

OVERCOMING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BLACKS; THE SUCCESS STORY OF THE OSU PEOPLE OF SOUTH EASTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate some of the salient issues that helped the Osu people in south eastern Nigeria overcome their disadvantage position as “the untouchables” in their communities. The Osus were out cast they had no land but lived in the shrines of the gods. However, this disadvantage position of the osu worked in their favor as they embraced 'western' education and became Nigeria's first doctors and lawyers and rich businessmen. With this development came power and authority as some of the Osus are becoming title holders “Orikeze” and sits among elders to make decision in some of their communities. Could their success story help other blacks worldwide overcome negative prejudices and discrimination against them? Over the years scholars and human rights activist have recommended legislative procedures, demonstrations and protests as the best solution to overcoming racial discrimination and violence against blacks particularly in the United States of America. In addressing this challenge within that limited scope, scholarship has either overlooked or underemphasized the issue of group power as the ultimate solution to the problem. Today, despite widespread opposition to racism in the US, the 2008 United States presidential election where white Americans played a role in electing Barack Obama, the country's first black president, racial bias remains, suggesting that the issue can only be overcome when the black man acquires power as a group. Of course the Osu people demonstrated the fact that group power is necessary to overcome the challenge; since racism is about a dominant racial group striving to maintain its systemic advantages and minorities fighting to subvert it. Thus the blacks can overcome this problem if they adopt the strategy that was recommended by T. Washington in the late 19th century that the surest way for blacks to gain equal social rights was to demonstrate "industry, thrift, intelligence and property. This fact was further confirmed by the Osu. Supporting evidence for each of our claims is provided from a broad corpus of relevant literature.

Keywords: Racism, Power, Global Struggle, Discrimination, Overcome

Introduction

What brought about racial discrimination against blacks? Traditional answer to this has centred on the issue of skin colour, yet research has shown time and time again that it can be found in the long and complex history of slavery that has shaped ideas about this issue. Over the years, a burgeoning literature has appeared taking stock of racial discrimination against blacks and recommending strategies to overcoming the challenge. Often we are told that such prejudices stems from sets of heritable characteristics such as colour of skin, eyes, and hair. Other explanations refer to personality traits and other social behaviour's as factors that attracts prejudices against blacks and that such challenge can only be overcome through legislative procedures and laws against racial discriminations. Whilst such

explanations and recommendations do have relevance, it does not tell us how to counter the power of dominant groups who are responsible for such discriminations from a disadvantaged position.

Of course this group power can either be countered or be acquired through conscious efforts by those in the disadvantaged position. Recent theories of power within social theory holds that we are all in a power shift era, basically from the dominate groups to whoever can key in. This power which is essentially knowledge is shifting from the West to other groups like the Asian Tigers. Alvin Toffler gives many examples on how knowledge has changed lives in his incredible book *Power Shift*. (Toffler, 1991) With knowledge you can gain power, as a group just like the Asians did. However there is one questions that requires an answer; can blacks worldwide acquire group power and regain their prestige as the Osu's did? Both Obama and Mandela are renowned leaders of African origin, yet Africa's major problem is that of governance. People like Andrew Harrison an African American was among the top engineers who constructed the Indira Gandhi ultra-modern international airport in Delhi yet Africans are technologically backwards, suggesting that power 'knowledge' can be very important when it is acquired by the entire group as the Osu's did. Though very few works have explicitly stated an approach to power and gave a case study showing how the approach can be applied, the Osu people offers such an example in their ability to transform knowledge in to societal power, a strategy that is worth replicating in this era of power shift.

This paper is divided into three main sections: the first gives the background or the Origin of the racial discrimination against blacks, facts and some existing explanations and the clarification of basic concepts, followed by the statement of research problem, objectives and the theoretical frame work within the futurists' social theories but with particular emphasis on Alvin Toffler's framework for analysing power. The second section gives a general note on early and current strategies aimed at overcoming racial discrimination against African Americans and evaluates the example of the Osu's in Nigeria. The final section looks at the salient issues in the Osu success story in relation to the strategies adopted by African American, while I use their experience to draw conclusions and recommendations for the black race worldwide.

Background to the Study

The Origin of racial discrimination against blacks: facts and some existing explanations

Someone once asked me who a Blackman is, and after some reflection I responded that he is the race at the bottom of global hierarchy. It all boils down to the issue of power. From, slavery to colonialism and now economic dependency the black race has always been a victim in the global struggle for dominance.

