

# USA and Nigeria: The Covid-19 Link

<http://nigeriaindepth.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Bukola-on-US-ban-against-Nigerians.mp3>

Early this year, President Donald J. Trump announced that he was banning migration of Nigerians and nationals of a few other countries to the United States of America—a country seen by most citizens of these banned states as the land of dreams.

And so, understandably, the announcement sparked outrage in those countries. “Why would he ban us”, they queried.

The reasons for the ban varied for each of the countries, but not farfetched in the case of Nigeria: it has to do with threat to the US national security, a very big deal to the US President!

Well, all over the world, nations retain the rights to decide who to and who not to admit within their borders. It is a sovereign right ceded to every state and which even the most powerful nations on earth cannot grudge the weak and poor ones as every sovereign state is equal in the exercise of this right.

As a corollary, countries of the world determine what affects their national security and what does not. So, it is within the rights of the United States of America to determine this for itself and other countries must accept and respect the rights of the US to protect itself and also determine when to bar and who to bar from entering its borders.

To many Nigerians, who are trying to justify why the US must continue to open its doors to them to flock to, the underlying reason for the ban–threat to national security–seems ludicrous, to say the least.

The opinion, as nursed by this set of Nigerians, was based on the belief that, from 1914 when the Colony of Lagos was amalgamated with both Northern and Southern Protectorates to form Nigeria to the day, President Trump signed the Executive Order banning immigrant applications from Nigeria, no known Nigerian has ever participated in terrorist acts. Wrong, you say, but wait!

Understandably, participation in terrorist acts is not the only way to pose a national security threat. There are countless other ways through which people can constitute threats to a country's national security. You only need to look well to discover various attitudes, habits and actions carried out by people all around the world to get persuaded along this line of thought.

It is true that over the years, a number of Nigerians have been indicted in Internet and wire-fraud, tax-return and health care scams among others in the United States. In the same vein, many nationals from Africa, Europe, Asia and the Middle East are also serving jail terms for similar and other criminal and potentially dangerous activities, rightly labelled national-security threats by owners of the country.

But as far as terrorism is concerned, no Nigerian has been involved in any terrorist's incidence in America. I am neither ignorant of nor downplaying the case of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a 23 year-old Nigerian, popularly known as "Underwear Bomber", who confessed to and was convicted of attempting to detonate explosives hidden in his underwear

while on board Northwest Airlines Flight 253, flying from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan, on December 25, 2009. I am only raising a point.

Abdulmutallab, who is currently in a supermax federal prison in Colorado, is serving 4 life terms plus 50 years without parole for his crime. Evidence presented at his trial showed that Abdulmutallab was trained and commissioned on his murderous exploit by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), not by the Nigerian government and not by any group within Nigeria.

The case of Abdulmutallab is therefore an isolated case that should not be used to judge Nigeria as a country or its people as a group of dangerous elements. So, it is unfair for the United States to punish Nigeria and Nigerians for Abdulmutallab's crime.

### **The real reason Donald Trump banned Nigerians from entering America**

Aside the issue of national security, many have also argued that the United States banned immigrant applications from Nigeria because the Nigerian government granted pardon to a Boko Haram kingpin who participated in the killing of American forces somewhere in West Africa. Other iterations of this maintained that the ban was occasioned by Nigeria's issuance of a National Passport to the said Boko Haram kingpin.

However, even if these two scenarios were true, in so far as

the said Boko Haram kingpin remains a Nigerian, it is within his or her rights to apply and obtain a national passport. Perceived also from the legal angle, whatever happened to the principle of presumption of innocence? Has the said Boko Haram kingpin been tried in a court of law? Nigeria may be 'poor', it is certainly not a lawless country.

Furthermore, just as the United States of America retains the rights to control its domestic policies, Nigeria should not only be accorded the same rights, its exercise of such rights must be respected by all and sundry.

The US Department of States, US Homeland Security, US Department of Labor, and many other American institutions have attested to the immense contributions of Nigerians to the United States. There is therefore no debate on what people from the most populous black country in the world brings to the table in America as Nigerian professionals dot the landscape of American universities, health care institutions, IT companies and media firms among others.

Ever since Covid-19 hit the USA, President Trump had requested that applications for any type of visas by medical practitioners from different parts of the world, including Nigeria, should be fast-tracked. He even categorically appealed to medical doctors, nurses, respiratory technicians, etc. from developing countries, including Nigeria, to inform their employers of the need to fast-track their application and come over to the United States of America to lend a hand in fighting Covid-19.

One cannot but wonder at President Trump's consistency at being inconsistent.

Late last year when the epidemic of coronavirus broke out in Wuhan, China, President Trump not only mocked China, he also dubbed the disease, 'China virus'. A few years before then, he had described Nigerians as hut-dwellers who, upon arriving the United States, refused to return to their 'huts' in Nigeria. As if that was not bad enough, he called Haiti and countries of Africa 'shithole' countries. Today, the same man is appealing to professionals from some of the countries he had denigrated in the past to come and help the US out.

With what began as an epidemic in Wuhan, China now a global pandemic, and the United States of America recording the highest number of victims and the dead, Trump's hand is being forced to eat his own words as he appeals to medical personnel from the 'shithole' countries to come and liberate America from the grip of the virus.

President Trump had said, and it is on record, that Norwegians are a better choice of immigrants to America than Nigerians. However, Mr. President, we say, much as Nigerians sympathize with Americans in this trying time, we advise that you keep your visa or, at best, take it to Norway and dump it on their laps. Nigerians cannot die for Americans, especially as they are daily denigrated and called names by the President of one of the most liberal countries of the world.

If the US President has just realized that Nigerians are more educated than Americans and Europeans in America and has also just woken up to the reality that America has thrived long on the talent-pool from Nigeria, then he should be bold enough to admit and recant his earlier gutter-language description of Nigerians.

Let this be clearly stated, Nigerians are no fools and could see beyond President Trump's virus-induced crocodile tears and carrot-dangling. They have seen a lot more over the years than be fooled by that illusion.