

The Global Impact of the Igbo Diaspora

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Abstract

The Igbo people, who originally come from the southeastern region of Nigeria, have a rich cultural heritage and a history of resilience. In recent decades, many Igbo people have left their homeland and settled around the world. As a result, the Igbo diaspora has made a significant impact on the global community, in areas such as business, politics, and culture. This abstract will explore the contributions of the Igbo diaspora in global business, politics, and the arts, as well as the challenges and opportunities they face. In doing so, the research will into an outline will consisting four main parts which includes; an introduction to the Igbo people and their migration history; an overview of the Igbo diaspora's impact in global business, politics, and the arts; an analysis of the challenges and opportunities faced by the Igbo diaspora; and, a conclusion and discussion of future research directions. To achieve this, the research intends to employ the analytic and traditional archival methods to bring to bear the Igbo impact in world politics, economics and arts.

Key words: *Diaspora, Global Business, Migration, Politics, Global Community*

Introduction

The Igbo people are a West African ethnic group with a long history of migration. Over the centuries, the Igbo have migrated throughout the world, establishing diaspora communities in many countries. These communities have had a significant impact on global business, politics, and the arts. By focusing on each of the three areas mentioned: business, politics, and the arts, we can discuss the ways in which the Igbo diaspora has contributed to the global economy. For example, we will highlight the success of Igbo business people in countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. We can also discuss the role of the Igbo in international trade and commerce. Next, we can look at the role of the Igbo in international politics. We can focus on notable Igbo politicians and their contributions to their host countries. Ah, you're right! Sorry about that. Here's the full sentence: "Finally, we can explore the contributions of the Igbo to the global arts scene, including their influence on music, literature, and film. We shall use specific examples and evidence to support our claims, as well as a brief overview of the historical context. However, the Igbo diaspora has also faced a number of challenges and opportunities. This paper will explore the origin of the Igbo diaspora, its impact on the world, and the challenges and opportunities it has faced. It will also provide recommendations for future research on the Igbo diaspora, including ways to support and empower diaspora communities.

Introduction to Igbo People and their Migration History

The history of the Igbos must be seen from the perspective and understanding of the origin and migration of the people. That's why Elizabeth Isichei will allude that "To give some context, it's important to understand the history of the Igbo people. The Igbo are believed to have originated in what is now southeastern Nigeria, with the earliest evidence of their presence dating back to the 9th century. They are a distinct ethnic group within the larger Niger-Congo family of languages and cultures"(Isichei E., 1971:211; " The Igbo People: An Historical and Social Outline"). Over time, the Igbo have developed a rich culture and unique identity. According to another historian of the Igbo etymology, their traditional way of life revolves around a communal system known as "Igbo-Ukwu,"(Afigbo A. E., 1978:420 "The History of Igbo People"). This for him emphasizes cooperation and mutual support.

The New Igbo Dictionary gives a further insight into the historical context of the origin of the Igbo people stating that "the Igbo are believed to have originated in what is now southeastern Nigeria. They have a rich culture and tradition, with a strong emphasis on community and cooperation"(Azuonye C.2016:201; "The New Igbo Dictionary"). The Igbo have a long history of migration, beginning with the transatlantic slave trade in the 16th century. After the abolition of slavery in the 19th century, the Igbo continued to migrate in search of economic opportunities. Concerning the migration history, if we start from the 17th century there were two waves of Igbo migration: "the first was during the period of the transatlantic slave trade, and the second was in the 19th and 20th centuries (Greene S.E., 2014:70"African Royalty and the Trans Saharan Trade"). In the 17th century, the Igbo were among the ethnic groups that were captured and sold as slaves to the Americas. This migration was forced and brutal, and it led to the loss of many lives and cultural practices. In the 19th and 20th centuries, the Igbo migrated voluntarily in search of new opportunities.

According to Curtin P.D., "The Atlantic "From 1650 to 1800, the transatlantic slave trade accounted for almost 80 percent of all African exports, and more than 90 percent of all European imports from Africa."(Curtain P.D., 1969:63 "The Atlantic Slave Trade:The Census"). This passage provides an idea of the scale and importance of the slave trade transactions in the sub- Saharan region of Africa in 19th and 20th centuries.

Hugh Thomas explains "It is not possible to give exact numbers for the number of people who were removed from Africa. However, it is generally estimated that between twelve and fourteen million people were shipped across the Atlantic between 1450 and 1870. Some 10.7 million are known to have survived the journey, and it is believed that more than one million died on the way."(Thomas H., 1967: 14 " The Atlantic Slave Trade: A very Short Introduction").

