

THE PODIUM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



FLAG-OFF AND UNVEILING REPORT

OUR VISION:

To bring dignity and hope to the downtrodden and vulnerable in our society.

OUR MISSION:

To carry out an advocacy driven by passion

www.derlif.org 

PARTNERS:



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

DE-REAL LIFE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION (DERLIF) wishes to acknowledge all the persons and organisations that contributed in one way or the other to make this launch possible.

In no particular order we would like to appreciate all our partners, **The European Union, The German Embassy, The Nigerian Correctional Service, IshK Tolaram Foundation, The Kukah Centre, Federal Ministry of Justice** for their continued support.

Our gratitude also goes to the Rivers State Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth Development, Dr Rowland Obed-Whyte for find time to grace our occasion. Of great importance is the Deputy Controller, A. Etim, the officer in charge of PH Medium Correctional Centre, who also found time to attend this event. We would not be able to thank Prof. Innime Righteous, Vice Chancellor of Highstone Global University Texas, USA, enough for his continuous support.

Our thanks also go to all the speakers and keynote addresses presenters and well as the goodwill messages we received, which include the following Prof Edward Ezedike, of the Department of Philosophy University of Port Harcourt, Dr Israel Mkpao, of the Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Dr. Bigman Nwabueze of the Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt,

Barr. Ms. Bukola Martins-Daniel of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Rivers State Branch, Dr. Nduka Wonu, Department of Mathematics & Statistics, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, PH and the host of many others.



CONTENT

- 1 Opening Prayers
- 2 Welcome Remark
- 3 Goodwill Messages
- 4 Unveiling of the Podium
- 5 Keynote Addresses
- 6 Vote of Thanks
- 7 Appendix

*Opening
Prayer*



*Welcome
Remark*

THE OPENING PRAYERS

The opening prayer was handled by a seasoned Christian leader, bible teacher and an academic, Pst. Dr. Israel Mkpao who prayed for the smooth launching of the programme as well as the safety and security of everyone at



the venue.



WELCOME REMARK

The convener and CEO of De Real Life International Foundation (DERLIF), Ambassador Felix Akpoi welcomed the participants to **The Podium for Social Justice** event and gave the reasons or what informed its establishment or launching. Among others he disclosed that **The Podium** was mainly established to propagate social justice in the society.

He opined that there are many victims of one social injustice or the other. Many according to him are languishing in several correctional facilities who are guiltless of any crime.



He further gave the modalities for the operations of **The Podium for Social Justice** to be mainly a social media platform for the discussion of national social justice issues.

The convener and director of the REAL LIFE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION (DERLIF), Ambassador Felix Akpoi, apologized for starting the programme behind schedule and regretted that some guests who couldn't wait till the starting of the programme had to leave because of other pressing issues.



to intimate the audience on some of the activities and achievements of the Foundation. He declared that the Foundation motto is Value for Human Life in every phase in it. This according to his was what inform their carrying out reformation activities to several prisons and prisoners at Kuje, Suleija, Keffi, Port Harcourt etc.

He used the medium to convey the goodwill messages from three of DERLIF partners, The Country Representative for United Nations on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), The European Union Ambassador and the Ambassador of Germany to Nigeria, who for one reason or the other could not make it to the event.

Giving an insight to why he is passionate about prisoners' welfare and living, he explained that as contained in his book, THE INNOCENT PRISONER, launched in December 2022, that so many people being in the prison are circumstantial who are completely innocent.

After putting the audience on lighter and relaxed mood by cracking a joke copied from his mentor Bishop Matthew Kukah, he declared that THE PODIUM was not a merry-making activity but its essence was to find ways of solving the societal ills, easing some of the difficulties on the society. The Podium according to him is aimed at enforcing social justice in the society which is worldwide phenomenon, which will form the theme of all the speeches, presentations, keynote addresses, lectures etc. that will follow after his speech in this event.

He used the occasion to inform the audience that a second book was in the offing which would be titled, 'A PRISONER BUT NOT IN PRISON' explaining that prison can be either a location or situation.

Explaining further on the efforts of the Foundation, he brought to the fore the



He equally used the period

issue of the need to review the Prison Act to reflect the current realities especially with a goal to decongesting the prisons. He explained further that they went as far as partnering with a Chinese organisation to remodel the prisons to give them a modern touch whereby there apart from its conducive environment, there will be cottage industries within the prisons for prisoners to learn one trade or the other in order to be useful in the society on release. Unfortunately, this idea was opposed by the law makers

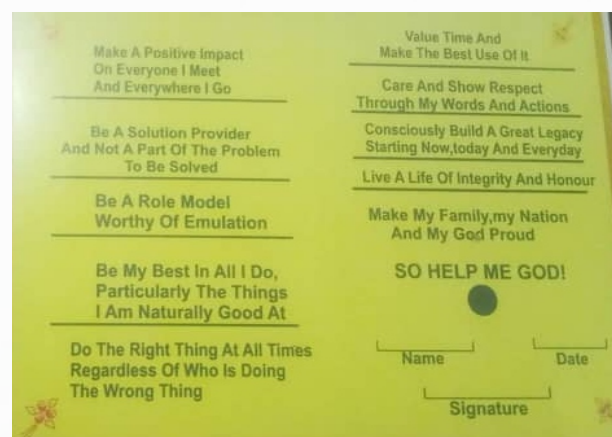


on the ground that it would easily encourage crime giving our hard economy.

Apart from the prisons, the impact of the Foundation is also felt in other sectors of the society. DERLIF also promotes social justice in education, educational prosperity, gender equality, religious tolerance etc.



He ended his speech by calling the audience to commit themselves to ensuring social justice in their sphere of influence in the society by voicing and signing THE PERSONAL CREED CARD, a copy is attached herewith.





