
SHMOOZING



the

NIGERIANS

*From: Agnimel Levis Kouame, Lagos, Nigeria
APPEAL for URGENT ASSISTANCE!!!*

*Gracious Sir; Your name came to me from
Director of Nigerian Chamber of Commerce. You
are said to be honourable American businessman
capable of assist pitiful orphan age 18.*

*My mother died when I was yet a baby
and my father took me special. My father,
Levis Christopher Kouame was a wealthy Nige-
rian cocoa merchant. He was poisoned to death
by a business associate two month ago.*

*Papa left me \$65,000,000 in U.S. mon-
ies. I must find honest American who will help
me move these monies out of Nigeria and into
his American bank account. Foreign partner will
receive 20% of these monies. This is 100% safe
enterprise to be conclude in 7 working days*

by Bruce Ferguson



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By Bruce Ferguson

Published by:

**OMNI Publications
848 Edgewood Bay Drive
Lakeview, AR 72642
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Other books by Bruce Ferguson:

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 **The reader is invited to join me in sending email thanks to the following hard-working Nigerian conmen and women. Without their cheery letters and offers of great wealth without working, this book would have been fiction.**

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A LITTLE BACKGROUND.....

If you, or anyone you know, has ever received a letter or an email from a Nigerian offering fabulous riches in return for the use of your bank account as a conduit for transferring huge sums of money out of Nigeria, you are witness to a worldwide effort to funnel every dollar, yen, drachma and pound from every country on the globe into the persuasive hands and yawning pockets of the world's best conman, the Nigerian.

It started twenty-plus years ago when a poverty stricken Nigerian church worker saw the potential in an antique mimeograph machine. In addition to running off church bulletins and appeals for financial aid, this rascal devised a sideline scam letter in which he posed as the orphaned son of a murdered tribal chieftain. These letters, later to be designated "the 419 scam" by Nigerian authorities, were mailed to a list of Americans provided by an unwitting international benevolent organization:

"My father, Chief Orobundo Kwaziki amassed a fortune in diamonds from the precious stone fields of the Kalahari," began the letter. "These diamonds along with \$9,000,000 in U.S. denoms are my inheritance. They are packed in a trunk and deposited in a vault at The Central Bank of Nigeria. I

pray for your help in getting my inheritance out of Nigeria and will pay you \$1,000,000 to guide me through the transfer from The Central Bank into your account in the United States.”

When I began receiving such letters I threw them in the trash, until one day when I impulsively decided to send a tongue-in-cheek reply. Thus, began a series of emails between myself and an endless procession of Nigerian scammers having exotic names like Dr. Chidi Sandoz, Madame Rosa Chika, Chief Abram Savimbi, and Fr. Isama Pollana.

Wondering just how far one could go before the Nigerian conman caught on and ceased replying, I penned ever more outrageous half-truths, fictional fancies and outright lies, once even posing as my non-existent sister. My Nigerian conmen correspondents responded with email letters of single-minded encouragement, enclosing all sorts of photos and documents designating me as “official beneficiary” and potential millionaire.

Along with these documents and promises came requests for Western Union money orders. This money, explained the Nigerian conmen, was needed to pay fees, bribes and related expenses in securing the release of trunks bulging with diamonds, currency, gold bullion, and priceless artifacts for shipment to me in the United States.

As Shelly Riskin, the well-known Chicago advertising genius, and my good friend of many years explained with a grin when caught kidding or stringing someone along, “I’m just Shmoozing him.”

This is your invitation to join me in ...



SHMOOZING the NIGERIANS

Weary of the onslaught of email fraud letters from Nigerian conmen, I sent the following letter to 828 2nd Avenue, New York City ... the offices of Mrs. Mandu Ekong, Consul General of Nigeria.

Dear Mrs. Consul General Ekong:

Congratulations on your recent appointment as Consul General. You have some big shoes to fill. In viewing a photo of your predecessor, The Honorable and Esteemed Taofiq Oseni, I’d guess they are about size 14.