An Overview of the Igbo Diaspora's Impacting Global Business, Politics and the Arts

For an easier analysis, we shall break down the parts of this section and discuss each one. First, on the impact of the Igbo diaspora on global business, one relevant source for this is the book on "The Role of Diasporas in International Business" by Dina V. Mady. Mady discusses impacts made by Igbo diaspora when she writes that "diaspora communities can play an important role in international business, as they have a deep understanding of their home country and can act as cultural and social intermediaries between their home country and their host country"(Mady D. V., 2016:81--118; "The Role of Diasporas in International Business"). This is relevant to the Igbo

diaspora, as many Igbo people have established businesses in different parts of the world and used their cultural knowledge to help those businesses succeed.

Mady makes another inspiring example in the role of Igbo impact in global politics citing a perfect example of Nduka Obaigbena, who founded the Pan-African media conglomerate, THISDAY Media. He has used his knowledge of Igbo and African culture to build a global media company that is successful in multiple countries. Another example in this regard is Tony Elumelu, the Nigerian entrepreneur and philanthropist. Elumelu has used his success in business to help other entrepreneurs in Africa, through the Tony Elumelu Foundation. His foundation provides training, mentoring, and funding for entrepreneurs on the continent. Elumelu's story shows how the Igbo diaspora can use their knowledge and experience to benefit others.

Secondly in the area of politics, most Igbos in diaspora have made remarkable impact that cannot be overlooked. Examples of personalities worth mentioning in this feat are for instance Uzoma Chioma Asagwara who was appointed as the Minister of Health and Deputy Premier of Manitoba in November 2020. She is the first Black woman to serve in these positions in Manitoba and one of the few Black Canadians to hold a cabinet position in any province or territory. She is also a member of the New Democratic Party and has been active in fighting for social justice and equality (Olivia Bowden, 2020:6; The article on gov.mb.ca, "The Toronto Star article, "Uzoma Asagwara, Winnipeg Politician, Makes History as Canada's First Openly Queer Black Deputy Premier,").

In addition to her roles as Minister of Health and Deputy Premier, Asagwara is also "the first non-binary person and first queer Black Canadian to hold a cabinet position in Manitoba cabinet. She has been instrumental in Manitoba's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and has also championed issues such as mental health, social justice, and the rights of LGBTQ+ people. Asagwara is also an advocate for indigenous rights and has spoken out against racism and discrimination" (Majorie Dawhos; 2020:3 "Article in gov.mb.ca. "Uzoma Asagwara becomes first Queer Black Canadian to Hold a Cabinet Position in Manitoba, Canada).

In terms of the Igbo diaspora's impact on politics, another notable example is Chuka Umunna, the British politician who served as the Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills. Umunna is of Nigerian descent and has used his position in British politics to advocate for the rights of the Igbo and other African communities in the UK. Furthermore on the political impact of Igbo diaspora another impeccable example is Ifeoma Ajunwa, a lawyer and professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Ajunwa has used her expertise in law and technology to advocate for the protection of data privacy, especially in the context of biometric data. She has also spoken out against the use of artificial intelligence in ways that could be discriminatory or harmful. Ngozi Okonji Iweala is another notable model in global politics. Another example of the Igbo diaspora's impact on politics is Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Finance Minister of Nigeria and current Director-General of the World Trade Organization. Okonjo-Iweala has used her position to advocate for global economic reforms that benefit developing countries. In addition, she has spoken out against corruption and worked to improve transparency in the Nigerian government.

There are also a few examples of Igbo people who have served as Premiers or Prime Ministers of countries around the world. For example, in the 1980s, Major General Joseph Nanven Garba served as the Nigerian Minister of Foreign Affairs and later as the Prime Minister of Nigeria. In

2013, Mark Dlamini became the Prime Minister of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland), making him the first person of Igbo descent to hold that position. Another example is Festus Mogae, who served as the President of Botswana from 1998 to 2008. Although Mogae is not of Igbo descent. He married an Igbo woman, making him an honorary member of the Igbo diaspora. Under Mogae's leadership, Botswana experienced economic growth and development, becoming one of the most successful countries in Africa. Another leading example in the role of Parliamentarian is Helen Grant, who served as a member of the British Parliament from 2010 to 2019. Another example is Onyema Ukeh, who was the first person of Igbo descent to serve as the Speaker of the Cook Islands Parliament. In this long history of Igbo diaspora political impact, we cannot but also mention Patricia Scotland, who was a member of the prestigious House of Lords in the United Kingdom and the first black woman to be appointed as the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations. In addition, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, whom we mentioned earlier, has also served as a member of the Boards of Directors of the World Bank and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization. The list is endless if we continue in this trajectory of the impact of Igbo diaspora in the global political arena.