Goodwill Message

GOODWILL MESSAGE

by Dr Rowland Obed-Whyte,
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Youth



The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Youth Development in the State, Dr Rowland Obed-Whyte, said he came to the programme against all odds. Ordinarily according to him, for an invite of this type to sail through in the Ministry, the organizers would have to come and have some meetings with the ministry to convince them about the importance of the programme to the Ministry before they will come. He said that he only saw the invite on his table and decided to come because the vision and mission of the programme are in line with the Ministry's activities.

In his speech he said the ministry is doing the same thing about developing youths in Rivers

State to be self-sustaining and not only those in the prisons. He added that since the days of Charles Colington in the USA, social justice has been an issue. He observed attempts have been made to solve the problem through distributive, restorative justice etc. However, according to him, there are pillars and pivots to this social justice. Human rights, access, participation, equity etc have been spoken about. Specifically, he stressed that there is difference between equity and equality. While many would want everybody to be treated the same, he observed that that should not mean someone who has a PhD and another who doesn't should be treated the same.

He observed that one area that Social Justice has not been emphasized is the Civil Service especially in recruitment and retirement of civil servants. He is opposed to the elongation of years of service to 65 years to 70 years which would mean that youths would have no space to fill as the aged have refused to leave.

How do we enforce social justice? He lamented the situation of Nigeria especially with respect to our General Elections where these social justice is lacking. All attempts to use the civil servants, youth corps members, lecturers etc. to conduct elections have not solved the problem of rigging. To him the solution may be adopting strict legislation with penalties such as amputation etc. as it is being done by some countries to serve as a deterrent to others.

He advised all not to give up and that we all have a duty to carry out. He believes the adoption of the social media as (THE PODIUM) is being launched today can help out in effecting justice in the society, citing a case of a police officer who was brought to book for slapping a young man and his girlfriend when there was a backlash from the social media. He advised the organizers to always involve the government in their activities like this so that other ministries e.g. health, social welfare would benefit from their rich presentations.





Unveiling Of The Podium

UNVEILING OF THE PODIUM

The PODIUM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE was formally unveiled led by the host, Amb Felix Akpoi and dignitaries present including, Dr Rowland Obed-Whyte, Permanent Secretary, Rivers State Ministry of Youth Development, Prof Righteous, Vice Chancellor of



Texas University, Prof Edward Ezedike, Department of Philosophy University of Port Harcourt, Dr Bigman Nwabueze of the Department of Sociology, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education Port Harcourt, Dr Nduka Wonu of the Department of Mathematics & Statistics,

Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Dr Israel Mkpaoro of the Deeper Christian Life Ministry Port Harcourt, Barr. Ms. Bukola M

artins-Daniel of the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) Rivers State Branch and others were on ground when THE PODIUM was unveiled.



The background image shows a blurred scene of a conference or meeting. In the foreground, a table is covered with a light green cloth, featuring a microphone, a glass of water, and some papers. A person's hand is visible holding a small bouquet of yellow flowers. In the background, several people are seated at tables. A large, semi-transparent circular graphic is centered on the page, consisting of a dark blue inner circle and a light blue outer ring. The text 'Keynote Addresses' is written in a white, elegant script font across the dark blue circle.

Keynote Addresses

KEYNOTE ADDRESS -1

"THE PODIUM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE."

The Speech Delivered by Dr. Bigman Nwabueze on the Occasion of the Unveiling of The Podium by De-Real Life International Foundation on July 5, 2023, at Golden Tulip Hotel, Evo Road, Port Harcourt. Protocol

Thank you for having me here today as one of your guest speakers. I stand before you to discuss a topic of utmost importance in today's interconnected world: "The Podium for Social Justice." We find ourselves at a crucial crossroads where social media platforms have the capacity to influence narratives, mobilize communities, and propel positive change. In an age where information spreads at the press of a button and activism takes new forms, we find ourselves at a vital juncture. The Podium that we are unveiling today is well-suited to fill that role in a really impressive manner. There is no one definition of social justice, yet inclusion and fairness are the overarching objectives of most



ideologies. They offer forth a collection of moral guidelines for a just society in order to fulfil those **objectives**. These principles may include:

Access: One of the most fundamental tenets of social justice is equal access to social goods. According to this, everyone in society should have equal access to resources. For instance, many social justice theorists think that everyone should have equal access to chances for employment, healthcare, and education. By making certain that everyone has access to these resources, public employees can uphold this concept.

Equity: The idea of equity holds that everyone should have an equal chance to achieve, regardless of any prior wrongdoings or institutional prejudice. This could imply that resources are allocated to meet the particular requirements of poor communities and individuals.

Diversity: Government and business leaders should be broadly representative





channels for coordination, communication, and awareness-building.

The following are a few ways The Podium can advance social justice:

- Increasing the volume of marginalized voices: Social media gives traditionally marginalized or silenced people and communities a voice and a place to tell their stories. People can raise awareness and create empathy among a large audience by using social media to highlight issues like racism, sexism, and more.
- Activating communities: Social media makes it possible for information to spread quickly, making it easier to plan protests, rallies, and other types of group actions. A larger collective voice and more mobilization can be achieved by activists by organizing events, disseminating information, and inviting others to take part.
- Enabling cross-border connections: Social media platforms enable communication and cooperation

of the populations they serve, according to the diversity principle. This means that minority communities should be equitably represented in public institutions, in addition to having women and people of colour in positions of power. This principle may, on a policy level, mean prohibiting discrimination or offering resources in several ways.

Participation: The idea of participation holds that everyone in a community should have a say in major decisions. In many countries, a select few influential individuals make decisions about public policy without consulting the groups they represent.

This might unintentionally exclude a significant portion of the community. By speaking with advocates for minority populations and taking into account their interests, public leaders can solve this weakness.

