch the Nomination

The first thing is to get a nomination. To do that, you need a political party. Don't ask me why, that's just what our constitution says, and that is why today we have more than fifty parties. But you must not waste your time with the papa-mama-and-pickin type of political party. Go straight to the biggest and find out the local godfather. Once you know the godfather, the next thing is to catch his eye. This is easier said than done, because everybody else is trying to do the same thing. You have to give yourself up to six months to do this. Find a houseboy in his house to give you the birthdays of all the children in the house.

Most of these godfathers have a dozen or more official children, so within six months there will be many birthdays, naming ceremonies, burials (god forbid), graduations and what have you. On each special day, if there's no party, drop your carton of champagne and envelope of money at the gate and go. Remember the golden rule for donations: If you cannot be among the top five donors, don't waste

your money. If there is a party (the length of your car and the quality of your brocade will be your invitation card) drop your presents, stay only five minutes and don't drink anything more than soda water.

The mistake most people make is to eat and drink as if they are trying to eat back the money they donated. That is just stupid. Experienced politicians are always afraid of new recruits who eat like pigs. They know that sharing *Ghana-mus'-go* bags is always a problem for people like that. It is called the *awoof-mentality*. Anyway, if you were always in the top five donors over those six months, the godfather will definitely notice you. But if after six months you haven't got a call from the godfather, check very well. Your driver may be replacing your million-naira-envelope to the godfather with his own ten-thousand-naira-envelope. It has happened before.

If you get the call, get ready. Over the next few months, your home address will become 'anywhere the godfather is'. You will do for this man, things you cannot do for your own wife, for your own father, but if you are serious about retirement, you will do it. The godfather is trying to answer one simple question: can I trust this man? He may ask you to walk naked to a shrine in the middle of the rain forest. Well, only you can decide how strongly you need to be a senator. He may even put a gun in your hand and tell you to shoot somebody, while a camera is recording you. Do it. It is just a test, the gun is plastic.

But if the gun turns out to be real, and somebody dies, well... at least try and look on the bright side: your godfather trusts you now.

Winning the Election

Once you are the candidate of the right party, you are almost there. Now, you have to start wetting all the ground around you, I'm talking about judges, policemen, churchmen, everybody. You have to start wetting the ground even before the breeze starts blowing. If the breeze is already blowing dust around, you are already too late. You see, you don't buy people. Nigeria is not a banana republic like that. You don't give people money on the day of your court case and expect them to lie down for you. That is not how it is done. You use your money to befriend people. Give a carton of money to a judge for his birthday in January and let me see the mouth he will use to sentence you in June. That's how to do it.

Let's be realistic, if you chose the right party you cannot really lose. You may think you are just a thief, but because Nigerians look down on politics, the candidates of the other parties will not be much better than you.

Trust me. I have been there before. They can call us thieves and idiots as much as they like, we are still the ones ruling this country.

Giving the Victory Speech

It is important to get this speech right, because, even if you are elected into a House of Representatives or the National Assembly, this may be your last speech until the next election.

You may thank your wife and children. You may thank your 'campaign team'. But you must not thank your godfather by name, and you must definitely not thank your thugs, because these are the same cannibals and ritual killers that everybody knows in the community. This sounds so elementary, but you will be surprised at the number of politicians who get carried away by gratitude and - on tv - begin to thank their concubines and the same armed robbers who serve as thugs during the election season. Believe me, your godfather will not be offended that you did not remember him in your speech.

You see, that is not the type of 'thanks' he is waiting for. Every weekend, from now on his boys will drive a Hiace van to your quarters for his share of your *Ghana-mus'-go* bags. That is the thank-you he needs. Everybody knows you rigged the election, but they don't want you to rub their faces in it by thanking criminals who should be in jail in your Victory speech. Naija *mugus* like to pretend that everything is nice and sweet. So wear a white robe and hold your arms apart many times during your speech. The cameramen will catch it and use it in the papers the next day.

You will look like Jesus Christ.

Eating the Money

Maybe Local Government Chairmanship is all that will reach you the first time around. Don't be too proud. Accept it with gratitude. The local governments of 'ordinary' Yobe State got 72 billion Naira to spend in 8 years. *72 billion Naira.*

Don't be greedy either. You may be the one signing the cheques, but it is not your money alone. There is honour among thieves. Remember the oaths you swore. Remember the pictures in your godfather's cameras. All this sounds very elementary, but government money is very intoxicating and it is amazing the things that people forget. Also remember that the political machine that bought you into office can also throw you out. The fear of impeachment is the beginning of wisdom. The power to put anybody into any political office in Nigeria belongs to the political mafia, and they can put a goat there if they want.