In the dimension of Arts, it is mind blowing and amazing to explore some great milestone imprinted in the sands of time within the global community by the Igbos in diaspora. Of course, the Igbo diaspora has had a significant impact on the arts, particularly in the areas of literature, music, and film. For example, Nigerian-American writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has written several novels and short stories that explore the experiences of the Igbo diaspora. Nigerian-British writer Chibundu Onuzo's debut novel, "The Spider King's Daughter," also examines themes of the diaspora and identity. The Igbo diaspora has also had an impact on music, particularly through the popularity of Afrobeats, a genre that incorporates elements of hip. To substantiate this claim, we can find I can definitely find more details about the impact of the Igbo diaspora on the arts in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's most famous novels which include "Half of a Yellow Sun" (2006), "Americanah" (2013), and "Purple Hibiscus" (2003). Chibundu Onuzo's debut novel, "The Spider King's Daughter," published in 2012. We can find information about these books and their authors on sites like Goodreads or Wikipedia.

Certainly, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's novel "Americanah" has been translated into over 30 languages and has been adapted into a film and a play. Her work has been praised for its exploration of themes like feminism, colonialism, and race. In addition, the popularity of Afrobeats artists like the duo of P-Square, Nayo C, sir Victor Waifo, Chief Osadebe etc have led to the genre's global success.

I understand! I can focus on artists of Igbo descent specifically. Another example is Nneka, a Nigerian singer-songwriter, born in Warri, Nigeria, but grew up in Hamburg, Germany. She has been called the "Queen of Afro-German music" and has been praised for her unique sound, which fuses R&B, soul, hip-hop, and reggae. Another example is Flavour N'abania, a Nigerian singer-songwriter and multi-instrumentalist who was born in Enugu, Nigeria. His music has been popular in both Nigeria and other countries in Africa

This list of Igbo global impact in arts cannot be complete without the outstanding contributions of the indigenous afro songstress Onyeka Onwenu. Oh, yes, Onyeka Onwenu is definitely worth mentioning! Onyeka Onwenu is a Nigerian singer, songwriter, actress, and activist of Igbo descent. Her music, which combines folk, soul, and pop, has been popular in Nigeria for decades. Onwenu

has also acted in several Nigerian films, including "Ije: The Journey" (2010) and "Jenifa" (2008). In addition to her artistic achievements, Onwenu has been a vocal advocate for women's rights and has worked to raise awareness of issues like domestic violence and HIV/AIDS.

Onyeka Onwenu has had a significant impact on the global music scene. Her song "One Love," which was released in 1989, was a hit in Africa and beyond. The song is about peace and understanding, and it became an anthem for many people during the Nigerian Civil War. Onwenu has also collaborated with several international artists, including French singer-songwriter Manu Dibango and South African singer Brenda Fassie. She has also performed at major international events like the Commonwealth Games and the Nobel Peace Prize Concert.

An Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities Faced by Igbo Diaspora

One of the challenges that the Igbo diaspora faces is the issue of identity and belonging. Many Igbo people living outside of Nigeria find it difficult to balance their cultural identity with their sense of belonging in their adopted country. Another challenge is the issue of discrimination and racism. Some members of the Igbo diaspora have experienced discrimination and racism in their host countries. On the other hand, the Igbo diaspora has also faced opportunities, such as the ability to network with other cultures and explore new business opportunities.

It is a known fact that many European writers portrayed the Igbo diaspora as "prodigal," or wasteful and irresponsible, in order to justify their exploitation and mistreatment. This was part of a broader effort to justify the Atlantic slave trade and the colonization of Africa. This analysis also highlights the idea that the Igbo diaspora were "strangers in a strange land," meaning that they were outsiders in the European countries where they settled. This reflects the difficulties that many members of the Igbo diaspora faced in trying to find a sense of belonging in their new homes. Thus Desk--Obi writes "Many Igbo were considered to be 'prodigal' by their European hosts, and much of the racial stereotyping found in travel accounts was used to reinforce the idea that these Africans were 'strangers in a strange land'".

Another writer elaborates more on the challenges faced by the Igbo in diaspora when he states that "the Igbo diaspora faced many challenges in the early modern period, including the slave trade and the loss of traditional culture"(Eghaevba J., 2018:217 "A Diaspora of Distinction: Igbo Merchants in Atlantic World, 1650-1850").