What with hanging pictures in your new office and finding the water fountain and all, you’ve probably been too busy to read the latest international reports concerning Nigeria. So, here’s an update.

According to Transparency International, the anti-corruption watchdogs, Nigeria has once again placed second (behind Bangladesh) among the most corrupt countries of 2003. This makes Nigeria the Avis (sorry, Avis) of international corruption for the second straight year.

Here's a thought: Have you considered flying an Avis fender-flag on Embassy vehicles as a reminder to never take your eye off of becoming Number One?

While critics, jealous of Nigeria's oil riches and booming machete and funeral industries "tsk, tsk" at news of such prize-winning corruption, it must give you some secret comfort to know Nigeria is at least highly placed in something.

I've never written to a Consulate General before, Mrs. Ekong, so please bare with me. I hope "Dear Mrs. Consul General Ekong" is the correct salutation ... or, should it be Mama Ekong, or perhaps Madam Ekong?

I once knew a Madam when I lived in Rawlins Wyoming USA. She ran a flocked-wallpaper, hot-pillow joint on Front Street. The sign on the front door boasted "Twelve Girls. No Waiting." Local joke was that city Council met there on Friday nights ... perhaps they still do. Who knows? The Shadow do, but he ain't talking. But, silly me, I'm already getting off of the point. Must be because I'm a bit intimidated by your title and stature.

As you have probably noticed, we Americans pride ourselves on our informality. We don't bow to each other, we aren't much on saluting, and we never curtsey to politicians. However, celebrities such as yourself seem to throw us into helpless frenzies of hero worship and autograph mania.

In the past I have written to Oprah Winfrey and to presidents Clinton and Carter addressing them as Oprah, Hillary and Jimmy, respectively. First names must have been OK with them because Oprah sent me an invitation to apply for tickets, Hillary invited me to an intimate gathering of a thousand or so of her best friends @ \$1,000 per plate, and Jimmy sent a Habitat for Humanity brochure and a note: "Pack your hammer and come on down."

Mrs. Ekong, since I know you will be embarrassed at Nigeria's number two rating in Transparency International's corruption scale, I am writing today to tell you about a national treasure which if managed properly, is sure to help you grab number one in next year's standings.

Here it is: In a tribute to ambition sure to grab the attention of educators everywhere, Nigerian crooks have somehow mastered the computer. Result: Nigeria has launched thousands of conmen and conwomen into cyberspace.

Working round-the-clock from lists (any phone book, any city) of Americans likely to fall for a confidence scheme, Nigerian crooks are sending off thousands of come-on emails promising to transfer large sums of money into the bank accounts of gullible Americans.

Of course, it's all a scam. When the victim comes to his senses and stops sending the money requested for various fees and bribes toward release of the phony funds ... even makes threaten-

ing noises about going to the authorities ... the scam is abandoned. The scammer's email address becomes a black hole, and the conmen and women fade into the Nigerian veldt where they turn their attentions to the next victim.

Mrs. Ekong, I realize the majority of Nigerian citizens are honest and hard working. However, the honest and hard working never write to me. I only hear from Nigerian crooks. They claim to be everything from trusted Nigerian government or banking officials, to needy orphans looking to escape Nigeria with money left to them by murdered fathers. They email fetching photos of themselves and their families along with legitimate-appearing documents and certificates bearing my name as "beneficiary" of huge sums of money.

Never taking their eyes off of the prize, Nigerian conmen will promise anything. Without so much as seeing my photo, Victoria Borunga Maitama, a Lagos conwoman with questionable taste in men, offered "intimate services" if I would come to Nigeria to take nominee possession of her fortune and escort her back to the United States where we would split the money. On hearing this, my wife, a lovely girl of puritan Polish stock and conservative leaning, issued a hollow laugh and announced in her winning way, "Not in this lifetime, Bub." 'Bub' is a term of endearment around here. Does your husband have a pet name for you?