Yes, people are shouting your name on the street, but that is not real popularity. You are still a temporary big man; once your term finishes, your phone will stop ringing like magic. And even if you are really popular, it means nothing anyway. Let me warn you again, popularity is not equal to votes. Because some people think they can use godfathers to get into office, and then get popular by 'serving the people'. Well, beware of crossing the Big Man. I won't say more than that. And always remember that chairmanship is just the beginning. There is still the Governor's house ahead... and you know that governors also become presidents, not so? But one step at a time, eh?

Always remember that you have only four years to eat. The money may look plenty, but remember what you spent to get in. And remember what you will spend to come back. A good politician needs to be ruthless in eating money, otherwise halfway through your re-election campaign you may run out of money and start making speeches to your thugs. Making speeches where money is supposed to talk is the beginning of the end for any politician. Bear that in mind and hit the *Naija mugu* as hard as you can. Hit your council staff as well: you

are the Local Government Chairman, not Father Christmas. Transfer all their salaries into your fixed deposit and pay their wages maximum of three or four months in arrears. I don't have to tell you what interest rates are talking now.

As a politician, you must be a man of the people. Go everywhere they invite you, and promise everything you have to. When you have to donate, tell them the government is broke, but you will give your 'widow's mite'. Naija *mugus* love that kind of thing. And when you can't deliver your campaign promises, complain about the debts you met in the office, if you can cry, cry. Swear by the life of your mother (especially if she's already dead) to do all you can to return the council to a 'sound economic footing'. Naija *mugus* like that kind of speech.

Back in the office, check that budget very well. Cancel every payment for any contract you did not award and set up a panel of enquiry for them. That will keep the contractors busy until you finish your term. The chairman before you has eaten their kickbacks, so they are not your priority. As for your own contracts, load them by 50% of value... if the council's budget is 500 million naira, half of that is yours... anyway I don't have to teach 419 experts like you elementary invoicing lessons.

6

When the Naija Mugus get Angry

Well, to be honest, they will get angry every now and then. Are they not human beings? They have no electricity and no generators. They have no water, they have no roads. Most of them have no jobs. I mean, I can fill this manual with what they don't

have, but what's the point? People whose toilet is the gutter, whose bathroom is the yard, whose houses are worse than poultries... of course they will be angry.

Of course you have tried your best, and you are not eating alone: at Christmas and Sallah you closed the road with a street party. You invited everybody. Goat meat and beer and rice - and your *Naija mugus* forgot their problems and danced till daybreak. But that was last month... and now your *mugus* are angry...

What can you do?

The secret is that every now and then you have to find them somebody to blame. Rice and meat is not enough. Are you going to feed them every day of the year? You know what they say about angry people? It is true. The *Naija mugu* is an angry lion in your cage. You are his zoo-keeper. You have taken his land and his animals so you have to throw something bloody into his cage now and again for him to tear to pieces – intestines, rotten meat, anything. Otherwise he will pounce on you one day, tear you to pieces, and take back his freedom. Believe you me, you don't want that to happen. There are many techniques for controlling the anger of the *Naija mugus*. As you start your career in politics you will develop your own methods, but these are some of the tried and trusted methods:

7

Applying Shock Therapy

Sometimes during a national crisis, it seems as if the situation is getting out of control; that is the

time to pull out a shock therapy. If the street protests are getting too much, a good way to check-mate them is to hit them with something that makes all their troubles disappear – and the best way of making a problem disappear is to swallow it up with a bigger problem.

A very reliable shock therapy is The Serious Fuel Shortage. It has saved so many Nigerian governments, you won't believe it. In many countries, a serious fuel shortage can bring down a government. In Nigeria, it is cement for weak governments, because the more Naija *mugus* suffer, the meeker they become. I am talking about the kind of fuel shortage where *okadas* sleep four days in petrol stations to buy fuel. That type of fuel shortage can quench any political protest. The people that would have been marching in protest will trek four hours to work or market and four hours home. They will leave home at 4.30 am and get back home at 11.30 pm.

And once they get home, they will go and sleep quietly.