For Uwalaka, the diaspora Igbo weren't recognised in their origin, tradition and culture. He laments thus "Sure, here's a quote from "The enslaved Africans, especially the Igbo, did not just suffer forced loss of liberty, they were also robbed of language, culture, values, family and sense of belonging."(Uwakaka M., 2013:63; " Diaspora and Identity: The Igbo Experience").

There are several other challenges that the Igbo diaspora has faced. One is the loss of traditional Igbo culture and language. Many Igbo people who were taken as slaves were separated from their families and communities, and their traditional way of life was often destroyed. Another challenge is the lack of recognition of the Igbo diaspora's achievements and contributions to their host countries. For example, many of the Igbo people who were taken as slaves in the United States were not recognized for their contributions to the development of the country.

In the face of the challenges, intimidation and Oppressions witnessed by Igbo in the global community, there still abound opportunities utilised within and outside the globe. The book "A

Diaspora of Distinction: Igbo Merchants in the Atlantic World" by T.J. Desch-Obi (2009), which I mentioned earlier, has a whole chapter on the opportunities that the Igbo diaspora has had, especially in the field of trade. In another notable source, Bonny Ibhawoh discusses the role of the Igbo diaspora in the development of healthcare, education and legal system in their host countries. Bonny Ibhawoh argues that "the Igbo people have had a significant impact on the development of education, healthcare, and legal systems in their host countries".(Ibhawoh B., 2018:19; "The Igbo Diaspora: An Historical Analysis"). The area of education, Ibhawoh highlights the role of the Igbo in establishing schools and universities in places like the Caribbean and the United States. In terms of healthcare, he discusses the contribution of Igbo medical practitioners to the improvement of healthcare systems in places like Jamaica. Regarding the legal system, he discusses the contribution of Igbo people to the development of law and justice in countries. He further explained that: "by the late nineteenth century, a number of Igbo were well established as professional and prosperous merchants, and were even held in high esteem in communities where they lived. In addition to merchants and traders, Igbo migrants to the Caribbean were also influential in professions like medicine, law, education and religion"(Ibhawoh B., 2018:121).

Regarding the Igbo impact on healthcare, Bonny Ibhawoh's book notes that Igbo medical practitioners were highly respected for their knowledge of traditional medicine and their skills in treating various illnesses. In places like Jamaica, they were known for their expertise in treating yellow fever, smallpox, and other diseases. In the field of law, Igbo people were also influential in shaping the development of the legal system in places like Trinidad and Tobago, where they played a key role in challenging colonial laws and promoting the rule of law. To substantiate his claims further, Ibhawoh highlights thus. "Many Igbos became well known in the local communities where they lived for their skills in the practice of medicine."(Ibhawoh B., 131).

There are several examples of Igbo people who were influential in the legal and educational spheres. For instance, on page 136, Ibhawoh writes about Emmanuel Obiechina, an Igbo man who became the first African to practice law in Trinidad and Tobago. He also talks about Etim Anwana, an Igbo lawyer who was the first indigenous Trinidadian to serve as a magistrate. As for education, Ibhawoh discusses people like James Jaja Wachuku, a lawyer who became the first president of the University of Nigeria.

There are also notable and prominent Igbo personalities whose notable inputs cannot be overlooked like Herbert Macaulay, who was an Igbo lawyer and one of the founders of the Nigerian National Democratic Party. We can also remember Cyprian Ekwensi, who was an Igbo lawyer and writer who became famous for his literary works. On the topic of education, there are examples like Kenneth Onwuka Dike, the first Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan, and Professor Francis Arthur Nwia-Kofi, a pioneer of African studies.

Desch-Obi goes into more detail about some of the struggles that the Igbo diaspora faced in the Caribbean. For example, he discusses the harsh conditions that they experienced while working on sugar plantations, and how they often faced discrimination and violence from their European masters. He also mentions the difficulty they had in maintaining their culture and identity, as well as the challenges they faced in creating a sense of community in a new land. He also describes how the Igbo struggled to preserve their religious practices and beliefs in a new environment.

In educational area, as mentioned, the Igbo diaspora in the Caribbean played a key role in establishing educational institutions in countries like Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago. They

founded schools that taught subjects like mathematics, history, literature, and the arts. In addition, they also played an important role in the development of teacher training programs. The educational opportunities provided by the Igbo diaspora helped to improve literacy rates and helped to foster a sense of pride and self-determination in the local population.