Discrimination against the Osu people like their African American counterparts started with our contact with people from other continent The old trade routes in the seas (mostly) were the domain of Arab traders who monopolized this trade from far off Malay islands to China and then to the Mediterranean countries and Europe. According to Bernard Lewis, the Arab Empire was the first "truly universal civilization," which brought together for the first time "peoples as diverse as the Chinese, the Indians, the people of the Middle East and North Africa, black Africans, and white Europeans."

(Lewis, 2003) We are made to believe that discrimination was not a part of this civilization as Arabs by virtue of their code of ethics and latter Islam, were forbidden to discriminate between people on account of the color of skin. Ethnic prejudices later developed among Arabs as a result of their extensive conquests, slave trade, and the influence of Aristotle's idea that slaves are slaves by nature. (Lewis, 1992) A refinement of Aristotle's view was put forward by Muslim philosophers such as Al-Farabi and Avicenna, particularly in regards to Turkic and black peoples (Bernard 2003) Also the influence of ideas from the early mediaeval Geonic academies regarding divisions among mankind between the three sons of Noah, with the Babylonian Talmud stating that "the descendants of Ham are cursed by being black, and [it] depicts Ham as a sinful man and his progeny as degenerates." (Chouki 2002)

However the slave trade was more damaging to Africans than other issues, by the 14th century, an overwhelming number of slaves came from sub-Saharan Africa, leading to prejudice against black people in the works of several Arabic historians and geographers. For example, the Egyptian historian Al-Abshibi (1388–1446) "It is said that when the [black] slave is sated, he fornicates, when he is hungry, he steals. (Cited in Bernard (2002) Al-Dimashqi (Ibn al-Nafis), the Arab polymath, on the other hand described the inhabitants of Sudan (region) and the Zanj coast, among others, as being of "dim" intelligence and that: ...the moral characteristics found in their mentality are close to the instinctive characteristics found naturally in animals. (Cited in Reid and Lane, 2004).

This sentiment was later echoed in the United States in the racial theories of Thomas Jefferson who saw Africans as inferior to Whites especially in regards to their intellect, and imbued with unnatural sexual appetites, but described Native Americans as equals to whites. (Voelker, 2006) But what made these people to feel that they were superior to the Blackman? Was it because they were technologically more advanced militarily and therefore more powerful than the Africans whom they enslaved? The literature of Arab slave trade is also rife with historical evidence of North African Muslim slave raids all along the Mediterranean coasts across Christian Europe and beyond to even as far north as the British Isles and Iceland. The majority of slaves traded across the Mediterranean region were predominantly of European origin from the 7th to 15th centuries, yet the Europeans have never suffered the type of prejudices and discrimination that has been experienced by the Blackman. Whereas the Muslim countries enslaved both Blacks and Whites, the form of slavery was different. In fact that of the Blackman indisputably contributed most to the present situation of Africa. It permanently weakened the continent, led to its colonisation by the Europeans in the nineteenth century, and engendered the racism and contempt from which Africans still suffer. M'bokolo (1989).

The racism rooted in the slave-trade era blossomed anew in these propitious circumstances. European discourse on Africa now centred on some racist theories about the "backwardness" and "savagery" of the continent. On the basis of such value judgements, the West was postulated as a model. African upheavals and regression were attributed, not to real historical developments in which Europe and the Arab world had played a part, but to the "innate nature" of the Africans themselves. Of course the situation faced by the Osu people was a direct replica of what the African American encountered all thanks to the racism that was rooted in the slave-trade era. Ironically, both the Osu people and African American's problems started with our contact with people from other continent. For instance before

the arrival of the 'white man' and Christianity, the discriminatory relationship that existed between Osus and Diala was perceived as normal. Things gradually changed and the world began to perceive the Osu caste system as a form of discrimination. The coming of the Europeans led to a process of social change and some of the customs of the indigenous Igbo society were seen as going contrary to the beliefs of the Europeans, (Dike, 2002). However the desire for freedom, and freedom itself, did not come to the Osus or African Americans from outside, though Enlightenment philosophers, abolitionist agitators or republican humanists contributed to it, they came from internal developments within the African societies themselves. (M'bokolo 1989) In the history of the Arab slave trade of Africans, there were several "Spartacus" moments. One of the most serious of these occurred in AD 869 when a group of African slaves working the salt flats east of Basra in Iraq rose up in revolt against their inhumane conditions. After 14 years of fierce fighting, the revolt was finally put down and their leaders' heads were paraded through the streets of Baghdad. (Ocumu 2002) It was due to the efforts of the Osus rather than depending on legislation designed to help them overcome their social and economic disability, that salvage the situation suggesting that the Blacks and only Blacks, as a disadvantaged race have solution to their plight.

