

Muckraking Journalism: The Roadmap to National Development in Nigeria

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Abstract

Systemic corruption in the socio-economic and political terrain of Nigerian nation has become a major bane of national development of this country. The situation, without mincing words, is so worrisome that it can no longer be tackled by mere routine journalistic reportage because of its inherent danger in our strive to achieving milestones for nation building. It is on this premise, that this paper explores the dynamics of muckraking journalism as a recipe and roadmap to the path of national development of Nigerian nation. This paper argues that conventional journalists and anti-graft agencies in the country have not made appreciable progress in the fight against the monster called corruption in both private and public sectors of our economy and indeed, in Nigerian polity. Thus, the role of muckrakers becomes sacrosanct if we must journey to the path of national development without hiccups. Consequently, the paper advocates for effective synergy between muckrakers and anti-graft agencies such as EFCC and ICPC in the fight against the maladies of corruption and its masterminds. Similarly, the paper advocates for institutionalization of muckraking units in all key media establishments, Federal, State Ministries, Agencies and Parastatals with the ultimate aim of exploring, exposing and explaining corruption issues and their masterminds for the interest of citizenry.

Keywords: Muckraking Journalism, Muckrakers, Roadmap and National Development.

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INTRODUCTION

The ongoing media advocacy campaign for national transformation in Nigeria may be an illusion if corruption continues to thrive in its socio-economic and political terrain without concomitant muckraking activities to unearth the maladies and their masterminds irrespective of whose ox is gored in the interest of the public.

Indeed, corruption in Nigerian nation has become multi-dimensional in nature, that it now needs an aggressive attention of the muckrakers in order to make a radical departure from the ritual approach adopted by conventional journalists in gathering and reportage of the societal cankerworm called corruption that has eaten the fabrics of our socio-economic and political platforms adversely. Thus, playing a dysfunctional role in the strive to achieving milestones for national transformation and development in this part of African continent. Also corruption in this part of the is systemic and if nothing is done to create an enabling environment for the operations of muckraking journalism to thrive in their role, the menace will ultimately become a cherished norm in the society and the inherent danger cannot be quantified.

Corruption has almost been institutionalized in this part of Africa. Sometimes, the system of governance encourages its existence. This is a nation where the former President of Federal Court of Appeal without mincing words, accused

the Chief Justice of the Federation of corruption but no conscious effort has been made by the anti-graft agencies to verify the veracity of the accusation and persecute the alleged offender. However, we saw the government harmer fell on the President of the Court of Appeal for making such revelation.

A nation where a former Governor, James Ibori was discharged and acquitted in a Law Court for stealing over 105 million pounds belonging to Delta State but only for a British Court known as Southward Crown Court to sentence the same offence for thirteen years in imprisonment. What an irony?

A nation where National Assembly has conducted over fifty public hearings on corruption issues perpetuated by heads of government agencies and parastatals and no appreciable effort has been made in prosecuting and convicting the masterminds of the misdeeds against this nation, called Nigeria.

A nation where managers of Police Pension Funds have comfortably looted over ₦32.86bn (Thirty-Two, Eight Six Billion Naira) belonging to the pensioners with almost total impunity and their misdeeds are treated with levity in the court of law. What a good nation!

Also, a Nation, where the National Assembly Budget is not tabled before any institution or legislative assembly for defence and scrutiny. This is a recipe for corruption and needs the intervention of muckrakers in order to save the Nigerian society from the broad-day robbery by those we have directly or indirectly elected to bring sanity to the nation's fiscal policy and expenditure. This assembly scrutinizes other institutions' budget but no one examines its own budget. What a misnomer !

In the same vein, a country where the Presidency would appropriate about Seven Billion Naira (7bn) to herself for purchase of Newspapers and Two Billion Naira(2bn) for repairs of household furniture when our federal roads are in bad shape due to lack of funds while tertiary and health institutions are begging for financial attention. (Gbenga Areluba, 2012).

This is a country, where a former Minister of Works, Chief Tony Anenih was appropriated about Two Hundred Billion (₦200b) by the Presidency through Federal budget for fixing up East- West Road but did not mobilize contractor to site. Surprisingly, he was not questioned for his action and inaction against the public interest by Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and her sister Commission, Independent Crime Practices Commission. The anti-graft agencies are yet to see any wrong doing in that misdeed in spite of media agenda on that misnomer. A country where festival of financial crime has hit the regulator of its major oil exploration and exploitation activities, NNPC and no one has been imprisoned for the act.