Rights of People: Human rights are the last and possibly most important social justice principle. It also calls for freedom from police brutality, respect for one's reproductive rights, and bodily autonomy in addition to political rights like freedom of conscience. Social media platforms have had a big impact on social justice movements by opening up new



among people and organizations from all over the world. By bringing together many perspectives, this globalization of activism promotes unity, encourages the sharing of tools and tactics, and broadens the impact of action.



- Sharing multiple narratives and viewpoints: While traditional media frequently reinforces prejudices and preconceptions, social media offers an alternative forum for sharing diverse narratives and counter-dominant narratives. People may challenge established biases and promote a more inclusive understanding of social justice issues by sharing their own stories, living experiences, and points of view.
- Making institutions responsible for their actions or policies: Social media has the capacity to make corporations and people responsible for their decisions and actions. Through social media campaigns, the general public can exert pressure on businesses, governments, and other significant institutions to be accountable, transparent, and just.
- Promoting educational opportunities: Social media platforms function as educational instruments, giving users access to data, materials, and instructional material on social justice-related topics. Online courses, webinars, and discussions given by experts can aid in promoting social justice consciousness among the public and educating them about the issue.
- Fostering solidarity and allyship: By

drawing attention to shared issues and encouraging allyship, social media can encourage a sense of unity among disparate populations. It enables people to express support, exchange resources, and have a conversation in order to advance inclusivity, respect, and understanding.

- Empowering grassroots movements: Social media enables smaller, less resource-rich organizations to reach a bigger audience. These venues give them the chance to become more well-known, win support, and develop networks of cooperation, which increases the impact they have on social justice concerns.
- Resource Mobilization and Fundraising: Social media platforms have developed into effective instruments for resource mobilization and fundraising for social justice issues. Online appeals, donation platforms, and crowdfunding campaigns have made it possible for people and groups to communicate with their fans directly and raise money for their projects. As a result, initiatives and programs have become easier to implement and social justice movements' financial viability has risen.

- Influence on Public Opinion and Policy: Social media has a significant influence on public opinion and policy. It has the power to sway public opinion, contest prevailing theories, and affect the conversation. Public perceptions of equality, human rights, and other important social concerns have been impacted by the extensive sharing of information, stories, and facts via social media, which has put pressure on governments to solve social justice issues.



The Podium will prove to be a potent weapon in the struggle for social justice, to sum up. The landscape of activism will change as a result of its potential to elevate underrepresented voices, activate communities, and promote speedy information sharing. However, we must proceed cautiously and vigilantly when dealing with social media's negative aspects, such as the dissemination of false information, cyberbullying, performative allyship, and filter bubbles. We must utilize The Podium properly, assess the information we come across critically, and have intelligent, courteous conversations. We can create a future where social justice

is actually within everyone's reach by utilizing The Podium's great potential while resolving its problems. Everybody must be involved in the fight for social justice because as they say in labour circles, "Injury to one is injury to all". Martin Niemoller who was a Lutheran pastor in Germany initially sympathized with and supported Nazi ideas and was later to spend eight years in Nazi prisons and concentration camps said this after World War II. **"First, they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist then they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me".**



Ladies and gentlemen, join me to congratulate De-Real Life International Foundation for the unveiling of The Podium today as we utilize its power to transform narratives, empower communities, and create a more just society.

Thank you all and God bless.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS -2

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN MOBILIZING SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS

by **Nduka Wonu, PhD**, Department of Mathematics/Statistics, IAUE PH.

Definitions

Social Media:

Online platforms and programmes that allow users to generate and share content, and have emerged as vital social change instruments.

Social Justice:

The principle of treating all individuals in society fairly and equally, regardless of their history, identity, or socioeconomic standing. Addressing systemic inequities, fighting for marginalised groups, and working to



create a more equitable and inclusive society.

Research Justification:

- Empowering activism through social media.
- Amplifying voices and sparking global conversations.
- Leveraging social media for positive change.



- Learning from successful campaigns.
- Ethical considerations and responsible engagement.
- Redefining social change through digital platforms.
- Harnessing social media for equity and systemic change.

Aim and objectives

Aim: The paper aims to investigate the influence of social media in mobilising social justice movements through the analysis of successful campaigns

Objectives: The specific goals are to:

- identify the strategies used by effective social justice movements in mobilising through social media platforms.
- investigate the tactics employed by these initiatives to engage and energise online communities, promoting solidarity and raising awareness of social justice problems.
- investigate the outcomes and influence of social media activism on policy changes, public discourse, and societal attitudes towards social justice causes.

- examine critically the limitations and challenges of social media activism.
- address ethical considerations related to social media advocacy.

Social Media Activism(SMA) **Definition and Significance:**

- The use of digital channels for social and political change is known as social media activism.
- It equips individuals and communities with the ability to raise awareness, mobilise support, and challenge entrenched power structures, making it a critical weapon for modern social justice movements.



Social Media: A Tool for Social Change

- It is a strong social change catalyst, giving individuals and communities unparalleled opportunities to amplify their voices, foster relationships, and mobilise worldwide support for revolutionary causes.

Successful Campaigns

#BlackLivesMatter

The Aim and Origin:

A response to racial injustice and police brutality, particularly against black individuals. It was founded in 2013 by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi. (Harvard University School of Law, 2023)

Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#BlackLivesMatter	Utilizing hashtags, powerful story telling, and viral videos	Organizing protests, sharing news, and updates	Increased public awareness, policy discussions and racial equity

#WeCantBreathe

The Aim and Origin:

A response to the death of Eric Garner, an unarmed African-American man who died in 2014 after being placed in a chokehold by a police officer in New York City. Garner's last words, "I can't breathe," became a rallying cry for the movement

Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#WeCantBreathe	Utilizing hashtags, amplifying Garner's story	Peaceful protest, sharing videos and testimonies. Community engagement, support for affected communities	Increased awareness, national and international attention, policy changes. Symbolic impact.