I ask two things of you, Mrs. Ekong. First, notify all Nigerian Chambers of Commerce to do a

bit of screening before allowing patrons to borrow American telephone directories.

My second request is that the next time President George W. Bush visits Nigeria with his American Aid checkbook in hand, that President Obasanjo ask George to save a few dollars for the town of Lakeview, Arkansas USA, and probably a couple hundred equally needy towns in every state of our union.

In Lakeview, Arkansas, the bed-at-nine retirement community where I live, we could use a real sewer system. Those 55-gallon septic drums fill up fast. Our fire department could use a new building, a couple of new puffers, a gross of fire axes, a mile or so of new hose, and a ladder capable of reaching a pussycat in a tall tree.

While the money is flowing, our little park could use a racquetball court, an Olympic pool and a covered stadium for holding walker races. And, it would be nice to have a 15,000 foot runway at the Mountain Home Intergalactic Airport in Midway, Arkansas so's the mayor could get his Piper Cub off of the ground without ricocheting off of the widow Nutbuster's bungalow.

Finally, the Lakeview Police Department could use a new Hummer. The cheap model ... the one without machine guns ... will be just fine. Just last week our 1959 Edsel police car, a once proud gum-ball cruiser, was forced to slink back to headquarters in shame after being unable to overtake a

tipsy octogenarian at the wheel of a speeding golf cart.

I will look forward to receiving your comments concerning the conmen and women who are operating out of your country and what your officials are doing to stop it. And, while you're at it, bilked Americans want to know what your government is doing to arrange the return of the millions of dollars already advanced to Nigerian fraudsters. Maybe Nigeria could send a check to America's needy. Imagine ... Foreign Aid **to** the United States. Wouldn't that be a switch!

Have a nice day in New York City, Mrs. Ekong. Lookout for muggers. Stay out of Central Park after 3 PM. Write soon. Call me "Bub" if you like.

Bruce Ferguson, American fraud target

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Mrs. Ekong did not reply, however, a Nigerian government statement did make airy mention of the conman problem, essentially placing the blame on the victims:

"There would be no 419 (email fraud) scam if there are no greedy credulous and criminally-minded victims ready to reap where they did not sow. It is the case of people with more ambition to get rich quick than commonsense."

I did not consider this statement a satisfactory reply to my letter; so, I sent a follow-up to Mr. Abanze Ukpokolo, a member of Mrs. Ekong's staff:

Good Morning, Mr. Ukpokolo:

I write to you today in the hope that you will ask Her Illustrious and Munificent Highness, the Consul General to reply to my recent letter in which I appealed to her for help in stopping the email crime wave being directed at American citizens by Nigerian conmen and women.

People in my state of Arkansas have lost hundreds of dollars, which in Arkansas is a great deal of money. People in New York and California have lost tens of thousands, maybe millions, but they have bigger football stadiums and refuse to drink screw-top wine.

This is a serious problem, Mr. Ukpokolo. It's a cultural attack on our way of life. An Arkan- san's loss of dollars to Nigerian scammers poses a direct loss to the Great American Tobacco and Beer industries. Americans will vote for anybody, but they get steamed when crooks horse around with American values. How would Nigerians like it if outsiders muscled into their money-laundering and pipeline-siphoning businesses?

As I mentioned to Mrs. Ekong in my unanswered letter, we know that 99% of Nigerians are honest as the day is long (ours are 24 hours – how long are yours?), that they have families to support

and educate and that they have no interest in cheating anyone out of anything.

Our problem ... and yours ... is the Rebellious Element, the 1% of Nigerians who have chosen the lower path, who turn their noses up at soiled hands and hourly wages in favor of sending come-on letters to susceptible and greedy Americans, offering them huge sums of money for participating in transfers of (non-existent) riches.