Again, a country where heads of government development agencies like NDDC and Niger Delta Basin Authority just to mention a few would abandon projects of public interest to award new ones for personal aggrandizement of the managers of the agencies in spite of the benefiting communities quest for the completion of the old projects.

In like manner, a nation where Governors would embark on elephant projects they know are unrealistic from the beginning but only to use such projects as financial drain pipes against the collective will of the citizenry. This is a nation where financial crime flows both in vertical and horizontal direction among the titans in the corridors of power.

In most cases, the system of governance in Nigeria waters the ground for financial crimes to take place. For example, the law makers both at federal and states levels who are supposed to monitor governance through effective legislation and rendering of checks and balances on the activities of those who governance of the nation are domiciled in their offices are now seen having unholy romance with the executive arm of the government who implements government polices and programmes. What an aberration?

This action and inaction of the law makers calls for the intervention of the muckrakes in order to save the nation from total collapse as done in the United States of America in the time of former President Theodore Roosevelt who

first called investigative journalists muckrakers in 1890s and the era of former President Richard Nixon who muckrakers forced out of office.

Muckraking journalism right from when the name was coined by President Theodore Roosevelt of United States of America to the era of former President Richard Nixon, has remained a major catalyst for national transformation and development under-pinned by its spectacular exploration and exposition of corruption issues committed in the high places of government and in the industrial sector of the nation's economy.

More so, without fear of contradiction, evidence abounds that muckraking reportage centred on the corruption of the administration of former President Richard Nixon of United States of America titled "Watergate Scandal" unearthed by Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein both reporters of Washington Post in United States, forced the number one citizen of USA out of office via his resignation advocated by muckrakers and supported by US Congress who threatened to pass vote of no confidence on Richard Nixon's led government. No wonder! One time United States of American President, Thomas Jefferson, in evaluating the role of the press in national development, once said; "if I were left to choose between government without press and the press without the government, I would quickly choose the latter". In simplest analysis of the above statement, the kind of press President Jefferson meant in that context is muckraking journalism. In the wisdom Rodman (2006,p.83), muckraking journalism is a style of reporting that uncovers information that sources including, government, corporations and other powerful groups have tried to conceal. Muckraking journalism goes beyond

routine and conventional methods of investigating phenomena or issues of public interest. It is bent on enforcing the norms and values of modern society and ensure that people live and work within the ambit of good morals (Alikor & Njoku, 2011, p. 342).

In discussing the seven blunders of contemporary society as observed by Mohandas Gandhi and cited in Mbah (1999, p. 213). Gandhi highlights the societal blunders as:

Wealth without work
Pleasure without conscience
Knowledge without character
Commerce without morality
Science without humanity
Worship without sacrifice and
Politics without principle.

According to Mbah, Gandh's grandson, Arun Gandhi added; "Rights, without responsibilities" to make societal blunders eight in number. These blunders are the bane of Nigerian nation's development. Aggressive battle against these blunders is indeed, the interest of muckraking journalism in Nigeria. This genre of journalism specialized in performing aggressive watchdog role rather than being a mere 'lapdog' on the laps of those in the echelon of power in our socio-economic and political terrain.

In the view of Ogunwale (2008, p. 207), if our newspapers have had in place or unit called investigative desk, where muckraking is actively encouraged and funded, most of the stealing that virtually grounded the societal order, would have been exposed by muckrakers. Ogunwale further observes that the absence of in-depth probing or research in our newsrooms has helped corrupt-minded persons in leadership to embezzle public fund with almost total impunity. Nigeria is one of the countries in the world where politicians and fraudulent industrialists can comfortably organize thanksgiving service in the Church or Mosque after looting public funds and with total impunity sometimes, national award and encomiums are lavished on them as heroes and heroines. This attitude to governance is diametrically opposed to national development. This is the thrust of this paper.

CLARIFICATION OF KEYWORDS

To enhance an effective understanding of this paper, it has become imperative to explain and clarify the keywords used in this article. Among these keywords are:

Muckraking Journalism:- This is a genre of journalism which deals with exploring, exposing and explaining corruption and other misdeeds perpetuated by corrupt-minded persons in the corridors of power either in public or private sector. Muckraking journalism aims at sanitizing the socio-economic and political atmosphere of any nation where it is operational.

Muckrakers: These are the operators of muckraking journalism who are extraordinary and outstanding journalists possessing and displaying high level of high moral standards and conscience for the survival of society devoid of blemish in unveiling the maladies and misdeeds perpetuated by enemies of national development in the governmental institutions and private sector in the interest of the generality of the public.

