



## SERVING THE LED: DEMOCRATIC OPTIONS FOR A NIGERIAN VILLAGE

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### INTRODUCTION

In a world of hard-to-predict, rapid change, leaders must understand the complexity of our social and natural world of variations, need for mutual interactive discussion, and process of selection for effective leadership. According to Axelrod and Cohen (2000), it is hard to predict situations in Complex Adaptive Systems (CAS), which means a “world where many players are all adapting to each other and where the emerging future is extremely hard to predict” (p. xi). Complex Adaptive Systems has a premise that agents are diverse (pp. 47 & 33). In a monoculture community, such as that of the Okpo/Ihechiowa in Southeast Nigeria, the lack of leadership experience in complex diversified cultures affects any adaptation to multifaceted modern economic, social, and political development. It also affects adaptation to the dynamic complexity of interaction and selection of leaders in the face of innovation. Torti Ufere, a native of Okpo, stepped out to explore the knowledge behind the successful development in modern nations, which seemed to elude the Okpo indigenous leadership model.

According to Wheatley (2002), “There is no power equal to a community discovering what it cares about” (p. 22). The Okpo community desires to adapt to complexity. Without going into a detailed explication of the term Complex Adaptive Systems, in this paper I shall discuss the complexity of variation, interaction, and selection, and how each affected Torti Ufere’s exploratory experience. Axelrod and Cohen (2000) defined variation as change processes which provide the raw material for adaptation; interaction



as a process of relating with the aim of harnessing complexity; and selection as the result of mechanisms such as trial-and-error learning, or imitation of the strategies of apparently successful agents (pp. 32, 63, 7).

To explore how variation, interaction, and selection affected Torti Ufere's leadership experience, I will not strictly follow the traditional academic writing style. The reason is that the literature says little about Torti Ufere's life and leadership. In an effort to develop this topic, I will first examine the background, the biographical data, and the stepping out of a servant-leader to experience variations. Next, I will examine interactive relationships, that is, their effect on Torti Ufere, the exploring servant-leader, and his challenges in navigating through boundaries. Last, the paper will examine the role of selection in Complex Adaptive Systems and its ethical implications for the servant-leader, concluding with a critical evaluation.

#### BACKGROUND

Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960. A few years later, Western education and leadership models became highly prized in Nigeria. While some parents resisted sending their male children to school for fear of indoctrination, others who had wanted a Western education for their sons could not afford it. Education from the onset in Okpo/Ihechiowa, Southeast Nigeria, was an adventure for the wealthy and the royal family. In 1963, twenty-four-year-old Torti Ufere received from his community a seemingly rare privilege: the opportunity to study in the United States (Moeser, 2003). He understood the importance of this unique opportunity and resolved to make the best use of it by exploring leadership variations through interactions and selection in order to help improve the indigenous leadership and living conditions of the Okpo village.

Upon graduating with a Master of Science degree in 1969, followed by a doctorate in 1974 in Urban and Regional Planning from the University of Wisconsin, and with four years of teaching experience at the Virginia Commonwealth University and the Kansas State University respectively



(Moeser, 2003; Murphy, 1986, p. 30), Torti Ufere left the U.S. with his Caucasian wife and two sons, returning to Nigeria, where a third son was born. As a faithful servant of his people, Torti Ufere started development projects in Okpo and in the neighboring villages. In 1983, he ran for a Nigerian senatorial seat under the Nigerian People's Party (NPP) and won the election (Murphy, 1986, p. 30). No sooner had this illustrious son implemented his leadership exploratory voyage in Okpo in particular and Nigeria in general, than the January 1984 military coup d'état stampeded the Nigerian civil rule and swept out their democratic leadership hopes for 20 years. Amidst the tragedy, Torti Ufere gave his people hope and courage through his democratic leadership exploratory experiences.

#### BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DATA ABOUT TORTI UFERE

Torti Ufere was born in 1938 to a Presbyterian Elder, James Ufere Torti, and Mrs. Mgbafor Ufere Torti in Amaiyi Okpo Ihechiowa, Arochukwu County in Southeast Nigeria. Torti was raised by deeply religious parents who practiced subsistence farming. In 1944, he attended mission schools equivalent to the United States' elementary and high schools. Upon graduating, he secured a teacher's training certificate and taught at Ngwa High School, Aba, Abia State, Nigeria until 1963, when his Okpo community awarded him a scholarship of one thousand pounds to study at Macalester college in the United States (Ufere, 1993, p. 7). In 1967 he gained admission to study Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Wisconsin; he received his Ph.D. with honors in 1974.

As a student, Torti made efforts to meet certain needs of his people who had survived the 1967-1970 Nigerian civil war. He appealed to the U.S. public, who responded generously with books, clothing, and money that helped "re-equip the library of Ututu/Ihechiowa High School" (Ufere, 1993, p. 11). Torti also saved money from his part-time jobs that was used to sponsor people, such as Ogbonnaya Ubi, in the Nigerian university. He was influenced by the ideals of Martin Luther King, Jr. and he also dreamed



that he could “educate to unite the Ihechiowa people with a view to achieving social, political and economic emancipation” (Ufere, p. 15).

Torti started serving certain basic needs of his people by making personal sacrifices. He had different job experiences in the U.S. In the summer of 1975, Torti secured a Nigerian job as a Senior Planning Officer, Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, in the southeast of what is now Imo State. Torti continued to assist in building and equipping local schools, a science laboratory, and libraries with his personal savings. He donated a school bus and gave out more scholarships as a way of combating illiteracy and poverty (Ufere, p. 51). At a time when Okpo and the neighboring villages were having conflicts, Torti engaged in reconciling neighboring communities. Ufere (1993) noted that although Torti was criticized for his fairness by some of his own community members, he did not hesitate to work across tribal lines.

Torti did not focus on developing his people alone, but also “held consultations with leaders of other villages and communities in the zone and made undisclosed monetary donations in aid of development projects” (Ufere, p. 51). According to his book, Torti (1973) observed the need for “the advocacy of the interests of the unorganized, the poor and minority groups which often are neglected in city master plans” (p. 50). Torti seemed to understand the value of mutual dialogue. He argued that leaders “should aim at helping the people of the Region to communicate, debate, discuss and educate each other on the needs, values, standards, objectives and goals of its people” (pp. 7-8). Because there are always some people whose interests are not represented, Torti and other planners thought it necessary to have pluralism in planning so that all interests, including those of the marginalized, would be better represented.

This egalitarianism was the motivating factor in Torti’s service to his people. People quickly realized that he had been serving them without any self-centered attachment. They beckoned him to be their community and political leader. According to Ufere (1993), Torti did not want to go into politics. However, the desire to advocate for the less privileged peoples and



villages was unquenchable. The motivation that led him to succeed in leadership exploration in the U.S. also led him to win the Nigerian Senate seat. When his dream to help steer Nigeria in a better political and economic direction was toppled by a 1983/84 military coup, he went back home as a community organizer.

In November of 1984 Torti was reconciling two conflicting communities in southeast Nigeria when he passed out. A few days later, on November 30, 1984, he died of a reaction to iodine because his doctor could not “single handedly perform an effective cardio-pulmonary resuscitation on him” (Ufere, p. 73). Nnanna wrote, “Torti sacrificed everything, including his resources, money, pleasure, time and his precious life in the struggle to make Ihechiowa [as well as Nigeria] great” (as cited in Ufere, p. 76). Torti empowered many Nigerians to step up, explore variation, and serve community interests through his exemplary life of selfless service.