#MeToo:

The Aim and Origin:

It aims to raise awareness about the incidence of sexual harassment and assault while also encouraging survivors to share their stories. In **October 2017**, actress **Alyssa Milano** encouraged women to use the hashtag **#MeToo** to report their **stories of sexual harassment and assault** on social media. (Brittain, 2023)



Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#MeToo	Encouraging survivors to share experiences	Using hashtags, sharing personal stories	Sparked conversations, policy changes, and increased accountability

#FridaysForFuture:

The Aim and Origin:

This campaign, led by Swedish climate activist **Greta Thunberg**, emphasizes the critical need for **climate change** in **August 2018**. Fridays for Future (also known as School Strike for Climate) is a movement. (Thunberg, 2023).



Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#FridaysForFuture	Organizing global strikes and protests	Social media campaigns, sharing information	Increased awareness, political pressure, youth engagement

#BringBackOurGirls:

The Aim and Origin:

The campaign began in April 2014, following the kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls by the extremist group Boko Haram in Chibok, Borno State, North-East Nigeria. It was launched by Nigerian activists with the goal of putting pressure on the Nigerian government and the world community to take prompt action to rescue and return the kidnapped girls. (Partnership for African Social and Governance Research, 2023).



Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#BringBackOurGirls	Advocating for the return of kidnapped schoolgirls	Sharing photos, using hashtags, engaging influencers	Global awareness, pressure on government, rescue efforts.

#ENDSARS

The Aim and Origin:

The #ENDSARS campaign began in Nigeria and gathered traction in **October 2020**. It was a protest against the Nigerian Police Force's Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit accused of severe human rights violations, extortion, and extrajudicial killings. (Amnesty International, 2023)



Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#ENDSARS	Exposing police brutality, demanding police reform	Sharing videos, organizing protests, and online campaigns	International attention, raised awareness, government response

#ThisFlag

The Aim and Origin:

Pastor Evan Mawarire spearheaded the #ThisFlag campaign in Zimbabwe in **April 2016**. The campaign sought to address **sociopolitical issues, government corruption, and economic challenges confronting** the Zimbabwean people (Nenjerama & Mpofo, 2021).



Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#ThisFlag	Protesting against government corruption and economic hardship	Using Facebook videos, mobilizing citizens	Citizen engagement, increased awareness, political pressure

#RhodesMustFall

The Aim and Origin:

The campaign began on March 9, 2015, in South Africa as a student-led movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT). It demanded that a statue of Cecil John Rhodes, a British imperialist and colonialist, be removed from the university campus (The Guardian, March 16, 2016). Its goal was to oppose the adoration of colonial personalities and to push for decolonization in education and society.



Campaign	Strategies	Tactics	Outcome
#RhodesMustFall	Demanding the removal of colonial symbols and decolonization	Social media campaigns, protest, online petitions	Sparked nationwide debates, institutional changes, global impact

Social Media Activism Strategies

- Use of hashtags and viral content to raise awareness
- Leveraging storytelling and personal narratives
- Collaborations and partnerships with influencers and organizations
- Utilizing multimedia content (videos, images, infographics) for impact

Social Media Activism Tactics

- Online petitions and signature campaigns
- Social media challenges and calls to action
- Virtual events and live streaming for engagement
- Community building and fostering solidarity

Social Media Activism Outcomes

- Policy changes and legislative reform
- Shifts in public discourse and awareness
- Empowerment of marginalized voices
- Global reach and mobilization

Limitations and challenges

- Digital divide
- Filter bubbles and echo chambers
- Online harassment and trolling
- Limited attention span
- Lack of offline impact
- Surveillance and censorship

Ethical considerations

- Authenticity and misrepresentation
- Responsible use of hashtags/campaigns
- Digital security and safeguarding
- Consent and privacy
- Engaging in constructive dialogue

- Amplifying marginalized voices

Suggestions for effective SMA

- Educate yourself
- Verify information
- Practice inclusivity
- Foster constructive dialogue
- Use hashtags responsibly
- Respect privacy and consent
- Promote offline actions

Conclusion

- The Podium for Social Justice is a welcome development in SMA
- Social media have shown to be an effective instrument for mobilizing social justice groups and bringing about change.
- It has given marginalized voices a forum to be heard, raised awareness about important concerns, and facilitated worldwide solidarity

References

Amnesty International (2023). #ENDSARS movement: from twitter to Nigerian streets. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2021/02/nigeria-end-impunity-for-police-violence-by-sars-endsars/>

Brittain A.(2023). Me Too movement: social movement. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Me-Too-movement>

Harvard University School of Law (2023). <https://library.law.harvard.edu/civilrights/history/BLM>

PASGR (2023). New Forms of Social and Political Action: A Study of

#BringbackOurGirls, Nigeria

<https://www.pasgr.org/what-we-do/research/research-projects/bring-back-our-girls-nigeria/>

Thunberg, G.(2023). Fridays for Future: International activist movement. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Fridays-for-Future>



KEYNOTE ADDRESS -3

SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCACY THROUGH THE SOCIAL MEDIA

A brief keynote address by Professor Edward U. Ezedike, Department of Philosophy, University of Port Harcourt.

Every organized civil society is based on some kind of social contract, which entails some privileges and responsibilities. We often conceive of justice as being the state of partaking in both privileges and responsibilities of the social contract, or the constitution. However, different people have expressed different opinions about justice and this is especially evident when people do not belong to the same socio-cultural tradition or philosophy.

This provokes us to think whether there is any universal standard of justice at all or whether our conception of justice is merely a product of our social environment and conventions. Where should we look for a universal and generally accepted definition of justice?