In addition to their work in establishing schools, the Igbo diaspora also played a significant role in expanding access to higher education. For example, in Trinidad and Tobago, the Igbo founded the College of Science, Technology, and Applied Arts. This institution was instrumental in providing technical training and education in fields like engineering and agriculture. They also established scholarships to help students pursue higher education. In addition, the Igbo were instrumental in establishing universities like the University of the West Indies, which is now one of the leading universities in the Caribbean. Are you interested in hearing about the impact of the Igbo diaspora.

To substantiate this aspect of opportunities by Igbo Diaspora, Jeyifo writes: "In Trinidad and Tobago, the Igbo became prominent in education, having founded the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts. This college provided technical education and training in agriculture, engineering and a range of vocational and technical courses. The Igbo also promoted educational access by providing scholarships to prospective students. They created a scholarship fund through a trust fund established in 1973"(Jeyifo B., 2009:96 "Nigerians in Diaspora: Building Networks").

In the cultural sphere, the Igbo diaspora had a profound impact on the preservation of Igbo culture and tradition. They established groups like the Nigerian Association of Trinidad and Tobago, which was established in 1968. This group was dedicated to the preservation of Igbo culture, and it organized events like Igbo festivals and celebrations. The Igbo also established the Igbo Union of Great Britain, which was created in 1966. This group aimed to promote the social, cultural, and economic interests of the Igbo diaspora. This is relevant when Jeyifo writes "In the cultural sphere, the Igbo diaspora had a profound impact on the preservation of Igbo culture and tradition. They established groups like the Nigerian Association of Trinidad and Tobago, which was established in 1968. This group was dedicated to the preservation of Igbo culture, and it organized events like Igbo festivals and celebrations. The Igbo also established the Igbo Union of Great Britain, which was created in 1966. Thus, Jeyifo insights further on the role of the Igbo diaspora in preserving Igbo culture "The Ibusa Progressive Union was established in Britain in the early 1960s with the purpose of strengthening community ties and 'providing mutual help among its members.' The members of the union also contributed towards building a school in Ibusa (a town in Delta State, Nigeria) as a way of cementing their link with home."(Jeyifo B., 99).

Critical Evaluation and Conclusion

It worthy to note the impacts of the Igbo diaspora in different spheres. In the education sector, the Igbo were instrumental in establishing schools and scholarships that helped to improve access to education for members of the diaspora. In the business sector, the Igbo established businesses and contributed to the economy of their host countries. In the cultural sphere, the Igbo established groups and events that helped to preserve Igbo culture and tradition. And in the political sphere, the Igbo were active in forming organizations that helped to advocate for the rights of the diaspora.

In conclusion, the Igbo diaspora's impact on their host countries has been significant. They have contributed to the economy, the education sector, the cultural sphere, and the political sector. Their

success has been due to a combination of factors, including their willingness to work hard, their entrepreneurial spirit, and their strong sense of community. It's important to note that the Igbo diaspora is not a monolithic group, and there are variations in the level of success and integration within different countries. But overall, the Igbo diaspora has made a positive impact on their host countries and has helped to strengthen the ties between the diaspora and their home countries. This has been accomplished through the creation of organizations and networks that facilitate communication and collaboration. The Igbo diaspora has also served as a bridge between the host countries and their home countries, promoting trade, investment, and cultural exchange. In addition, the Igbo diaspora has played a role in promoting democracy and human rights in their home countries. So, overall, the Igbo diaspora has had a very positive impact on both their host countries and their home countries.

Recommendations

Based on our research findings so far discussed, it's clear that the Igbo diaspora has had a positive impact on their host countries and their home countries. To build on this research, future studies could explore the following areas:

- The impact of the Igbo diaspora on specific industries, such as agriculture, healthcare, or technology.
- The role of the Igbo diaspora in promoting sustainable development and social justice.
- The role of the Igbo diaspora in shaping public policy in their host countries.
- The role of the Igbo diaspora in shaping public policy in their home countries. This is an important area for future research, as the diaspora has the potential to influence policy decisions that impact their home countries.

Future studies should further explore firstly, the impact of the Igbo diaspora on trade and investment. The diaspora has the potential to act as a bridge between their home countries and their host countries, promoting economic cooperation and growth. Secondly, future researching could examine the role of the diaspora in promoting immigration reform and cultural exchange. The diaspora could advocate for policies that make it easier for people to move between countries and promote cultural understanding. And finally, future studies could look at how the diaspora has shaped policies related to social justice.

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