#### STEPPING OUT TO EXPLORE VARIATION: TORTI UFERE AND OKPO EXPERIENCE

As defined above, variation in a Complex Adaptive System is a change process that provides the raw material for adaptation. In an ever-changing, nonlinear world, servant-leaders who are not open to diversity may be at risk in the future (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000). According to Wheatley (2006), a very slight variance is capable of amplifying into completely unimaginable results (p. 120). For example, a monoculture is placed at risk via the elimination of the genetic variety in a crop. Without genetic variety, Axelrod and Cohen (2000) opined, the introduction of a new parasite can wreak havoc (p. 34). Diversity brings about progress and balance in communities.

The Okpo community is increasingly unchanging and therefore seemingly remote due to a lack of adequate variation. This insufficient diversity is evident in the traditional one-way-traffic of living and thinking valued only in an overly closed system (Griffin, 2002, p. 202). Axelrod and Cohen (2000) argue that “variation in agents may be valuable even if the environment is unchanging, if the best agents in the population up to this moment



are far from the best possible, variety can have value, and homogeneity may be a hindrance” (p. 34). Torti Ufere perhaps understood this need to explore various ways of doing things in a world that is becoming increasingly complex. Agents or policy makers in a Complex Adaptive System, therefore, strive for the middle ground between diversity and uniformity. By doing so, they retain commonality without losing track of the possibility that there may be differences we are temporarily either ignoring or are unaware of (p. 34).

### *Exploring and Exploiting Variation*

Axelrod and Cohen (2000) argued that in the past, research on various mechanisms for transforming or destroying has led to the establishment of an important trade-off principle, usually referred to as *exploration versus exploitation*. This principle “captures the tension in Complex Adaptive Systems between creations of untested types of leadership that may be superior to what currently exists versus the copying of tested types that have so far proven best” (p. 43). Europeans, for example, created a leadership style that was not first tested in Africa prior to replacing the tested African traditional leadership style during colonialism. The untested leadership type that was introduced in Africa was considered superior to the prevalent African leadership model. Today, instability still pervades many of these African nations partly because adaptation to this Western leadership complexity seems a Herculean task. The untested leadership type in Africa was probably introduced prematurely.

Also the trade-off principles in exploring versus exploiting have turned out to be revealing across a range of settings. The value of exploring was gradually overtaken by some Nigerian leaders exploiting the resources of the followers. Lack of accountability was becoming pervasive in the Nigerian post-colonial leadership style. Much like Helga Estby in *Bold Spirit* (Hunt, 2003), Torti Ufere appeared to want an opportunity to help transform his village leadership. To make his dream a reality, Torti set aside his indigenous leadership model by exploring and evaluating without necessarily



exploiting the modern leadership variation. This led to the deep reflection upon and development of Greenleaf's (1977) servant-leadership principles, which we shall discuss later.

#### INTERACTION AND ITS EFFECTS ON TORTI UFERE

According to Axelrod and Cohen (2000), interaction in a Complex Adaptive System is a process of relating to the other and harnessing complexity (p. 63). This relationship is deeply rooted in communication and mutual dialogue. Wheatley (2006) argued that interaction brings particles into being momentarily with other energy sources (p. 34). Wheatley further argued that the result and probability of this interaction can be plotted by physicists, but that no particle can be drawn independently from the others (p. 34). In other words, the relationship between agents, who are defined as a "person such as the team member in a company, who has the ability to interact with its environment, including other agents" (Axelrod & Cohen, p. 4), should be interdependence. The Okpo community is drawn at the edge of this new world of relationship (Wheatley, p. 34), and therefore should be able to interact because the events of interest within a system arise from the mutual interactions of its agents and with the interdependence of each other (Wenger, 1999).

The challenge encountered in this aspect of interaction is what Axelrod and Cohen (2000) called asymmetric and local. The pattern of interactions is asymmetric because a leader in the U.S., for example, may have the opportunity to "broadcast messages simultaneously" to many others in Africa, "who usually do not have as much capability to broadcast back" (p. 63). The agents are not equally interdependent. Torti Ufere, an Okpo village citizen exploring leadership variations, expected to interact with all agents on an equal basis. In Africa, the pattern of Torti Ufere's interaction with the diverse world is asymmetrical due to the level of discrimination and marginalization experienced across the board, which often impedes mutual dialogue. This symmetry/asymmetry idea is fundamentally rooted in differences related to power, status, and wealth.