Statement of Problem

Racial Discrimination and violence against Blacks has been going on for centuries. The legacy of our past, that is the enslavement of Africans still hunts us, suggesting that new ways of overcoming the challenge is needed. Whereas scholars and human right activist have over the years recommended legislative procedures as the best possible option, events unfolding in the United States of America shows how the dominant racial group (whites) striving to maintain its systemic advantages continues to creates racial bias. For instance it is argued that there exists color blindness or an "understanding that cultural differences rooted in racial identities are irrelevant for peoples' prospects and their overall well-being", yet, several studies have shown the reverse. one counter-example to this claim is that employer interviews reveal reluctance from both black and white employers to employ "urban young males who exhibit lower-class behavioral styles", highlighting the existence of embedded socio-economic preconceptions. (Glenn, 1998) This article therefore seeks to explore other ways of overcoming racial prejudices and discrimination against black with particular focus on African Americans. Can the success story of the Osu people provide a road map to overcoming racial prejudices and discrimination against blacks? Are there some salient issues in their experience that can stand the test of time? In the process of addressing these questions the objectives of this paper was achieved. They include among others; 1) To explore the direction the Osu people took in other to overcome their disadvantage position in their communities. 2) To investigate those salient issues in the Osu success story that could replicated by other blacks.

Conceptual and Theoretical Clarifications of OSU

It is essential to provide some definitions and clarifications of terms associated with the Osu caste system. The Osu, by definition, is a people sacrificed to the gods in Igbo community. And they assist the high priest of the traditional religion to serve the deities or the gods in their shrine. It is the belief of many Igbo traditionalists that the deities, which were perceived in some quarters as being very powerful, would wreak havoc in the society, if they are not appeased. Dike (2002) Other people regard the Osu's

as sub-human being, the unclean class, or slaves. In Igbo traditional society there are two classes of people: the Nwadiala (Freeborn) and the Osu. The Nwadiala or Diala who are the Freeborn are the masters, or the sons of the soil. The Osu are slaves, strangers and aliens, and they are subjected to various forms of abuse and discrimination. They live separately from the Freeborn, and in most cases, very close to the shrines or market places. It is said that the system originated some two hundred years ago when some people were dedicated to the gods and became ritual slaves. It then became a taboo for people to socialize with those who have been dedicated to the gods. Egwe , (2006) In this paper the author shall use the term, Osu, to describe all the lower caste groups in Igboland.

Discrimination

Cambridge Dictionaries Online defines discrimination as the prejudicial treatment of an individual based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or category, "in a way that is worse than the way people are usually treated. Moral philosophers have defined discrimination as disadvantageous treatment or consideration. This is a comparative definition. An individual need not be actually harmed in order to be discriminated against. He or she just needs to be treated worse than others for some arbitrary reason. (Oscar Horta,2006);

Power

Power is usually synonymous with wealth, quite obviously because money, and its use to gain social prominence can be used to block various forces in your own interest. The concept of power is also closely connected to that of realism. Since power provides a sense of security in holding with the logic that nobody can/will hurt/influence you when you have the ability to hurt/influence them. Therefore, each party should try to maximize and consolidate its power. Wars, racism, economic competition, cutting remarks at parties, domestic violence can all be traced back to the urge to dominate others. The definitions of power as 'capability' or 'transformative capacity' fit in well with Amartya Sen's capability approach to development. In this paper power is viewed as the capacity of group of individual to leverage themselves from a disadvantage position into that of social prominence in the international community.