What they're doing is a crime, Mr. Ukpoko, at least it's a crime in the USA. So, what we want to know here in Arkansas (a state that is number 49 in almost everything except in Nigerian scams, where we probably rank number 2 behind Mississippi) is, what is your country doing about it? Have you ever caught one of these scammers? What did you do to him/her? Is his head mounted someplace where a victim could see it? How about his behind ... is it stuffed and mounted so an American victim could travel to Lagos to kick it?

I have a large file of names and email addresses of Nigerian scam operators who have targeted me over the past five years. I will be pleased to forward them if you will be pleased to find and put them all in jail ... assuming your jails are not already filled to capacity with political prisoners.

If that's the case, we'll try to find a place for your conmen in Arkansas jails, where miscreants must take a number to gain entry. While I would take little pleasure in seeing honest Arkansan boot-

leggers and armed robbers being forced to associate with Nigerian conmen, justice must prevail.

Here's a thought. Maybe we can negotiate a prisoner exchange, say three meth-makers and six check kiters for one Nigerian conman. Think about it. Cooperation is the bedrock of progress (I just made that up. Use it in your next speech).

I am confident any alternative proposal you might advance would be seriously considered by our esteemed Governor, Brother Mike Huckabee, a decent and reasonable man who is suffering premature balding, noticeable weight loss and an annoying nervous tic in attempting to perform a thankless and impossible job.

Please give our regards to the lovely Mrs. Ekong, and if he's around, to her illustrious husband, Mandu. (If he's not around would that make him Mandon't?) I also send regards to each and every one of the 99% of Nigerians who are not crooks, merely poverty stricken like a lot of Arkansans. We now look forward to receiving Mrs. Ekong's considered thoughts on this important national matter.

Bruce Ferguson, Mad-as-Hell American

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Mr. Upokolo did not reply. Mrs. Ekong did not reply nor was anything heard from any one of the 99% of non-crook Nigerians. Figuring that the Nigerian Consul General and her staff were simply too busy with arranging upper class cocktail parties and Foreign Aid Recipi-

ent luncheons with important politicians and grinning lobbyists to respond to a lowly American citizen's cry for help, I turned to the United States Government. Having read of a large building in Washington DC that houses a desk manned by an expert for each country on the face of the globe, I addressed a letter to the Nigerian Desk:

Dear Mr. Nigerian Desk or phone #202 482-5149

Sir: The buy-a-friend American Foreign Aid Program that out-of-office malcontents are fond of characterizing as donating more money to foreign despots than to America's homeless and health-insurance-deprived, is a total flop in the eyes of the everyday Nigerian conman.

Sorely disappointed in the level of American Foreign Aid generosity, Nigerian confidence operators have mounted an ingenious form of email fraud to cover the shortfall.

From Lagos, Nigeria, the infamous crime-ridden, cesspool of ethnic murder, rampant sidewalk-spitting and prize-winning political turmoil comes a flood of emails designed to woo and scam gullible Americans with get-rich offers.

Example: Just last week I received a from-the-heart email solicitation from a Mrs. Merci (that's French for 'thank you') Williams of Lagos, Nigeria. Mrs. Williams describes herself as "a cancer victim awaiting my summons from God."

Merci states in her email that without her knowledge or consent, her late husband, Olata

(Sticky Fingers) Williams, became inexplicably and gloriously rich while a trusted employee in the receipts and collections department of the Nigerian Petroleum and Sand Pounding Corporation of Lagos, Bagos, and Umgumwa Provinces.

On the morning when his “unauthorized loans” were discovered, Sticky Fingers was called into the president’s office where he was roundly ~~castrated~~ castigated and made to feel ashamed of himself. He was then invited to an early lunch in the company of a couple of company enforcers dressed in designer loincloths and carrying 30 caliber Gucci spears.