Plato, in his Socratic dialogues, which are commonly considered the first works in political philosophy, discusses with his companions some basic political issues such as the question of social justice. In this circumstance, social justice is what we contextualize in a societal setting. It has to do with the concept of justice as it applies to human social relations. In his Republic, Plato conceives of the State or society as man writ large. This simply means that man conceived as being a composite of soul, spirit and body, is a miniature State. He challenges the commonly accepted opinions by which Athenians were governed. He seeks a definition of social justice that arises not from the traditions of a particular community, but from the universal and unchanging principles of human nature. To understand society and its operations, we must first understand human nature and the workings of the human soul. The soul represents different classes of people in society – rulers, soldiers, farmers, etc. Justice has to do with harmony in the soul, composed of the rational, spirited and appetitive parts. The rational part of the soul (reason), must be in control of the spirited and the appetitive parts, to ensure order and harmony in the system. Injustice occurs when one class usurps the function(s) of the other parts. For Plato, a disordered soul results in a disordered society.

In his Politics, Aristotle conceives of justice as that which requires that like cases should be treated the same and unlike cases differently. In other words, "equals should be treated equally, unequals unequally". For him, justice demands that each person get what he deserves. This position may not necessarily ensure social



justice because it stratifies society into equals and unequals. For example, Aristotle's concept of justice (in antiquity) excludes slaves and women from public and political life. This is not consistent with contemporary political thought and aspirations of different peoples in different societies.

John Rawls in contemporary times wrote a seminal book, *A Theory of Justice*, where he defines social justice in terms of fairness. He avers that the principles of justice are those we would choose under certain conditions of fairness. Rawls insists, because we could, presumably, rely on whatever standards of justice we could choose as free and equal rational persons acting under circumstances that were fair. The problem here is that equality does not necessarily ensure fairness and justice because humans are not equally endowed.



From the perspectives of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Rawls, it is obvious that the notion of social justice is quite complex and controversial. I must say at this juncture that justice should be defined in terms of equity, fairness and objectivity. To define justice in terms of equality may not ensure fairness because of some inherent disproportionate natural endowments, abilities and capacities of individuals in society. I think the way forward is to redefine social justice in terms equity and objective fairness.



On a different note, social justice advocacy can be promoted through different social media platforms (such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, etc.). These platforms are veritable means of promoting social justice in view of their global reach and the teeming population of netizens. This, however, must be done circumspectly without any political, religious, ethnic or cultural biases. The good of humanity must be our focus and ultimate goal.

In conclusion, I must to say that advocacy for social justice through the social media will help society to address the problems of marginalization, racism, ethnic and religious bigotry, sexism, chauvinism, class struggles and oppression, unemployment and violence. I believe social justice advocacy through the social media will help improve social inclusivity, social order and social cohesion. Furthermore, it will help eradicate social conditions of injustice, marginalization, poverty and oppression that make criminal activities attractive.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS – 4

REDUCING THE RATE OF RECIDIVISM IN NIGERIA THROUGH PRISONERS' REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION – by Dr. Israel Mkpao

INTRODUCTION / PROBLEM STATEMENT

- Recidivism is the act of a person repeating an undesirable behaviour after they have experienced negative consequences of that behaviour. It is also used to refer to the percentage of former prisoners who are rearrested for a similar offense.
- Rehabilitation & Reintegration is a major aspect of the correctional institutions.
- Its absence leads to high rate of recidivism in Nigeria which increased from 37.3% in 2005 to 52.4% in 2010 (Osayi, 2013). In 2014 alone, more than 32,000 recidivist inmates were recorded! (NBS,2016).
- This is blamed upon the following:
 - o The factors in the prison system and society tend to promote recidivism (Adelola,1988), .
 - o Difficulties in economic survival and social interactions (Adelola,1988),
 - o The current Nigerian Prison Act as outdated and being silent on the crucial service of reformation or rehabilitation (Chukwumerije (2012)).
 - o Social stigmatization in the mainstream society is also a major cause of recidivism in the Nigeria (Otu, 2015).



- The correctional institutions have become a training ground for criminals instead of rehabilitation home in Nigeria (Obioha,1995)

PROFFERED SOLUTIONS

Good rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-convicts includes:

1. Qualitative treatment of prisoners (Otu, 2015).

2. Rehabilitation programmes are handled by professionally trained rehabilitation counsellors (Adegboyega, et al., (2019)
3. Provision of educational & vocational programmes (Otu, 2015). Education has been proved to have potency of reducing recidivism by 29% (McKean and Ransford, 2004).
4. Ex-convicts are assisted to utilize the entrepreneurial skills acquired in prison (Adegboyega, et al., (2019)
5. Periodic evaluation of prison reformation and rehabilitation programme to ensure that the goals are being achieved (Adegboyega, et al., (2019)
6. Collaboration between all law criminal justice partners (Doug,2010)
7. Organizational development in which all organizations involved must be encouraged to be on the same page and buy into the same plan (Doug,2010)
8. All partners involved must be engaged in evidence-based practices (Doug,2010)
9. Transfer of inmates to facilities in their own communities before release will reduce recidivism rate (Lerer and Stahly-Butt, 2013)
10. Rehabilitation and reintegration should start on the communities where the prisoners would be released into so as to reduce social stigmatization in the mainstream society which is a major cause of recidivism in the Nigeria (Otu, 2015).
11. Prison authorities and other stakeholders should be engaged in helping inmates to adjust to conditions outside of prison and be able to deal with the common challenges they may face upon release.



