

**FROM
"NIGERIA"
TO "NAIJIRIA"**



PROBLEM SOLVED!



THE OKALI SEMINAL IDEAS FOUNDATION FOR AFRICA (OSIFA)



-the first ideas were in Africa

THE OKALI SEMINAL IDEAS FOUNDATION FOR AFRICA (OSIFA®)

OSIFA is a not-for-profit Foundation dedicated to fostering a culture of ideas within African societies, and, by so doing, ending the continent's "ideas-dependency", while reclaiming its intellectual dignity. The fundamental premise is that "Ideas beget action, and action then begets progress"; ideas matter, in short, if Africa is to progress!

OSIFA thus seeks a stronger presence of Africa in the world of ideas.

Founder's Vision Statement:

"I want us Africans to be able not only to catch our own fish, but, more importantly, to figure out what to do should the river dry up, and, even better still, how to keep the river from drying up."

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Founder-chairman



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ISSUE

A simple, but critical adjustment needs to be made expeditiously to the name “NIGERIA”, as explained below.

PROBLEM: FIFA World Cup Embarrassment

Nigeria is being badly hurt in the international arena by the constant and recurring confusion between NIGERIA and NIGER, between what is “**Nigerian**”(i.e. pertaining to NIGERIA) and what is “**Nigerien**”(pertaining to NIGER). This confusion, often coming to the fore during major international events, was manifested **again** at the Opening Ceremony of the ongoing FIFA World Cup. As reported by Yahoo Sports, the flag of Niger was displayed in place of that of Nigeria, thereby subjecting us to acute embarrassment, if not humiliation, at this most-watched and most-anticipated event on the planet!

PROBLEM: “Nigger Area”Quandary

Confusion with “NIGER” is not the only problem with “NIGERIA”. A second, and to some more serious, problem is that the word can be associated with the racially derogatory term “NIGGER”. In many languages (e.g. Germanic and

African), NIGERIA is pronounced as “NEEGGERIA”, which suggests “NIGGER AREA”. This is most uncomfortable, bearing in mind that NIGERIA itself is a derivation from “NIGER AREA”!Nor does it help that the official symbol for Nigeria in such international organizations as FIFA is “NGA” (NIGA? NIGGER AREA?).

PROBLEM: Zero Authenticity and Colonial Antecedence

Yet another problem with the word “NIGERIA”is that it is simply NOT AFRICAN AND HAS COLONIAL CONNOTATIONS, so no particular need to protect it. Scholars can find no etymological linkage between the word “NIGER” and the language of any of the African communities living along the entire route of River Niger; even if they had, the word most definitely would have been spelled differently. African words are spelled phonetically the way they are pronounced, and vice versa (which “NIGER” and “NIGERIA” are not). What seems likely, therefore, is that “NIGER” derives in fact from the Latin word for “black” (Niger). A nation of Nigeria's stature and leadership position in Africa should, after 100 years, have a name that looks and sounds African, and without obvious colonial connotations!

Niger or Nigeria?

Opening ceremony showcases wrong flag



The opening ceremony organizers displayed the wrong flag while announcing Nigeria on Thursday. Instead of Nigeria's flag, it projected an image of Niger's flag onto the globe at midfield during the ceremony.

Twitter user Cameron Lawr pointed out the blunder.

SOLUTION

There is a simple, effective and almost no-cost solution to all of these problems: CHANGE THE WAY OUR COUNTRY'S NAME IS SPELLED (i.e. WRITTEN) FROM "NIGERIA" to "NAIJIRIA". This solution, which only changes the written spelling, BUT NOT THE PRONUNCIATION of our name, will separate us both alphabetically, and visually, from NIGER, thereby ending the confusion. Interestingly, too, it will put us on top of the "N" category of countries in the alphabetical list, thus enhancing our visibility. The same simple measure will also solve the "Nigger Area" problem once and for all, as it is impossible to read "Nigger" into "Naijiria", and it will effectively Africanize our name, since this is the way the name would be written in an African language. Incidentally, the result will also align our name with our currency, which is the "NAIRA" and not the "NIRA". Also critical in this context is the attitude of our youth; already familiar with the term "Naija", they will presumably also embrace "Naijiria".

CONCLUDING APPEAL: Critical Task At Hand

Distinguished Delegates of the National Conference, As you grapple with weighty issues of great political and practical consequence, especially on the domestic front, you also have the opportunity and, dare we suggest, the responsibility to solve some serious practical problems for our nation in the international arena, such as the ones described above. Additionally, it may be observed that an idea such as the one presented here enriches the work of the Conference by bringing to it the dimension of idealism - idealism that lifts us beyond our everyday material concerns to a higher level of aspiration, that inspires our youth to believe in Nigeria as a great and progressive African nation that actually stands for something! Granted, it is not easy to leave behind what one has been used-to for so long, but all progress involves change!

We at OSIFA call on the National Conference to do the country and posterity a favour, and in the process enhance its own legacy, by initiating this much-needed change that will spare the country further set-backs and embarrassment in the international arena!