Race

The concept of race emerged as a way to categorize people on the basis of physical and cultural differences. Later, colonialists used the concept of race to justify unequal treatment, exploitation, and enslavement of supposedly inferior peoples. Scholars continue to debate the degrees to which racial categories are biologically warranted and socially constructed, as well as the extent to which the realities of race must be acknowledged in order for society to comprehend and address racism adequately. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Sociology professor at Duke University, remarks, "I contend that racism is, more than anything else, a matter of group power; it is about a dominant racial group (whites) striving to maintain its systemic advantages and minorities fighting to subvert the racial status quo." (Bonilla-Silva,2006)

To Perri, "race is something that happens, rather than something that is. It is dynamic, but it holds no objective truth. Other scholars argue that racial categories obviously correlate with biological traits (e.g. phenotype) to some degree, and that certain genetic markers have varying frequencies among human populations, some of which correspond more or less to traditional racial groupings. For this reason there is no current consensus about whether racial categories can be considered to have significance for understanding human genetic variation. The types of practices that take place under this new color-blind racism is subtle, institutionalized, and supposedly not racial. Color-blind racism thrives on the idea that race is no longer an issue in the United States. There are contradictions between the alleged color-blindness of most whites and the persistence of a color-coded system of inequality. (Lieberman, Kirk, Corcoran, 2003)

Theoretical Framework

In his theory, 'The Third Wave society' Toffler has explicitly discussed the role of knowledge and technology in effecting changes and thus shaping the coming of the new type of society in the future and argues that the very nature of power is currently shifting. Throughout history, power has often shifted from one group to another; however, at this time, the dominant form of power is changing. During the Industrial Revolution, power shifted from nobility acting primarily through violence to industrialists and financiers acting through wealth. Of course, the nobility used wealth just as the industrial elite used violence, but the dominant form of power shifted from violence to wealth. Today, a The Third Wave of shifting power is taking place with wealth being overtaken by knowledge. Knowledge has gone from being an adjunct of money power and muscle power, to being their very essence and as knowledge is redistributed, so, too, is the power based on it. Toffler, (1991).

Knowledge can be used in a transformative way. Such examples are, acquiring and sharing knowledge on agriculture to ensure that everyone is capable of supplying himself and his family of food. For instance, the Asian tigers (countries like South Korea) used the knowledge of few individuals to develop the entire group. Although, some see Toffler as a visionary whose writings can help foretell the future and whose interpretations of current trends can help make the future a reality. Others see his writings as superficial "pop sociology" that offers little of substance. However, the Osu people have demonstrated though not in the strict sense of Toffler's futurist theory, how knowledge can be transformed into power, reducing to the barest minimum the issue of prejudices and discrimination in their communities. Thus blacks can key in to this power shift era by acquiring knowledge which will lead to long-term economic advancement in the black communities and the overall development of the race.

Methodology

This article has been prepared based on a desk review and analysis of published and unpublished literature, available documents on slave trade and strategies adopted by the Osus and African American to overcome racism. This researcher relied on data from a snapshot of individual's views or an excerpt of opinions from individuals on <http://www.nairaland.com/click/culture/111> because it is almost impossible and against the law to call anybody an Osu. Just like Walker (2009) rightly pointed out that It took the BBC a long time track down an Osu willing to talk, Igbo journalists, human rights advocates, academics and politicians could suggest no-one. Although there are varied oral stories on the origin of

the Osu caste system, yet there are little documented information on the issue, there are sufficient studies that helped us to draw our conclusions on the Osu strategy as against that of the African Americans

Strategies Adopted by African Americans to Overcome Racial Discrimination

One of the most prominent forms of American racism began with the institution of slavery, during which Africans were enslaved and treated as property. The stigmatized status of Africans following enslavement has become the basis for the more virulent anti-African racism that has persisted until the present. After the abolition of slavery in the United States, free blacks tended to concentrate in urban areas, since cities afforded employment opportunities, greater freedom of movement, and larger concentrations of people to support churches, schools, and other organizations.

However, African Americans faced many obstacles and prejudices not encountered by whites, even in areas where slavery had been abolished. They were barred from most educational institutions, limited to the least desirable residential and farming areas, often prohibited from practicing trades and opening businesses, and generally segregated in public conveyances and public worship. Thus African Americans were forced by these circumstances to debate the best response to the rising tide of racial discrimination. Of particular interest to this article is the strategy recommended by a Black educator Booker T. Washington, a policy of racial accommodation. Washington, who had been born into slavery, believed that protest aiming for social integration and political rights was doomed to failure in the South. Instead, he urged blacks to acquire occupational skills for economic advancement. (Fitzhugh, ed.2003) He argued that African Americans were the backbone of Southern labor and urged sympathetic whites to encourage manual and agricultural education for blacks to strengthen the Southern economy. With the financial support of wealthy white businessmen, he established the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Alabama in 1881 to educate black workers.