The solution can be executed through, Pre-Prison, In-Prison and Out-of-Prison activities as outlined below:

(I) PRE-PRISON PROGRAMMES

These are Community Based Programmes that are aimed at reducing their stigmatization upon release:

- Target Programmes: Seminars and Workshops etc. aimed at preparing them to receive the ex-convicts upon release.
- Target Audiences: Traditional rulers and opinion leaders (like Youth and CDC leaders).
- Target Activities: these include
 - Ø Collate list of prisoners, communities of origin, their expected dates of release and their preferred addresses to be released into
 - Ø Visit to the communities to secure permissions from the community and opinion leaders
 - Ø Profile the communities to ensure the



ex-convicts are not released to join criminal gangs etc.

- Organise seminars and workshops in the communities on their expected support to ex-convicts and repentant criminals Set up community support groups for released convicts from prisons
- Organise seminars and workshops to prison officials to sensitize them

(II) **IN-PRISON PROGRAMMES**

They include but not limited to the following

1. **Job Skills Workshops** - These sessions are aimed at equipping inmates with requisite skills that will help them to become either employable or self-employed as entrepreneurs.



- Conduct sessions of interview/assessment of the inmates to establish their capability levels and preferred vocations. Each inmate shall be assessed on what he or she loves doing, which will be very useful to "self-motivate" him/her (Doug, 2010).
- Classify and allocate the in-mates to their preferred skills.
- Training of the in-mates in the various preferred skills sets which shall include but not limited to the following: ICT, Tailoring, Welding & Fabrication, Confectionaries, Hairdressing, Furniture, Mechanics etc.
- Graduate and award of certificates of completion

2. **Counselling Services** - The prison condition is likely to affect the in-mates psyche, thus making some of them on release to consider suicide, recidivism etc. Counselling will make those of them struggling with a dark past find brighter days ahead and assist the ex-convicts who have served their various jail terms in building new lives as productive and responsible members of their respective communities. The counselling sessions which shall be conducted every week shall focus on:

- The need to accept the realities before them as inmates
- How to move on in life
- What they should expect after their release
- The need to prepare for release through skills acquisition etc.
- How to reintegrate into the society

The effectiveness of the counselling shall be evaluated through feedback mechanisms which should be put in place.

3. **Educational Programs**

- Education has been proved to have potency of reducing recidivism by 29% (McKean and Ransford, 2004).
- It addresses the needs of released prison inmates to possess the



necessary skills that will help in finding and retaining employment.

- Where possible educational programme should facilitate the enrolment of ex-convicts into programmes of the closest National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN)
- The various courses available should be made known for them to choose.



- Career counselling should be handy to guide them in their choices of courses based on their capabilities and inclinations.

4. **Faith-Based Programs**

- This is another antidote to recidivism because it provides various religious organisations with opportunities to interact with prison inmates.
- McKean and Ransford claimed that some faith-based programmes and activities have actually reduced recidivism rate by as much as 50 or even 60 percent!
- Prison officials shall be encouraged to allow this access to inmates.

5. **Mental and Physical Health Programs**

- Because of the deplorable conditions found in Nigerian prisons, inmates easily fall sick and need medical intervention (Akpoi, 2023).
- Our medical outreaches shall close this gap in conjunction with the available prison medical facilities.

(III) **OUT-OF-PRISON PROGRAMMES**

These programmes shall be executed after the release of the in-mates.

1. **Ongoing Support Programs**

- Once the offender is discharged and acquitted, a community ongoing support should be sustained to ensure that they stay away from crime propelling environments and friends to avoid the risk of relapsing.

2. **Call Centres Establishment**

- A call centre should be established for the purpose of responding to their needs until they are able to fully stand on their feet.



3. Employment Services Programs

- These would address the need of inmates that have been discharged and acquitted in order to help them to be gainfully employed.
- Out-of-prison employment services will include: Career development seminars, Job preparedness coaching, Resume writing, Job interviews preparations etc.
- These services will help the inmates to be prepared for job and consequently be well placed in the world of works with limited or no chance of relapsing into criminal act.

References

Adegboyega, L., Idowu, O., & Idowu, A. (2019). Suggested Solutions to Recidivism by Prison Officers in Kwara State, Nigeria. *Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counselling: Theory and Application*, 8(2), 81-90. <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijgc.v8i2.32144>

Adelola, I.O.A, (1988) Pull-Push Factors of Recidivism in the Nigerian Prison System. *Indian Journal of Criminology* Volume: 16 Issue: 2 Dated: (July 1988) Pages: 139-146

Akpoi, F. (2023), *The Innocent Prisoner*, Gospel Warehouse Press, Port Harcourt, Nigeria.

Chukwumerije, U. (2012). Explanatory Memorandum on Amendment of Prison Act. (On-line: <http://www.Senatorchukwumerije/id63html>)

Lerer, T. & Stahly-Butts, M. (2013). Approach to reducing recidivism: Model state survey. Criminal Justice Clinic, Jerome N. Frank Legal Services Organization, Yale, USA. USA 12 REFERENCES

McKean, L. & Ransford, C. (2004). Current Strategies for Reducing Recidivism. Center for Impact Research. 926 N. Wolcott Chicago, Illinois.

National Bureau for Statistics (NBS) (2016), Crime Statistics: Nigerian Prisons, Retrieved from <https://nigerianstat.gov.ng/elibrary/read/379>

Obioha, E. E, (1995), Prison Culture in Nigeria: A study of life within Agodi Prison Community, Ibadan, M.Sc Dissertation Unpublished, Ibadan: Department of Sociology, University of Ibadan

Osayi, K. (2013). Socio-Cultural Factors Affecting Reintegration of Discharged Prisoners in Anambra State, South East, Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(10), 775. Retrieved from <https://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/view/1261/1290>

Otu, M. S.: (2015), Analysis of Causes and Effects of Recidivism in the Nigerian Prison System, *International Journal of Development and Management Review (INJODEMAR)* Vol.10 June, 2015



KEYNOTE ADDRESS – 5

Social Justice - Problems And Solutions

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF WOMEN LAWYERS (FIDA) RIVERS STATE BRANCH
PRESENTATION PAPER ON “**SOCIAL JUSTICE**”

PRESENTED BY BUKOLA MARTINS-DANIEL

Introduction



Social justice at its most basic definition is the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Social justice envisions a society, community, country, nation and world that upholds the rights of every human being, encourages fair play, equality, lack of discrimination, equity, impartiality and justice.