Roadmap:- In the context of this paper, roadmap means the pathway to national development which the nation must strive to maintain in order to efficiently and effectively achieve milestones for national transformation without barriers. In Nigeria, corruption, electoral malpractice, insecurity, poor infrastructural development among others are some of the barriers to our roadmap to national development.

National development:- This is the deliberate plan by Key players in the governance of a nation to using human and material resources available for overall transformation of the nation and its citizenry from perceived poverty to a more dynamic economic, social and political prosperity devoid of blemish.

Statement of Problem

One area of journalism that appears to have been relegated to the background particularly at this critical time when right-thinking Nigerians and global community at large are seriously advocating for aggressive attack against corruption in high places in government and industrial sector of Nigerian nation is muckraking journalism. Of course, no nation striving for national growth can make robust success when the operators of the government and its economy are entangled in corruption. Nigerian citizenry is angry and hungry because of the misgovernance and corruption in the nation while few privileged personalities in the hierarchy of leadership in private and public sectors fraudulently amass the commonwealth of the nation at the expense of the masses. It is in line with this, that this of paper extols the role of muckraking journalism as a roadmap to national development in Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

This paper draws a lot from the concept of “Journalistic Watchdog” in media practice. According to (Rodman 2006, p. 25), while the United States of America government does have some regulatory control over the media, the media act as unofficial watchdog of government actions. This is also applied to any country where libertarian press holds sway like Nigeria. This watchdog role gives the media the impetus to act as agent of anti-financial crimes and other misconduct. The founders of the United States like Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin envisioned the American media as “a fourth estate of the realm” or unofficial fourth branch of government” designed to watchdog and report on the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government (Rodman, 2006 p. 25). This is also applied to Nigerian media as the nation borrows a lot from American Constitution and its media systems.

In line with the above assertion, the media are supposed to keep citizens informed about the actions and decisions of those elected to govern the nation. In doing this, the media are expected to have an adversarial relationship with those in the corridors of power to aggressively check their excesses in the interest of the public. The exponents of watchdog journalism further hold that whenever the government propose to have a serious romance with the media, the implication is that the government has some to hide from journalists especially those in private media houses who are not supposed to serve as cheer leaders or ‘spin doctors’ for government and its key players, but should function as anti-corruption crusaders in order to bring sanity to governance.

Alexander Hamilton cited in Rodman (2006, p.25) pointed out that it is the duty of the press to examine each new law proposed by government. If the law is found wanting, Hamilton said: “it is essential to say, not only that the measure is bad and deleterious, but to hold up the person who is the author, that in this our free and elective government, he may be removed from the seat of power (Roadman, 2006).

But how far has the present press in Nigeria being alive to its watchdog role vis-à-vis muckraking journalism. This paper therefore, argues that these ongoing clamour for national transformation by the present administration led by

President Goodluck Jonathan may be an illusion if muckraking journalism practice is not encouraged in Nigerian Nation.

A DISCOURSE ON MUCKRAKING JOURNALISTS

According to Ekwelie (2006), a muckraker is more or less a policeman without official uniform and powers to function optimally, but he serves as an agent of change in our contemporary society. For one thing, a muckraker does not have a warrant of arrest empowered by the law to arrest the suspect of a financial misconduct or break his office or residential house for the purposes of seeking for a hidden fact on suspicion that crime has been committed or about to be committed (Ekwelie, 2006).

Ekwelie further posits that muckrakers are comparable to policemen without warrant to arrest and bring to the media house for interrogation. They are like “moral police” who seek to dig out hidden secrets or facts of public interest and set agenda on them (Ekwelie, 2006).

Muckrakers strive to solve the maladies of corruption, shortcut and other cankerworms that threaten the overall health of the nation. They are exposers of misconduct of prominent personalities in public offices. They are conscience journalists who take no stipends and freebies from the news sources or public figures in discharging their constitutional roles. This class of journalists, work according to the dictates of good morals and canons of muckraking journalism.

Muckraking journalists generally are concerned with the role of saving the soul of the society from the misdeeds of the corrupt leaders in governance of a nation, states, local governments and corporate governance of our economy. Their activities involve the conscious act of digging down to the heart of a hidden issue in order to unveil it in the interest of the public. They function like a cleanser that sanitizes the fabrics of leadership of modern society. Muckrakers adopt para-police model in pursuit of hidden facts with the desire to exposing them in the public interest (Alikor & Njoku, 2011, p. 343).

Agbese (2008, p. 88) points out that muckraking journalists are primarily concerned themselves with ‘scoop’ or big news that may rock the political kingdom or an industry if it is made public. Muckraking news focuses on evil deeds perpetuated in high places. A case in point is the discovery of toxic waste disposal at Koko, Delta State, Nigeria (Agbese, 2008) as quoted in Alikor and Njoku (2011).