Washington's school was remarkably successful, considering the racially hostile atmosphere. His accommodations stance made him one of the most influential African Americans among powerful whites during the late 19th and early 20th century, but many blacks resented his seeming willingness to accept without protest the deprivation of African American rights. Many college-educated blacks disagreed with Washington and pursued equality through political and social protest. Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, William Monroe Trotter, and W.E.B. Du Bois were among those who established such all-black groups as the African American Council, the Niagara Movement, and in 1909, the interracial National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). They demanded their civil rights and worked against the Jim Crow system of segregation through the courts and, where possible, through politics. While substantial gains were made, black poverty and lack of education which Washington tried unsuccessfully to address deepened, giving rise to more Prejudice, discrimination, and institutional racism which has continued to affect African Americans.

Although it is now argued that there exists color blindness or an "understanding that cultural differences rooted in racial identities are irrelevant for peoples' prospects and their overall well-being". Yet, one counter-example to this claim is that employer interviews reveal reluctance from both black and white

employers to employ "urban young males who exhibit lower-class behavioral styles", highlighting the existence of embedded socio-economic preconceptions. (Glenn, 1998).

Furthermore, many cite the 2008 United States presidential election as a step forward in race relations: White Americans played a role in electing Barack Obama, the country's first black president. In fact, Obama received a greater percentage of the white vote (43%) than did the previous Democratic candidate, John Kerry (41%) (Pew Research Center-November 5, 2008.) However, racial divisions persisted throughout the election; wide margins of black voters gave Obama an edge during the presidential primary, where 8 out of 10 African-Americans voted for him in the primaries, and an MSNBC poll showed that race was a key factor in whether a candidate was perceived as being ready for office. In South Carolina, for instance, "Whites were far likelier to name Clinton than Obama as being most qualified to be commander in chief, likeliest to unite the country and most apt to capture the White House in November. Blacks named Obama over Clinton by even stronger margins two- and three-to one — in all three areas, suggesting that color blindness is superficial and racism has persisted.

Strategies Adopted by the Osu people to Overcome Discrimination

The Osu were not allowed to dance, drink, walk, associate with, or have sexual relations with the Diala or the Freeborn. He was in fact an outcast, living in a special area of the village, close to the Great Shrine. Wherever he went he carried with him the mark of his forbidden caste – long, tangled dirty hair. The Igbo welcome ritual of presenting a kola nut to a guest who in turn breaks it is not available to an Osu. No Osu can pour libation or pray to God on behalf of a Freeborn as it is believed that such prayers bring calamity and misfortune. In his book, *Ihiteafoukwu: The Echo of Igbo Culture*, Ugwuh (2004) captures the systemic discrimination meted out to the Osu: "They (Osus) cannot plant their crops near or close to Diala (Freeborn) nor can they plant at the time Diala plants or sows his crops and seeds. An Osu could not attend an assembly of the freeborn, and they, in turn, could not shelter under his roof. He could not take any of the four titles of the clan, and when he died he was buried by his kind in the Evil Forest. How could such a man be a follower of Christ? (Achebe 1959).

Like the African Americans after the abolition of slavery, the Osus were freed but unable to participate actively in their communities because of those constraints stated above. They were therefore left with the options of either confronting the Diala (Freeborn) over segregation and discrimination meted at them, or putting more reliance on long-term educational and economic advancement among their people. The Osus adopted the second strategy. They embraced "Western" education and became Nigeria's first doctors and lawyers, and successful businessmen. A snapshot of individual's views or an excerpt of opinions from individuals on <http://www.nairaland.com/click/culture/111>, shows that the above mentioned taboo has fizzled out as people interact freely with the Osus due to their success story. One individual captured the point when he states that "If you people knew anything about Osu then you would know that Osu and non-Osu interact. You would also know that most Osu live their entire lives having no idea whatsoever that they are even Osu. Your best friend could very well be Osu, and you would not even have the slightest clue. Why because even he most likely does not even know. The last Igbo girl you dated could very well be Osu and you wouldn't even know. Why because she herself probably has no idea. Do you get the picture I'm painting here? You're shouting "Discrimination!" with