Social justice is a concept that is well known and has been a subject of discussion at the international, national and local levels. The absence of social justice leads to a society wherein there is high level of corruption, inequality, discrimination, abuse of power and classism. In Nigeria, there are several well recognized challenges and flaws in our social, economic and political structure. The environment is one where social justice is hardly recognized or even acknowledged. This has made initiatives such as “**THE PODIUM**” a timely

construct to help tackle these challenges and ensure a just society for all.

In this paper, we would be discussing not the problems that plague Nigeria and the absence of social justice in our society but would be discussing the solution to these challenges. It involves looking at the 3 main concepts of social justice which are:

1. **EQUALITY**
2. **EQUITY**
3. **ENFORCEMENT**

We would be taking an in-depth look at the measures to enforce social justice in our society and this begins with a detailed analysis of what **THE PODIUM** could stand for as a tool to tackle these challenges.

The PODIUM for social justice could represent the following enforcement techniques:

P – POLICY

O – ORIENTATION

D – DIVERSITY & INCLUSION I – INFORMATION U – UNITY



Policy

Policies are very important in the discussion and enforcement of social justice. Policies ensure that there are rules and regulations guiding economic, social and political activities. It ensures that the society does not run amok or contrary to laid down principles of natural justice and good conscience. Policies also involve LAWS and these LAWS are the



driving tool that ensure enforcement. Without Laws, there can be no way to enforce punishment of crime or infringement of rights. This is encapsulated in the maxim *Nullum crimen sine lege* which is the principle in criminal law and international criminal law that a person cannot or should not face criminal punishment except for an act that was criminalized by law before he/she performed the act.

In Nigeria, there has been a recent trend of Laws or amendment to already existing laws to ensure that social justice prevails and is enforced. However, there is also the place of the people, community and stakeholders being an active and integral part of the process of the creation of these policies and laws. There should be a mechanism in place to involve the people in the legislative process, in the laws that affect them. In Nigeria, this is sadly lacking and this can be one of the vital tools that THE PODIUM can create awareness on.

With the enforcement of policies and laws, the judicial arm of the government has a lot to play and this would start by ensuring the integrity of Judges, the unbiased treatment of matters assigned to them. It also involves proper remuneration for



judges and ensuring that the process of selection and nomination of Judges is devoid of government interference. Some suggested policies that THE PODIUM can advocate for are:

1. Training, re-training, appraisal and higher

recruitment standards of police officers and other enforcement agencies.

2. The minimum requirement for all Prosecutors in all judicial division should be a person who has a legal background and has been called to the Nigerian bar. This is to ensure professionalism.

3. There should be the creation of special courts to hear and determine sexual and domestic violence cases. This is to ensure speedy trial and not to retraumatize the victims with long adjournments, societal scrutiny and exposure.

4. There should be better policies and laws in place to tackle corruption and provide for a better electoral process.

It is also important to note that policies are only effective when they are known. For example, during one of our advocacy programs on the radio, we discovered that a lot of women had no idea about the Rivers State Prohibition of the Curtailment of



Women's Right to Share in Family Property Law No. 2 of 2022 signed into law by the former Rivers State governor, Nyesom Ezenwo Wike. This law is vital to curb the rate of disinheritance of women which occurs in Rivers State. This spurred advocacy to inform the public of this law and other laws that protect women. Therefore, it is important that advocacy go hand in hand with policy making.

Orientation

Orientation has to do with mindset, the way people think. It is the driving force behind most behaviors and actions. It is also the most powerful tool for change. There is a popular saying that "It is better to teach a man how to fish than to give him fish". The first tool to tackling societal ills, injustice, discrimination, bias, inequality, racism, religious and ethnic sentiments is to employ full scale advocacy to re-orient the mind of Nigerians and to encourage social justice. Thankfully, one of those advocacy platforms should be "The PODIUM". Orientation should be one of the major foci points of advocacy initiatives. One of the ways this can be achieved



is by targeting young Nigerians and children, creating an atmosphere of pride and strong loyalty to Nigeria in them. This can be done by creating subjects that students can learn right from Nursery school, teaching them love and support for country, integrity, love for humanity and social justice. In Nigeria, we hardly ever think or prepare for the generational effect. We think of the present and that is why policies, laws and actions are taken which fail after some time. It is time we all think like statesmen and have generational leaders with impact.

It is also important that in the promotion of social justice, the orientation of people



to its ideal is made a focus. This would impact positively on the high level of religious/ethnic sentiment, inequality, corruption, abuse of power and inequality experienced in Nigeria. THE PODIUM should be this driving force and should have its own hashtag - #THEPODIUM which would represent the ideals of social justice in Nigeria.

Diversity & Inclusion

One of the key concepts of social justice is ensuring that there is equality, diversity and inclusiveness in the society. A society where everyone has a voice, equal rights to opportunities and are not excluded based on gender, religion, race, ethnicity, colour, age or disability. It is important, vital and imperative that THE PODIUM be used to encourage diversity and inclusion especially of minority and vulnerable groups in society.



One of those focal groups are WOMEN. Women have been subject to discrimination especially in climes like Nigeria. Women have been denied rights such as education, inheritance, economic and political empowerment, and even though giant strides have been made in recent times, there is still a lot of room for improvement. Women should be encouraged through policies, advocacies and inclusivity to be at the corridors of power where decisions are being made. They



should have the right to full economic benefits and aspiration without prejudice or social sentiments.