Muckraking journalists are interested in bringing sanity to political and corporate governance of any nation they found themselves in order to stimulate national growth. This they do, by exposing the corrupt-minded personalities in leadership positions so that the common wealth of the nation can be channeled appropriately to areas of needs for national development.

Perhaps, it is in view of the outstanding role of muckraking journalists that a French nationalist leader, Napoleon Bonaparte once stated: “I would prefer to face a battalion or legion of soldiers rather than being attacked by a single press. In simplest analysis of this statement, the kind of pressmen he meant in that scenario were the muckrakers who in modern day journalism, are often called conscience, moral and adversarial journalists.

The job of a muckraker is like drawing water out of a dried well so as to quench a personal thirst. It requires doggedness and resilience to make success. Muckrakers are expected to turnover cupboards of suspects in order to search for hidden skeleton with the ultimate aim of satisfying public interest.

Okunu (2007, pp. 83-84) has earlier observed that there is an unfriendly relationship between muckrakers and key government personnel as well as captains of industries because the latter perceive muckrakers as enemies of progress. Thus, regarding muckrakers as a cog in the wheel of their progress. Muckraking journalists strive to digging down to the heart of a grave in order to exhume an already decomposed body which stinks when it is made public. In Nigeria, corruption is systemic and even more domiciled in civil service. Currently, some civil servants are alleged to be villains of financial crimes in Nigerian polity. They are said to be richer than some states and local

governments via looting of public funds appropriated to their offices through the nation's budget for implementation of government programmes and projects as part of their official mandate.

To buttress this fact, Justice Mohammed Talba of an Abuja High Court had hurriedly granted some corrupt barons in the Federal civil Service bail in March, 2012 namely the Permanent Secretary in the Office of the Head of Service of the Federation, Abubakar Kigo, Esai Abubakar, Ahimed Wada, John Yusufu, Verionica Onyegbula and Sani Zirra who were arraigned in the High Court by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, EFCC on charges of alleged complicity in the illegal division of ₦32.8bn from the Nigeria Police Pension Funds (The News Magazine 2012, April 16, pp. 14-15).

The EFCC alleged that between January 2009 and June 2011, the accused persons, all public servants also diverted the sum of ₦14.5bn from the Police Pension Funds domiciled in First Bank of Nigeria Plc. They are also accused of stealing ₦8.9bn between January and December 2009, ₦4.7bn between January 2010 and February 2011 (The News Magazine, 2012, April 16, p.14).

Similarly, ₦858.3m between February 2011 and June 2011, was discovered to have also looted from the Police Pension Fund by the alleged corrupt titans in the Federal Civil Service. Indeed, the catalogue of the embezzlement of public funds by these persons according to the Newsmagazine is unending.

To worsen this high profile corruption by these crop of Civil Service, is the media report that EFCC found the sum of ₦2 billion in Kigo's bedroom. Also EFCC also claimed to have found N1 billion in cold cash in the residence of Sani Teidi Shuaibu, former Director of Pensions Department, Office of the Head of Civil Service of Federation (Newsmagazine, 2012, April 16 p.16) What a corruption in high places !According to EFCC Chairman (2012) in a media report, there is high level of corruption in the Civil Service. The way they steal is mind-boggling. (Lamorde, 2012).

Indeed, Nigerians are in a hurry to forget Dimeji Bankole, former Speaker of the House of representatives corruption saga centred on falsified contracts figures. In the report of Newsmagazine 2012 (p.17), Bankole is being prosecuted on allegations that he participated as one of the Principal Officers of the House, of the Representatives in the approval of inflated contracts. The inflation of the contract, as alleged by the EFCC, resulted in the purchases of one unit of 40 sets of Samsung television at ₦525,000 as against the prevailing market price of ₦295,000. Some contracts which prices were alleged to have been inflated under Barkole's leadership of the house included:

*Supply of HP Compad Desk, Computers awarded at ₦330,000 each instead of ₦160,00,
100 units of Sharp Digital Copier supplied at ₦270,000 each instead of ₦150,000 etc
(Newsmagazine, 2012, April 16, p. 17).*

One of the major sources of corruption in Nigeria is through inflation of contracts especially road construction projects. Our roads are seen as the most expensive in African continent if not in all developing countries of the world. This is in spite of poor service delivery in terms of finishing of the roads. To lend credence to this assertion, Senator Bala Mohammed, Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (2012) in a television chat disclosed that Federal Government has discovered that the ongoing Abuja Airport/Kuba road construction has been criminally inflated at the rate of ₦38bn.