no empirical evidence to show. You don't see Osu coming to talk about their plight. How could they, when the vast majority of them don't even have the slightest clue if they are or are not Osu? You're crying much much more than the bereaved. End of story". Another observed that "... when you come to villages you don't even know those that are osu s anymore except maybe from their names! (Names like nwsu) but those that their families changed names a long time ago you can't even tell because there is absolutely no discrimination anymore! (Nairaland Forum, 20014). Notwithstanding, people like professor Obumselu argue that the traditions have a lingering hold on people because they are not sure how much power the "old ways" still have. Traditionally the Osu are treated as a people apart, but were never the victims of violence. (BBC News (7 April 2009). But today some Osus have become so powerful that no one would want to show you an Osu for fear of being confronted. In fact community conflicts have erupted between people each accusing the other of being Osu. (BBC News (7 April 2009). The only trouble the Osu encounter nowadays is when they try to get married. Because of the Osu factor, marriages in Igbo society are preceded by investigations elders from both sides travel to native villages to find out the social status of the other party. And if per chance it is discovered that one of them is an Osu, the marriage plan is automatically abandoned. There have been numerous cases where married couples have been forced to divorce because one of the parties was discovered to be an Osu – people believe that a Freeborn marrying an Osu is like inviting a “curse” on the family. Egwe , (2006) Also Osus that are interested in public office do not get the necessary support from the community except where they were appointed by the Federal Government. The prejudice amongst the Ibos is still strong that the Osus are sacrificial lambs to the gods or dedicated to the gods but Some Igbo communities have worked hard to bridge their Osu divide. (Dike,2004)

Discussions

The issue of stereotyping is not new. With almost a uniform agreement among white Americans, African-Americans are labeled (in error), as lower class in mentality and manners. In a study conducted in the 1930s, Kimball Young listed many stereotypes for the “Negroes” in the United States. The study noted that African-Americans have “emotional instability, [are] lazy and boisterous” (Young, 1934, pp.158-163).

Like the African-Americans there is a belief that people interact less or avoid the Osu because they feared that the spirit of the deities (which the Osu people serve), would haunt those who socialize with the Osu. The people in the villages believe that the deities that the Osu attends to are powerful and dangerous.

Others would say that socializing with the Osu would contaminate, pollute and transform the Diala into an Osu. There is also the belief that since the Osu has been dedicated to the gods it was a taboo to socialize with the group. In addition, oral history would say that the Osu is isolated because they “steal” and are “dishonest.” Yet, other stories would say that the Diala or the freeborn abhor those branded Osu because they are “dirty” or that they have “repulsive body odor” and are “lazy.” However, there is no empirical evidence to support these inhumane assertions (Dike 2002). Of course colonialists used the concept of race to justify unequal treatment, exploitation, and enslavement of supposedly inferior peoples. However several studies have shown that it is more of power play where the dominate group

seeks to justify their action against minorities. But are there some elements of truth? Of course not, if African Americans were lazy they wouldn't have survived slavery rather, their problem was the adoption of a wrong strategy to overcoming racial discrimination. The Osus on the other hand unknowingly adopted the strategy that was recommended by T. Washington to African Americans in the 19th century but rejected, and now the Osus have a success story to show to the world. While the Osu were able to demonstrate industry, thrift, intelligence and property, this strategy was rejected by the African American who preferred protest. Today blacks in the US are still regarded as lazy and people still holds the same prejudices against them, in spite having an African American President.

Conclusions

Although the prejudice amongst the Ibos is still strong that the Osus are sacrificial lambs to the gods or dedicated to the gods, the vehemence of the tradition has weakened over the last 50 years; Thanks to the efforts of the Osus. In a society such as Nigeria where laws are disregarded, the Osus would have been worst off without their own effort to build their capacity.

As noted by Dike (2004), there are varied oral stories on the origin of the system, yet there are little documented information on the issue. The paucity of information in this subject is perhaps caused by people's erroneous believe that it is an exercise in futility for any person to attempt to change the attitude of the people on the system. However Some Igbo communities have worked hard to bridge their Osu divide. This is obviously the result of the Osus progress which has changed the misconception that Osu are "dirty" or that they have "repulsive body odor" and are "lazy." Yet others are treating the issue with kids globe, as dissenters are hoping that it would 'fizzle out' with time. Ironically people have the same erroneous views about African Americans suggesting that the strategy which was recommended by T. Washington that the surest way for blacks to gain equal social rights was to demonstrate "industry, thrift, intelligence and property" still stands.

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