Sticky Fingers was never seen again. His ailing wife, Merci, admitted in her letter to me that she had never been good with money and declared she had no idea of the amount of money her husband had stolen. “They murdered my loving husband over a few dollars, and now I must spend what’s left of my life alone,” she complained.

When told of her husband’s disappearance, Merci swallowed her grief and nipped right down to the Central National Bank where she lovingly opened the family lockbox and removed the \$8,500,000 left there by her missing husband.

So, here we find Merci (thank you) Williams, a friendless, childless cancer victim facing her maker while comfortably perched atop a mattress stuffed with eight million, five hundred thousand American dollars.

Writes Merci, “I am in search of a church or charitable organization that can find a God-propagating use for this money. I’ll soon be dead, and then I won’t need it.”

The fly in Merci’s altruistic ointment is that any needy church or charity wishing to apply for her make-believe millions must first remit \$25,000 “for release documents and barrister’s fees.”

Several of our friends and business associates have received similar share-the-wealth offers from persons wishing to move large sums of faux money Out of Africa. While most people recognize such emails as scams and dump them back into cyberspace, a fair number are taken in, and naively contribute money for various fees, bribes and the like, never receiving a dime in return.

What is our government doing to apply pressure to Nigeria and other scam-operation nations to find and jail the people responsible? Are we threatening to reduce (ha, ha) or withhold (ha, ha, ha) Foreign Aid? Are we actively searching for American confederates? Have we filed grievances with the United Nations (ha, ha, stop it, you’re killing me)?

Bruce Ferguson, Columnist & American Citizen

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The only reply was a flyer from the Republican National Committee soliciting a contribution.



SHMOOZING the NIGERIANS

A classified ad in a popular magazine some years ago offered a “Guaranteed Caterpillar Killer” for a dollar. “Money back. No questions asked,” promised the ad.

My Uncle Cleroy’s Evansville, Indiana garden was infested with the notoriously voracious saber-toothed crop cruncher. “I hear ‘em out there all night, munching and munching,” he said, while anxiously stuffing his dollar into an envelope addressed to The International Critter Crusher Corporation of Chicago, Illinois.

Uncle Cleroy was soon rewarded with a package containing two small blocks of wood. One block was stamped “Block A.” The other was stamped “Block B.” Accompanying the blocks was a two-line instruction sheet. “Place caterpillar on Block A,” said line one. “Strike sharply with Block B,” said line two.

Uncle Cleroy was not amused. “I have been *&%#+!!! hornswaggled,” is what he said. And hornswaggled he was, as was the neighbor lady who sent her dollar in to The National Seamstresses Guild in New York City for a “Yard of Pure Silk. “What a bargain!” she said to her husband, Shlomo, figuring that a yard was just about right for covering a particularly ugly side chair that had come to them from his side of the family.

The mailman soon stopped by to present her with an envelope from The National Seamstresses Guild of New York City. Inside was her yard of silk; a thread three feet in length. "That's a yard of silk alright," said her husband, doing his best to stifle a laugh. "Some bargain! It's strong enough to hang the cat, but there ain't enough of it to make him a sweater."

"Harmless" scams such as the "Guaranteed Caterpillar Killer," and the "Yard of Pure Silk" might be viewed as laughable lessons for the gullible. But, the scams described in the following pages were artfully designed by devious Nigerian minds ... minds capable of more useful work ... to take advantage of the greed living within all of us.

It's the Nigerian scammer against the world. The object of the game is to empty the unwary victim's bank account. The victim's goal is instant wealth without work.

Headquartered in Lagos, Nigeria, a network of West African con-men, con-women, rip-off artists, thugs and murderers troll the world for likely marks. Confederates and fellow travelers in dozens of countries provide assistance and back-up.

With a population estimated at 132 million, a less-than-princely annual per-capita income of \$290, and a history of famine, civil war and bloody massacres, Nigeria is at once the most corrupt, most populous, and very likely the poorest nation in Africa. Running water and household electricity are rare, as are paved roads, telephones, and ade-