In the same vein, Senator Smart Adeyemi, who chairs the Senate Committee on Works while inspecting the project observed that the contract has been grossly inflated.

Transparency International Research Centre (2010) in her result of study on corruption behavior in public and private sectors in the world found out that 'bribery' is particularly widespread in construction, energy and extractive industries and that in Nigeria, one of the countries with dominant extractive industries, corrupt Civil Servants went home fraudulently to nothing less than \$3.2bn as bribes in the 2010/2011 financial year alone via contracts inflation bribery and other means. In like manner, the amount of financial scam in oil subsidy programmed of Federal Government of Nigeria is heart breaking. In this scam, over One Trillion Naira (1trn) fraud has been uncovered by the House of Representatives Committee on subsidy matters (The News Magazine, 2012, p.16).

Against this background, muckrakers and social critics are unhappy by the government's body language and action towards the fight against the menace of corruption in Nigeria. Even the establishments of anti-graft agencies have not helped matters because their personnel are also entangled in corruption. The presence of these crop of civil servants or public servants have continued to contaminate the system of governance of the nation hence, negates national development plan anchored on transformational agenda of President Goodluck Jonathan led government.

MUCKRAKING JOURNALISM, CORRUPTION AND NIGERIAN NATION

In contemporary Nigeria, corruption is no longer domiciled in the office of politicians but holds sway among civil servants both at federal, state and local government levels. Civil servants who are supposed to be implementers of public projects, programmes and policies are now entangled with high profile corruption.

Civil Servants are architects of corruption in Nigeria. They design for political appointees and executive officers how to loot public resources. They are the quantity surveyors of corruption; they quantify the amount to be looted. They are also the soft-ware engineers of corruption. They use computer programming language, write a source code and develop an algorithm for any corrupt practice (Patani, 2012).

Presently, some key players in Economic and Financial Crimes Commission have been traced to have close affinity with corrupt-minded politicians and senior civil servants. It is in line with this, the Chairman of EFCC, Ibrahim Lamorde initiated measures to purge his anti-corruption agency of undesirable elements. According to Punch Newspaper (2012, p.3) Lamorde has shocked Nigerians on March 22, 2012, when he admitted openly that there is widespread corruption within EFCC.

Lamorde in a two day workshop on corruption organized by the United Nations Global Compact and the Nigeria Economic Summit Group observed that:

The foot soldiers of the anti-corruption crusade who are supposed to fight the barons of corruption have been involved in various corruption issues in recent times. The situation, therefore, needs urgent muckraking attention.

Lamorde further points out that the anti corruption campaign in EFCC is set up to fight, among others the criminal elements in the organization (Punch Newspaper, 2012, 14, p.3).

In view of the above, we can no longer repose absolute confidence in the anti-graft agencies' role in their fight against financial crimes in Nigerian nation since it is obvious that these agencies also have some bad eggs among their operators.

Similarly, the corruption charge against the chairman of house of representatives and hoc committee on fuel subsidy regime, Farouk Lawan organization bribery scandal of \$620,000 offered him by Femi Otedola aimed at expunging Otedola's name from the list of vililans is another confidence betrayal by our leaders.

The consequence of these scenarios in the quest for national development is inexplicable and dangerous to the overall health of Nigerian nation. Therefore, the role of muckrakers in fighting the perennial menace of corruption in this part of African continent cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, given the enabling environment, practitioners of muckraking journalism can bring sanity to financial activities of both public and private institutions in the interest of the general public.

This no doubts, will provide a leeway to national development as no nation can make outstanding success in terms of socio-economic development when those saddled with the responsibility of leadership are dramatizing sharp practices and corruption. Their antics are the bane of national development. Journalism can hardly worth its value without being a catalyst for national transformation positively especially in the time of colossal corruption in governance of a nation and corporate world. It is a misnomer for muckraking journalists to remain aloof while our common wealth is being squandered by few titans in the corridors of power as currently observed in Nigerian nation. For muckraking journalists to maintain their collective name as aggressive watchdog of the society, it is beholden

that the members of the Fourth Estate of the Realm (journalists) strive to expand the frontiers of democracy by deploying muckraking to the front burner of their roles in nation building.

Given insight into Nigerian corruption, Transparency International rated Nigeria as the second most corrupt country in the world in 2003 and 2004. According to Iyare (2004), the collapse of social infrastructure and the lack of provision of social welfare for the citizenry is traceable to primordial primitive accumulation of wealth by the ruling elite. The huge amount reflected in the yearly budget hardly translates to any good life for people because of endemic corruption.