8

Playing the Ethnic Card

Now, pay attention, because this is the most successful political card ever played in the history of Nigeria. You may all have been eating from the same bowl for the last 20 years, but that has to stop now. Once you enter politics the papers will begin to call you the Maitama Mafia if you're not careful. Don't allow that to happen. You must start abusing yourselves in the papers. Yerima must become that Greedy Hausa Dog. Femi must become that Dirty

Yoruba Rat. You get the general idea? Call Bonaventure a Pagan Igbo wizard. Fill up the newspapers with your quarrels. If you can really get angry about how Awolowo insulted Azikiwe in 1955, the better. Do you have Moslems and Christians in your club? If so, praise the Lord! Abuse Mohammed. Curse Jesus. Fight.

As you play-fight in the newspapers, that is how the Naija *mugus* on the street will be fighting themselves for real. If the budget provides for 5,000 new jobs, create 500, chop the rest of the money and blame the arrogant Fulani minister. The Fulani minister will blame the back-stabbing Edo Permsec. On the streets, the hungry Yoruba will fight against hungrier Ishan, the homeless Igbo will fight the landless Nupe, the Methodist will fight the Pentecostal. In the middle of all the confusion, continue your own agenda. Before the *mugus* know what is happening, another budget would have been finished.

Let me assure you, what happened to Ice Water can never happen to you. Even if the Naija *mugus* recognise you on the street as the Governor who stole all the money, or the Senator whose share of the *Ghana mus' go* filled a convoy of six Hummer jeeps, what do you think they will do? You think they will beat you like they beat Ice Water? Or lynch you like a common bread thief in Onitsha market? No, the Naija *mugu* is a coward. He is too cowardly even to call you 'thief'. He will call you 'Chief' and prostrate before you. If he is going to abuse you, it will be behind your back – and you are not going to stay awake at night thinking of that, are you?

Dropping the Ethnic Firebomb.

The ethnic card may be the most reliable one you have, but believe you me, occasionally you will need something more powerful. Some people are getting more and more common sense these days. Not all the *mugus* will fight because their politicians are play-fighting in the name of their tribes for office and loot. So what do you do if you are fighting and abusing yourselves in the papers and people are just watching you like spectators at a boxing match? Or maybe newspapers and prosecutors begin to make too much noise about missing budgets and things like that.

(By the way, if you are not a member of the Maitama Club and you are still reading, your eyes are going to blind soon, just keep reading).

What you must not do is to go and start burning ministry buildings and newspapers houses. That is so old-fashioned. Remember we are no more in the 1980s. Just call some of those boys at your gate. Give them money for petrol and send them at night to burn five Igbo houses in Kano... or Hausa houses in Ibadan... or Efik Houses in Tudun Wada, it doesn't really matter. But you must be very careful there: not more than five. You don't want to cause another civil war. You just want to start a riot. Because that is how some people miscalculated and started the Biafran war.

By the next morning, those five houses will escalate to 400 houses, in one week there will be maybe, 200 dead and 25,000 displaced people. By this time, you can be sure that nobody will be talking about the money you embezzled for another six months? In fact, when the journalists come to you next time, it

won't be to ask you embarrassing questions, it will be to beg you to use your influence to say some- things to calm the hot-headed youths of your state.

10

Managing the Police Problem

You will have police problems, let's be realistic. If Nelson Mandela had police problems don't think you can just retire from 20 years in 419 without suffering any police headache at all. Just settle those you can settle, okay?

Nobody wants their rulers to be criminals and ex-convicts, but this country belongs to us as well, doesn't it? Anyway, you are not the first, and you won't be the last person who did not enter politics from a seminary - governors, senators, you name them, they have been there before you. The good thing about this country is that anybody who has the guts can be anything. Naija *mugus* tolerate criminals, murderers and ex-cons in the highest levels of government, so don't be afraid. Just wet the ground from the highest level that your hand can reach. If you can reach the Inspector General of Police, the better for you. If you're not afraid to try the Supreme Court, very good for you - because when a junior judge or inspector begins to disturb you, and he refuses to be settled, you can just telephone your contact in high places. I have seen stubborn inspectors and whatnot transferred from Asaba to Kaura Namoda in three days flat. That is the beauty of our federal civil service.

And nothing sweets the soul of a god-fearing god-father than when he solves the problem of a stubborn civil servant without hiring an assassin.