

## **Saraki, Onaiwu And Expanding Frontiers Of Public Engagement**

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November 16, 2018

When Senate President Bukola Saraki appointed Earl Osaro Onaiwu, sometime in August this year, as Liaison Officer, State Governments, it was a crystallization of the long held notion in the political space that the Edo state-born experienced politician and public administrator understands the matrix of engagement with state governors and governments.

Perhaps, David Boaz, executive vice president of the Cato Institute and author of “The Libertarian Mind,” was referring to Onaiwu when he noted that a leader must have a firm grasp of reality. According to Boaz, good character and a firm grasp of reality are fundamentals for service.

Over the years, Onaiwu, has like old wine, mature into a rare and fine specie of those endowed with the patience of learning, retooling and knowledgeable about timing. It is in this light that he sees his current office as both an opportunity and a challenge to engender a new paradigm in the relationship between the National Assembly and state governments.

In an interview he granted to the media recently, he said: “There is no shortcut to doing well in any human endeavour especially in wanting to serve your people. You need to have vision, focus and sincerity of purpose and for you to do that you have to put in your energy, drive, passion, creativity and loyalty or commitment if you like.

“For me, this office is an opportunity to create a nexus that is mutually rewarding to the National Assembly on one hand, and the state governments on the other. It is to see how issues of lawmaking that will aid good governance in states is achieved. This office is essentially about synergy and this I do not take lightly because the the Senate President His Excellency Bukola Saraki is wholly committed to seeing that this country works, and state governments are integral in this regard.”

Osaro’s odyssey – political and business-wise- is one that has not come cheap but through dint of hard work, loyalty and commitment to excellence.

As a young man with an eye set on the future, Onaiwu has drank, literarily, at the feet of renowned and successful administrators whether in politics, administration and or business such as the ever green former governor of old Bendel State, Dr. Samuel Ogbemudia; ex-vice president, late Admiral Augustus Aikhomu; Dr. Bamanga Tukur, former National Chairman, PDP, and served as coordinator of the Nigeria Governors Forum under Senator Bukola Saraki, the Senator Jonah Jang’s NGF, and has held the position of coordinator, PDP Governors Forum

from 2013 to 2016 when he resigned the position to run for the Office of Governor, Edo State as candidate of the All Progressives Grand Alliance, APGA.

His first glimpse into public governance started with the man rightly described as the builder of Modern Edo, and by extension, Delta state; late Dr. Ogbemudia. During this period, Osaro was tempered in the furnace of administrative preparedness as Personal Assistant to late Ogbemudia.

Serving under the one-time governor opened Onaiwu to what service, unalloyed service, means to the changing the lives of people for good. It is on record that he was not just a starry-eyed PA, but that he also brought his idea of governance and development to the table. His record of service, many have said, is what lent impetus to his being picked by another illustrious Edo son, the late Admiral Augustus Aikhomu as Special Adviser.

In all of these, Onaiwu gained insight into the inner recess of power and governance, opportunities that cemented his aspiration to work towards service.

Over the years, he has demonstrated that he is a man of many parts; entrepreneur, socialite, philanthropist, patron of the arts, and fundamentally, a vehicle for the formation of the Nigeria Governors Forum (NGF).

In the early days when the governors were without a coordinating body to present a common front on issues affecting states, Onaiwu proposed a peer review mechanism to the then chairman of the NGF and his current boss, Senate President Saraki, where states can leverage on their economies of scale for accelerated development. Years on, his vision has lived on leading to his being a pivotal presence in the circle of governors over the years.

Having carved a near impeccable niche for himself when it comes to creating social and media relevance, Dr. Bamanga Tukur appointed him as Special Adviser on Governors and Government in 2012 to engage governors in the realization of the PDP's manifesto.

Osaro is not your normal run-of-the-mill politician with all sorts of baggage. He has managed to stay the course, eschewing political divisions, shunning religious schisms and the temptation of filthy lucre.

As 2019 reaches a febrile pitch, it is the considered view across the political divide that Osaro remains about the most popular and strategic figure that straddles between the opposing camps.

Some have argued that his office will gain the PDP and in particular, the Atiku Abubakar campaign, a veritable mileage if properly harnessed.

Speaking on the recent passage unto to glory of Chief Tony Anenih, former minister and chairman of the BoT of the PDP, he had this to say; "Chief's death is a huge blow to not just Edo state but Nigeria as a whole given the precarious situation we are in as a country now.

"It is for such a time as this that need people like him to offer invaluable advice to steer the ship of state from the rocks. But I am convinced that his conviction of belief in the Nigerian Enterprise will guide those at the helms of leadership to do what is right. For me, I hope Edo state ponders on his passing and find a worthy replacement to be our leader."