

MIXED GRILL

# Angulama: A Creek On The Rise

By  
**Paschal Agbada**

I love the creeks. They remind me of mother nature, where serenity and aquatic life submerge to give a tranquil ambience. The aquatic birds chirping away while sea waves complement an esoteric but lively entral.

The jetty at Buguma was lonely though intending guests for the occasion had smartened up, looking regale in their Nigeria wax attire of yellow and greenish hue, but they all appeared uncertain. The reason for the uncertainty in their faces and eyes was simply because the boat drivers were no where to be found at this moment. Meanwhile, the occasion was to start by 11.30am and the time was already 10.45am. Everything about this time in the jetty and for the trip appeared bleak.

However, this reporter's appearance with a coterie of other press men suddenly awakened the neighbourhood. The boat drivers emerged from God knows where and the leader of the press crew was busy bellowing orders as they were immediately obeyed.

The men and women attired in yellowish-green Nigerian wax assembled at an end on the jetty and were seen entering their own boat, so also were the press crew. Destination, Angulama.

Angulama is a little hamlet amongst others forming islets off the coast of Buguma in the Asari Toru Local Government Area in Rivers State. It is the home of the current commissioner for Urban Development in the State-Osimah Ginah. And the event was the grand reception given by the Angulama people for their illustrious son Osimah Ginah who according to the welcome address presented by the Angulama community on the occasion is the first commissioner to be appointed outside Buguma by any regime since the creation of Asari Toru Local Government Area-20 years ago.

Angulama is a piece of land begging for attention, and urgently too. For instance quoting the welcome address, which at this point totally evoked tears and sighs from guests, the people said: "Angulama typifies the true Niger Delta, with tales of neglect in the midst of plenty. Our community has been at the mercy of the tide for more than 30 years, living only a half-life, because of the activities of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) who in 1981, excavated our waterfront and laid their Soku-Alakiri eighteen inches (18") oil pipeline which has now silted up and blocked our canal, the access into the community. All appeals to the company to remedy the damage have been rebuffed. Our Chiefs and elders have prevailed on the youths hoping to get an opportunity to express our grievance". The opportunity they said was this grand reception

occasioned by the appointment of Osimah Ginah as the commissioner for Urban Development which in turn brought the day to be and will hopefully open the leeway for greater things to the people.

In my estimation, the community were a little mild in stating some of their problems. I say this because there is every reason for them to appreciate the State Governor in appointing their own as his commissioner for urban development. It is really good to be grateful. Otherwise, a place where oil pipelines crisscross do not need to beg for infrastructure. However, this very administration cannot be blamed for whatever backwardness and neglect Angulama and other riverine enclaves may have suffered in the hands of past regimes and administrations. In fact, to put it straight, the government of Rt. Hon. Rotimi Chibuike Amaechi has come strictly to right the wrongs done to the masses by past regimes.

As the secretary to State Government (SSG) Magnus Abe put it in his address to the community on that very occasion, he said... "The present administration will develop Angulama, not because the commissioner for urban development comes from here, no. We will not develop Angulama because Osimah Ginah is in government or is by any stroke of chance a friend of the present administration, not at all. Government will pay strict attention to Angulama because it is the policy of the present administration of Gov. Rotimi Amaechi to uplift the living standards of our people most especially those living in the creeks, they are the most neglected".

With the foregoing, it goes without saying that the plight of Angulama people has been well noted even before that day by the present administration.

Proof of this was the fact that this reporter and other journalists who went to cover the event saw tractors and bulldozers at different areas where portions of land were being reclaimed for various purposes. And no one would doubt the fact that in due course whatever projects government has earmarked for the community would be carried out before too long. Definitely also, infrastructure, in the area of water, light and even the construction of link roads to other parts of the local government as government deems fit and necessary would be carried out.

The Commissioner for Urban Development Barr. Osimah Ginah

is reputed to be a proactive administrator. This is evidenced in his reappointment as according to a citation read on his behalf on the day, Governor Amaechi was quoted as having said about him... "Hon. Barr. Osimah, the commissioner for Urban Development stands today as one of my most tested and trusted commissioners in this cabinet. No task before him is assiduous and problematic which he has no solution to. I go to sleep on any issue involving Ginah knowing that he will perform", the Governor had said.

Being the commissioner for Urban Development simply means that a greater part of the burden of the Urban Renewal Policy of the current administration is etched on his shoulders. Would he then look aside and not spare a thought for his people and community. Would he only be concerned about giving Port Harcourt a new face and forget the home that suckled him?

Barr. Osimah Ginah does not come across to me as someone detached from his people. Frankly, the way he caressed and embraced all and sundry on that day of his grand reception gave him away as a man of the people, a man loved and cherished, a man of modest means, a man whose humility can melt the stiffest of hearts. For this reporter, the turning point in the whole day and what gave the commissioner away as a man of limited scruples was when a security agent tried to prevent a dressed man from shaking the commissioner's land, the commissioner had recognized him and he was inching his way toward him, he simply told the security agent to let the man be as he extended his hands and shook the man.

Even though the present administration is signposted on the rule of law and, the commissioner who already has a reputation of being a no-nonsense man as he is known as Mr. Bulldozer, probably would not want to jeopardize his long-established honour, yet, 'nothing spoil' if he makes sure that more government presence is felt in the area. It is said that a person whose brother is in heaven cannot go to hell. The people of Angulama are typically proud of the present administration of Gov. Amaechi and what he is doing. But they are even overtly happy with him for appointing their own as one of his cabinet members as they effusively demonstrated that with the way they hosted all that came and joined them in receiving their illustrious son and these included Prince Tonye Princewill, Magnus Abe, Commissioner Sampson Parker and a host of other government representatives and not forgetting Barr. Ginah's wife who also had other wives of commissioners in attendance.

No doubt about it, that grand reception brought two things to the fore. One, the creeks which before now were only known as hide outs and hibernating areas for militants would soon wear new looks. From Magnus Abe's speech, a grand policy to redesign the creeks and make them more relevant is in the offing and as a matter of fact ongoing as evidenced by the presence of the tractors and other earthmoving machines. In the same vein, Angulama as it were reflects exactly what the present administration is thinking of riverine communities.

Secondly, to see Barr. Osimah Ginah embrace, hug and almost 'cavort' with old friends, peers and relations shows that men involved in the Amaechi administration are all down-to-earth men, a demystification of governance as



Mr. Osima Gina,



Hon Magnus Abe

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