

# A Bouquet of Cultural Stereotypes

written by Guest Contributor | December 11, 2018



Some elements are recurring features in the behavior and ways of speaking, dressing and walking of some Nigerian people. These weird and sometimes awkward cultural components of some ethnic groups in the country are regarded as cultural stereotypes.

However, stereotypes are not necessarily authentic nodes that should be used as the requisite standards to address the entire people of any tribe or clime. At most they are parochial templates that, perhaps, fit for some people, not all.

For this context, therefore, we have decided to expose some of the behavioral differences, food habits, hospitality sense and language foibles of some of the tribes and ethnic groups in the country.

See below a preview selection from an inexhaustible list of stereotypes that abound in Africa's most populated city.

## **LANGUAGE FOIBLES**

- **The 'H' Factor**

An ethnic insignia of the Yoruba of South-West Nigeria. Whenever a Yoruba man opens his mouth in conversation, he contaminates the airwaves with his 'hateful' 'hinsertion' of the 'H' sound before every vowel sound.

Inexplicably, where there **is** an 'h' sound, he erases it. 'I am' becomes 'Hi Ham and 'hopeless becomes 'opeless.

- **'P' and 'F' Palaver**

Common among the Hausas is the hunger to always substitute the 'P' sound for the 'F' sound and vice versa, thereby committing an unforgivable foul to the unsuspecting ears. Meet a northerner and you are bound to notice that, with enviable ease, 'Polish' becomes 'Folish' and 'Father' takes on 'Pather.'

- **'R' and 'L' factors**

The Igbos of Anambra engage in a perpetual misuse of the 'R' and 'L' sounds. This misuse, when heard, is rather offensive to the ears. Employ an Anambra person as your worker and he will give excuses on why he came to work 'rate' because of 'tlaffic' on the 'load' that morning.

- **This Warri Creole**

The Warri people from the Delta are unique when it comes to their interesting language of communication. What I have chosen to call 'Warria Franca' is the brand of the informal Nigerian Pidgin English, or 'Broken' English or 'Rotten' English as popularized by the late Ken Saro Wiwa in his Soza Boy novel, that the Warri people have created.

## **FOOD AND NUTRITION**

- **The Ijebu Garri saga**

For an Ijebu man the popular street saying is true, that 'Garri has no advert, yet it sells even more than Indomie, a new age instant noodles, mostly for kids. The Ijebu Garri is the most enriching meal to be served an Ijebu man. Known for the acclaimed 'sourness' of their Garri brand, the Ijebus are more patriotic about their Garri than they are about the Nigerian cause.

- **This Dog is not for soup, beware of Calabars and Ondos**

The Ondos and Calabars are unrepentant 'Dog-eaters'. Just like chicken and fishes are regular features in menus in most parts of the country, Dog meat—or 404, like a popular car—is a palate's companion that is eaten with relish. Parboiled with 'Ogogoro'—local gin—and cooked with scent-leaf, the delicacy, according to its consumers, is both delicious and nutritional.

- **The Yoruba pepper**

Yorubas have a love for eating peppery edibles. You even find them putting pepper in local snacks like 'puff-puff. Someone once said that looking closely at the picture of a Yoruba person might make your eyes start to water from the pepper they have consumed.

- **The Hausa love for sweeteners and sauces**

The Hausas are known for their excessive consumption of sugar and any other sauce that sweetens meals. Little wonder you find them accompanying every meal with various garnishes that make the meal spicier, saucier and sweeter than is necessary.

## **HOSPITALITY**

- **Tivs and their Legendary Hospitality**

The Tiv men are reputed to be the perfect template for impressive generosity; offering their wives to every Tom, Dick (Pun intended), Harry and August visitor sleeping over in their houses. How interesting! I also gathered that, rather than spite the culture, married women look forward, with gusto, to the arrival of a strong, macho visitor that knows how to satisfy women.

- **Igbos and Kolanuts**

There is a saying in Igboland that 'He who brings Kola brings life'. This rubric has ceased to be extinct. Rather it has become an integral part of the Igbo hospitality culture. Accompanied with frothing palm wine, there is hardly any gathering of Igbo men without lobes of Kolanuts shared, to appease the ancestors.

- **Ekiti people and yam/pounded yam**

It is easier for Ekiti people, when welcoming a guest, to prepare pounded yam than make any other cuisine. Yams are always in abundance, as such, guests, whenever they request for meals, are served plateful of well-pounded, succulent yams. The rice craze in other parts of the country has nothing on the Ekitis.

## **BEHAVIORAL PATTERNS**

- **The Edo crave for Italy**

For an average Edo youth, male and female, Europe is where greener grasses abound, especially in Italy. Italy is where every youth from that part hopes to travel to. This hunger for traveling to Italy has made people to accuse their ladies of hoping to be enlisted into one of the various prostitution cartels that Italy houses.

- **Igbo men and the root of Evil**

The Igbo man does not see money as the root of evil. Instead, it is the answer to all things. How else do I describe how much an Igbo man is in love with the tingling smell of crisp currency notes? Maybe I could say that an Igbo man loves money the way a 'Jehovah's Witness' loves his "never walk alone" bag (portmanteau), or the way a Northerner loves his transistor radio. But, I'm not even sure that these images are enough.

- **The Legendary Ijebu Stinginess**

The Ijebus are arguably the most miserly of God's creations. For every Ijebu man, apart from a few 'righteous ones', the pidgin expression common among

ladies, 'moni for hand back for ground' is a universal motto. Believe it or not, like they say, an Ijebu man is an ambassador of stinginess, and Ijebu land is the headquarters of unrepentant misers.

#### • **Fulanis and their Love for their Cattles**

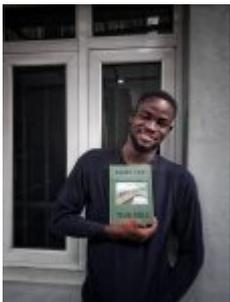
A proper Fulani man pays more attention to his Cattles than he does his children and immediate family. Someone says that you only find a Fulani man crying when he loses a Cattle and not when his son dies. This excessive love for the flock could be attributed to the fact that you do not pay a Cattle's school fees or cook meals. You only need a patch of grasslands, filled with blades of Green grasses.

#### • **Yoruba Parents and their Shelf-full of Ancient Plates**

As they say, it is easier for a Camel to pass through the eye of a needle than to see a Yoruba mom who does not have in her shelf, an array of ancient ceramic or steel plates, cups/glasses/mugs and spoons. Yoruba mothers prefer to eat daily with the new plates while they keep the ancient ones locked up until an 'August' visitor, in form of an Uncle or Aunt shows up.

#### • **Ogogoro in the Delta**

If the saying is true that refreshments for visitors point to the personality of the host, then there is no denying the fact that Deltans are unrepentant alcohol consumers. The consumption of this scorching gin, under shady palm trees, is a refreshing exercise for delta men. Ogogoro is to every Delta woman what Mary Kay powder is to young Nigerian ladies of this sophisticated age.



**Adefolami Ademola** is a writer and social commentator. His poems have appeared in Sentinel Literary Quarterly, Prosopisia, New Orleans Review, Black Room, Poetry Potion, among others. His nonfiction pieces have been published in Akoma, The Nerve Africa, The Afro Vibe, Ynaija, Newshunter, Ebedi Review. A 2016 PIN (Poets in Nigeria) Poets' Residency Fellow, his poem, "Memories, regurgitated" made the Top Ten Shortlist in the 2016 edition of the Korea/Nigeria Cultural Poetry Fiesta. His personal essay *Dying in Installments* was recently published in the print edition of the Selves Anthology of Creative Nonfiction.