Social justice cannot thrive without diversity and inclusion of everyone regardless of any perceived difference. This is

the only way to thrive as a society and encourage social justice.

Information

Information is key in policy formulation and implementation. It is unfortunate that in Nigeria there is a lack of concrete database. Any society that does not invest in capturing and procuring data is heading for poor policy making and implementation. This is not only restricted to government alone, but it also affects private institutions and NGOs.



There needs to be a culture of harnessing data in every institution. For example, in FIDA Rivers Branch, there is an online database to capture the number of complaints, mediation, litigious matters and concluded matter by month, year and case description. This data can be easily accessed by interested people. The importance of information and data can never be overemphasized and it is one of the ways of monitoring the effectiveness of polices geared towards social justice. It is difficult to quantify the level of inequality, discrimination, criminality and injustice in the society without relevant information and data. For example, the primal focus of De Real Life International Foundation which is prison reform can be a veritable tool for prison database in Nigeria. This can capture the number of awaiting trial inmates, those wrongly incarcerated, the number of prisoners in each state across the country and state of prison facilities in Nigeria. This would be very helpful in ensuring that there are quantifiable ways of determining the success or otherwise of measure for prison reforms and make the Foundation in

prime position for support from the government and international community. THE PODIUM would also be an advocacy program to ensure that these reforms are discussed and implemented.



Unity

The society cannot function where there is division and rancour. Social justice begins with a unified society for that purpose. In Nigeria, one of our major problem is division along ethnic, tribal and religious lines. From the agitations in the East by the Indigenous people of Biafra, to the cry of the people from the South-South region on economic divide and to the religious agitations from some sect in the North, there are a lot of divisive instruments in play. There is a popular saying that a house divided cannot stand and in this case, there needs to be coalition, collaboration and teamwork geared towards the advancement of social justice.



Therefore, it is important that these issues be tackled and there be a unified position by government, individuals, communities, private institutions and NGOs to promote and encourage social justice.

Motivate and Empower



Social justice has at its core the need to ensure that everyone has equal access to opportunities. This could be economic, social and political. This simply means giving everyone a platform to economic advancement. One of the major reasons why crime is on the rise in Nigeria can be attributed to poor economic standard of living, The society cannot talk of social

justice without discussing the root causes of the inequalities, discrimination and injustice. Tackling the root causes is imperative in promoting social justice.

It is important that people are empowered and motivated to succeed, be productive and a contributing member of society. There needs to be empowerment schemes, access to education and mental health awareness that would give the people a sense of purpose, tackle poverty, productivity as a country and ensure the wellbeing of its citizens. This is the reason why platforms such as THE PODIUM is vital in ensuring that this is achieved.

Conclusion

De Real Life International Foundation needs to be applauded on this initiative called "THE PODIUM FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE" which signifies a platform to ensure that social justice is achieved in Nigeria through the use of social media. In recent times, we have all come to acknowledge the power of social media and the use of it as a veritable tool to fight injustice. The need to use technology and social media to promote social justice is not only a welcome development but a needed one.



We therefore applaud the organisers and convener of this initiative and encourage them to keep the flame burning and pursue this cause with all diligence as we all strive to achieve social justice.

Appendix

APPENDIX



DE-REAL LIFE INTERNATIONAL FOUNDATION (DERLIF) PROFILE

- ❑ A not-for-profit organisation incorporated in Nigeria with a mission to carry out an advocacy driven by passion for souls held behind bars.
- ❑ Our Vision is to bring dignity and hope to prison communities in Africa and beyond
- ❑ Our Mission is to reach inmates with vocational, relief materials, medical, & counselling assistance across Africa & beyond:
 - To facilitate their seamless rehabilitation and reintegration into the society
 - To show love, care and support to prison inmates and destitute
 - To advance social development
 - To bring hope to the hopeless
 - To foster educational and poverty eradication

Action Plans of DERLIF

These are achieved through our 4-prong action plans, namely

- ❑ Vocational & Other Trainings - provision of basic education/vocational skill to the downtrodden/vulnerable in our society. Empowering inmates through vocational training for successful reintegration into the society upon release. This also includes training programs for Nigerian prison staff on prison management and security related courses.
- ❑ Counselling Assistance - Providing guidance and support to prisoners through life ministry and counselling to re-orientate prisoners before their release
- ❑ Relief Materials Provision - Bringing comfort and aid to those impacted by incarceration through donations of essential relief materials.
- ❑ Medical Outreach - Access to healthcare is a basic human right. Support our medical outreach efforts to save lives



Provision of Relief Materials



A Medical Personnel during our Medical Outreach



Vocational Training Session



Counselling Session

S/N	Location	Date	Description	Remarks
1	Lafia, Nassarawa State	2019	Provision of Relief Materials	
2	Keffi, Nassarawa state	2020	Provision of Relief Materials	
3	Suleija, Niger State	2021	Provision of Relief Materials	
4	Lafia, Nassarawa State	2019	Vocational Training Session	
5	Keffi, Nassarawa State	2020	Vocational Training Session	
6	Suleija, Niger State	2021	Vocational Training Session	
7	Keffi, Nassarawa State	May, 2019	Medical Outreach	
8	Lafia, Nassarawa State	May, 2019	Medical Outreach	
9	Suleija, Niger State	Aug 2019	Medical Outreach	
10	Bida, Niger State	Aug 2019	Medical Outreach	
11	Southern Kaduna	Jan,2021	Medical Outreach	
12	Mongu, Jos, Plateau State	Mar 2021	Medical Outreach	
13	Abriba, Abia State	Dec 2022	Medical Outreach	
14	New Keffi Correctional Centre		Counselling Sessions	
15	Lafia Correctional Centre		Counselling Sessions	
16	Suleija Correctional Centre		Counselling Sessions	