The corruption rages from embezzlement, payment for jobs not done, over invoicing, double debiting, inflation of contract figures to release of money without the consent of the approval authority (Iyare, 2004), In the words of Iyare: "If these processes of corruption remain unchecked, the country may soon go to the dogs and acquire the state of a banana island". According to Iyare, the consigning of muckraking journalism to the back burner and its replacement with press release is a bane of Nigerian development.

The Nations Newspaper (Tuesday, May14, 2012) in a cover page story via a banner headline, alleged that the former Chairman of Stock and Security Exchange Commission, Ndidi Okereke Onyike spent about ₦186m on purchase of a set of Rolex wrist watches and over ₦1 trn on overseas trips in a year, while members of her Council shared over ₦7bn belonging to the Capital Market.

Consequently, this alleged corruption has caused near collapse of the Capital Market in Nigeria. To prove the truism of this matter, House of Representatives Committee on Capital Market is currently investigating this malaise. This is just one of the many cases of corruption opened up in recent times by similar committee. The can of worms opened in oil subsidy regime is another whopping amount of corruption in Nigeria.

The question one is left to ask is: why has corruption thrived in Nigeria and why have Nigerian journalists left a critical and the flagship of their role (muckraking) to Anti-graft Agencies and National Assembly to handle? This is a major miscarriage of role on the side of journalists and other media practitioners in Nigerian nation. No doubts, no nation can thrive in terms of national growth when a greater part of its resources is embezzled by corrupt-minded bigwigs in the corridors of power who misappropriate and embezzle public fund with almost total impunity.

In view of this, Mboto and Eteng (2009, P.34) observe that the following Agencies and Commissions have been established either by decrees or acts of parliament with the ultimate aim of fighting this societal maladies.

- i.) The Money Laundering Act of 1995
- ii.) Advance Fee Fraud (419) and other Fraud Related Offences Act of 1995
- iii.) Failed Banks Acts of 1996
- iv.) Banks and other Financial Institution Acts of 1991
- v.) Foreign Exchange Acts of 1995
- vi.) The Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Act of 2000

But how far have these efforts and the Anti-financial Crimes Agencies Commissions achieved resounding success in confronting this societal cankerworm called corruption in Nigeria. Given the fact that corruption cans of worm are being opened almost daily in Nigerian polity perpetuated by the titans in the corridors of power without the imprisonment of the offenders. Corruption has assumed an alarming proportion in Nigerian nation. The Police Pension Fund scan, the Probe of the Stock Exchange Market and indeed, the fuel subsidy fraud, Faruk Lawan vs Femi Ofedola over \$620 dollars bribery scandal are more than enough to scandalize Nigeria citizens even more than ever before by Foreign organizations and their nationals (The Guardian Newspaper, April 26, p. 68).

Ribadu (2003) cited in Mboto and Eteng (2009, P.23) writing on how African fights economic crime and corruption, identifies the following negative effects of financial corruption on Nigerian democratic system:

- Loss of government revenue*
- Negative national image*
- Poor government service delivery*
- Failure of state institutions*
- Brain drain*

Electoral malpractice
Absence of law and order
Civil unrest
Poor investment climate
Business failure and unemployment
Poverty among others.

Without mincing words, financial scam has become a major bane of Nigeria national development. As a nation crusading for national transformation, we must strive to defeat this “Goliath” of our national growth called corruption, otherwise, the aspiration to transforming the social, economic and political horizon of this country will be an unachievable mission.

Mboto and Eteng (2009) citing Adams also identified some of the stimulants to financial crimes in Nigeria as “inadequate pay, absence of inadequate fringe benefits, absence of law and order, inadequate checks and balances, lack of information made available to the public and ineffective freedom of the press”.

They further posit that difficulty of proving cases of corruption in law court, high social acceptance of corruption in our society, insecurity of the judiciary, culture of bureaucratize elitism, poor leadership, etc are also the major factors encouraging corruption in Nigerian democratic governance. This situation has led to poor service delivery, poor infrastructural development, poor implementation of budget, loss of revenue. Our corporate national image has been stigmatized on the alter of financial scam globally. In many cases genuine Nigerians across the international frontiers are often seen as corruption epitomized by foreign nationals. To address this situation, Nigeria government through its Federal Ministry of Information and National Orientation Agency have embarked on several images laundry programmes and campaigns without appreciable success.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ROLE OF MUCKRAKING JOURNALISTS IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Muckraking journalists can serve as panacea for national development given an enabling environment to perform. Some of their roles toward national development are:

- They can aggressively compel the government and industrialists to be accountable to the governed and stakeholders in business.
- They serve as advocates of transparency and probity in the business of governance of a nation in order to stimulate national growth.
- They serve as alarmists against financial crimes and other misdeeds against God and humanity in a nation. This is done to safeguard and keep the populace alert and alive as a result of imminent danger in the society. In other words, they serve as “aggressive whistle blowers” against corruption and other forms of misdeed in the governance of a nation.
- They serve as agent of national transformation. This they do by crusading for good morals and integrity in the business of governance of a nation especially where muckrakers have enabling environment to operate.
- Muckrakes serve as purifiers and sanitizers of a nation’s socio-economic and political terrains given the right climate to operate.
- They also function as aggressive watchdog against corruption and its masterminds in a society so as to stimulate national development.
- Muckraking journalists equally serve as unbiased explorer and exposé of corruption in high places in government and business sector of a nation even at the risk of their lives.
- They bring disgrace to people whose integrity in governance of a nation has eroded so as to use them as deterrent to potential perpetrators in the interest of the public.
- They indeed, serve as ombudsman in society by providing the platform for aggrieved members of the public to make their complaints. Muckraker also serve as tipsters for anti-graft agencies.
- They serve as potent “unofficial and moral police” in a nation in order to explore and expose financial crimes and other misconducts.

- They equally set agenda on corruption issues in a nation so as to persuade anti-graft agencies and security personnel to take action.
- They investigate misconducts and make result of their findings or complaints against high profile personality known in a nation where they operate.
- They provide antidote to solving societal problems through “curative muckraking journalism”.
- They serve as catalyst for checks and balances on the three arms of government.
- They equally prevent financial crimes and other forms of societal blunders through the practice of a “proactive muckraking journalism” in society.

However, muckraking journalists can only render the aforementioned daunting roles in a conducive terrain devoid of uncivilized media control mechanisms such as threats to life of muckrakers, harassment and detention of muckrakers, unfavourable media law, outright killing of muckrakers, danger of being charge with sedition, libel slander, threat to muckrakers family members lives, proscription of muckrakers’ media houses, litigation of muckrakers, threat to withdrawal of operational license or deregistration of corporate certificate of media houses, unfavourable editorial policies, fear of loss of government patronage. Conversely, the opposite of the above stated issues stimulate effective and efficient muckraking journalism for national development.

OBSTACLES TO EFFECTIVE MUCKRAKING JOURNALISM IN NIGERIA

- **Nigeria Union of Journalists and Government Unholy Romance:** The proposal of Rivers State Government to build a befitting NUJ Secretariat as captured in 2012 State budget has the capacity to kill muckraking activity against the government. This benevolence weakens muckraking activity against the government because the law of nature frowns at biting the finger that feeds the beneficiary.
- **Ineffective Adherence to the Prescription of FOI Act:**
It is worrisome that many governmental and non governmental organizations are yet to subscribe to the dictates of Freedom of Information Act which gives impetus to muckraking journalism in Nigeria. There is disrespect for FOI, Act by government officials and key captains of industries.
- **Corporate Media Award:-** This is a situation where corporate organizations as part of their media control mechanisms adopt a style whereby some active journalists are pencilled down for award in order to gag them. This is followed by monetary gains.
- **Robust Government Advertorials:** This is a system of media control mechanism in which the operators of government policies and programmes deliberately give media establishments ample advertisements of government programmes and campaigns with the ultimate aim of gagging the media establishments even in the time of serious financial crimes and other forms of misconducts.
- **Police Brutality Against Perceived Muckrakers:** There is a growing wave of police harassment and torture against those perceived to be investigative journalists by the Police attached to those in the corridors of power. This by no small measure, weakness the quest for muckraking activity in Nigerian nation.
- **Lack of Muckraking Dextenty:** Many media establishments both print and electronics do not possess the skill for effective muckraking activity. This no doubts, poses a great barrier to effective muckraking journalism.
- **Unfavourable Editorial Policies:-** Many media organizations consider muckraking journalism as a new creation in the media practice and regard it as mere adversarial journalism. Therefore, hold it as mere witch-hunting or sensational journalism which ends up making more enemies than creating wealth for the owners of media industry. It is in view of this, they make muckraking activity a serious caveat in their editorial polices.

