

Top 6 tips on “winning” (s)elections in Nigeria

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This is a guide for the many Nigerians in the Diaspora contemplating going home to either “contribute their quota to the our nation’s development” or “get their own share of the national moi-moi” or even join in “enjoying democrazy dividends”, by joining the long list of well-remunerated (s)elected officials.

A London-based lawyer once returned in the early 2000s to run first for deputy governor and then senator. His driver was killed in a shootout with political opponents, he lost a lot of his money, and got this fingers burnt big time. He was back in London in no time to lick his wounds and try to resurrect his life and career. I would have saved him a lot of money if I had written these tips way back then.

The criteria set out here are for “winning” in your state, as presidential (s)elections are an entirely different ball game.

1. To “win” a (s)election you must join the “right party”. This tends to be the ruling party in your state. Most moderately effective and ruthless ruling parties tend to render the opposition irrelevant in their state by a selective deployment of largesse.
2. Secure the support of a “godfather” in the “right party”. Every state’s ruling party tends to have a kingmaker, whose “vote” is the most important. He may not hold elected office like the late Lamidi Adedibu in Oyo State. He may be an ex governor like Ahmed Tinubu in Lagos or Jim Nwobodo in Enugu in 1999. With the right godfather’s backing, the (s)election becomes a mere

formality.

3. You must be willing to do whatever the godfather wants. If he wants you to swear an oath of loyalty at some juju shrine, you must be prepared to ignore whatever your religious faith says to the contrary. You must be willing to sign up to handing over a chunk of the public funds at your disposal to the godfather, like governor Chris Ngige of Anambra State agreed with his godfather Chris Uba.

4. With a godfather in place, you then need “structures on the ground”. If you are lucky, your godfather may have those structures already. Those “structures” include an army of “youths” on the payroll that follow you to every event, they may man polling booths for you on (s)election day to either ensure that your supporters are allowed to vote or prevent your opponents’ supporters from voting, or even to ensure you “win” in some remote communities with 99% “turnout” even if it is a remote fishing community and all the adults went fishing or to the market on polling day.

5. There must be money for “stomach infrastructure”. Like “structures on the ground”, your godfather may provide this. Otherwise, you have to have the financial muscle to do it yourself. You have to bribe voters to show up at your rallies with bags of rice, and a variety of free foodstuff usually beyond the reach of many of your constituents. If you don’t bother to do this, your opponent will and this will disadvantage you big time. This is called “amala politics” in the Southwest, where that local delicacy is distributed to thousands of supporters. Adedibu once said, “if you come with your salad politics I will defeat you with amala politics”.

6. Are you ready for “do or die”? One US-based Naija man seeking to run for (s)election met up with a godfather and requested backing. When the godfather asked: “Are you ready to kill somebody”, the guy knew immediately that he was in the wrong business. You see, the rewards from high office are massive. As one of my cousins would say, the money involved is just too much. When a member of the House of Representatives earns more than Barack Obama, he would be ready to kill anyone trying to stop him from getting his snout in the trough.

If you don’t have the stomach for these six of the best, Naija politricks is not for you. Stick with your wage slave job abroad and worry about the bills coming through your mailbox.