- **Threat to Lives of Muckrakers:-** Many journalists globally have lost their Lives in the course of practicing muckraking journalism. It is in view of the above, that many journalists who want to veer into muckraking journalists are now skeptical of entry into this hard side of journalism.
- **Nigeria Union of Journalists Award Initiative:-** This has become a major phenomenon in our society, and it is a leeway to corrupting journalists including potentials muckrakers. Indeed, NUJ in the course of recognizing some personalities in a bid to give them media award for their selfless services to the nation compromises its conscience or better still, mortgage their conscience in a bid to attract monetary gains or advertorials from the benefiting politicians or corporate organizations. This no doubts, have the capacity to hinder media establishments from engaging in muckraking activity.

Conclusion

This paper has extensively examined the concept of muckraking journalism as the roadmap to national development. The paper relied much on desk research based on the plethora of media reportage on corruption in Nigeria, and the observation of the authors on the activity of Nigerian journalists toward the fight against the monster .consequently, the paper observes that muckraking journalism has been relegated to the background in favour of spin doctor journalism, media consultancy journalism and advertorial journalism. Surprisingly, many practicing journalists are yet to understand the dynamics of muckraking journalism. Therefore, do not have interest in it. Beyond that, lack of security of journalists in Nigeria have been identified in this work as the major bane of muckraking personalities in the corridors of power and private sector of Nigeria nation's economy .Therefore, the current genres of journalism being practiced in Nigeria need a paradigm shift.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the observations made in this work, the following recommendations are made:

- The paper advocates for effective synergy between muckrakers, Police, Economic Financial and Crimes Commission and Independent Crimes Practice Commission in the fight against financial crimes in Nigerian nation. This will provide opportunity for muckrakers to bring their expertise in uncovering financial misconducts hidden beyond the trace and notice of the public to limelight.
- The paper also advocates for the establishment of muckraking units in all key media establishments and government ministries, agencies, parastatals and even local governments as this will serve as wakeup-call to corrupt-minded persons in the corridors of power and by extension to captains of industries.
- The paper equally advocates for legal framework to establish and legalize “Chartered Institute of Muckrakers” of Nigeria so as to have a fundamental legal framework to operate, distinct from FOI Act which is yet to come in full operation.
- Police and other security personnel brutality against muckrakers should be made a serious criminal offence against the state rather than the muckrakers who serve as agents of positive change in the nation.
- All laws, ordinances and acts hindering the effective muckraking journalism practice in Nigeria should be amended to give room for fearless and improved muckraking activities in the nation.
- Nigeria Union of Journalists and its affiliate's bodies should periodically embark on training and retraining of conventional journalists on the dynamics of modern muckraking paradigms.
- Federal government should set aside a day for national award for muckrakers who have distinguished themselves in their profession in order to encourage Nigerian journalists to embrace muckraking journalists rather than mere conventional journalism.
- The paper advocates for Muckrakers Monitoring Council to be created. Membership of the council should consist of Civil Society and Media Transparency International to watchdog the muckrakers in order to eliminate the eventual excesses of muckrakers if any.

- Since it has been observed that the work of muckrakers are as daunting and hazardous like that of Nigerian Army and other security personnel, therefore, it is beholden and germane that government protects media practitioners and their media houses especially muckrakers in order to save lives and Nigerian nation from the hands corrupt elements in corridors of power. A case of Boko Haram bombarding. This Day and the Sunday Newspaper houses should be a wakeup call for the executive arm of government to protect members of the Fourth Estate of the Realm.
- Journalistic reportage on corruption should transcend mere rhetoric but compels the three aims of government to collectively seek ways to sincerely punish the master mind the maladies be derailing the growth of socioeconomic and political climate of Nigeria nation.
- The paper also advocates that Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN) and Nigeria Guide of Editors (NGE) should place muckraking journalism on the front burner in their scheme of things rather the ongoing “rat race” among them on who gets robust contracts and advertorials from highly placed government officials and business moguls. This type of journalism, no doubts, jettisons muckraking journalism because “he who pays the piper dictates the tune”.
- The ongoing unquenchable thirst of many reputable journalists to serve as “spin doctors” for titans in government of Nigeria and corporate organizations should be discouraged because this syndrome has the potential to gag media practitioners. Consequently, leads to a fettered media reportage. This journalistic syndrome can as well turn journalists as mere government or corporate megaphones. Indeed, this is a major bane of muckraking in Nigerian polity. Thus, Nigerian journalists need to make a radical departure from the syndrome of spin doctor journalism.
- The paper also recommends for establishment of special court to prosecute corrupt-minded personalities in the corridors of power in-order to speed up delivery of justice to Nigerian Nation. This court should consist of members of civil society, muckrakers and the judiciary.

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