Also, the pattern of interaction is local because, according to Axelrod and Cohen (2000), it is “convenient to shop in stores near our homes. . . . We know many people near where we live or work, and only a minuscule proportion of others in the world” (p. 63). As a result, our interactive relationship has a strong local bias and is quite far from uniform (p. 63). In this case, though it is obvious that it is convenient for a leader to shop in stores near to home, it is also quite possible that a leader may not have what his or her people need within their geographical locale. It is therefore essential for a servant-leader to interact in a uniform pattern even with the smallest proportion of others residing beyond reach.

#### *From Local to Global Mutual Interaction*

A proverbial aphorism holds that “charity begins at home.” Similarly, Griffin (2002) argued that “the themes patterning interaction are themes local to those who are interacting and attention is therefore directed to themes emerging in local interaction between people rather than thinking in terms of themes across global situations” (p. 170). If this is the case, one is likely to argue that Griffin’s thinking seemingly builds boundaries, walling off interaction (Wheatley, 2006, p. 32).

However, Griffin (2002) did not end here. For him, “Whatever the global themes one might want to articulate for an organization or a society, they have reality only insofar as they are expressed in local situations in the living present” (p. 170). This is somewhat true because the “living present” need in Okpo is the driving force for Torti Ufere’s multi-cross-cultural interaction and servant-leadership exploration. It is not the same with a leader who has the opportunity to broadcast messages simultaneously to many others, who usually do not have as much openness to feedback. The broadcast mentality has the capacity to exploit.

Obviously, Griffin’s (2002) argument is not an easy one to make. On the one hand, if we continue with our “global categories,” we will tend to reinforce existing power relations. If we attend only to our local interactions, we become isolated. Everything depends on how we define both





“local” and “interaction.” Certainly, the organizing notions of “democracy” and/or the “Church,” for me, are ways that we try to expand the context of freedom and agency in order to live in the local interaction productively and joyfully. Yet, the lingering effects of colonialism and the general states of foreign policy affairs in capitalist-dominated cultures prove a challenge. Thus, even if the Okpo are living well locally, the external situations caused by the 1885 Berlin Conference when several European nations decided to partition Africa to meet their short agenda (Odima, 2003, p. 22) seem to continually be “messing up” the Okpo’s efforts at self-governance.

### *Genuinely Mutual Interaction for All*

Following Stacey, Griffins, and Shaw’s (2002) concept of distinct interacting patterns in the Complex Adaptive System, it is more convenient to interact near home. However, it is not the ideal to limit interactions near home if we understand clearly that all humans, wherever they may be, are from one source. In the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson held as self-evident the truth that all people are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. Genuinely mutual interaction should be upheld by all, and it should not matter if one is near or far from home (Wenger, 1999). Axelrod and Cohen (2000) made a crucial but challenging observation:

Those who are “near” you are not necessarily “near” each other. . . . It also means that many who are near you, in the sense of being able to reach you easily, may not be like you, or be liked by you (p. 82).

Thus, it may not be always convenient to interact from home.

Unfortunately, this often discriminatory attitude, according to Fawel (2006), Hunt (2003), and Odima (2003), affects interaction and equal treatment, leading to a superiority-inferiority complex which often affects mutual interactive dialogue. An example is the secretary who controls access to the boss’s calendar and decides who should or should not have



access to the boss. Another example is a border patrol official who enforces rules of immigration, often making crossing the border a nightmare for immigrants. Each of these people is capable of conditionally opening or closing a barrier of an interaction for or against a servant-leader wishing to move through it (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000).

### *Encountering Boundaries in Interactive Relationship*

Wheatley (2006), Axelrod and Cohen (2000), and Griffin (2002) seem to argue that boundaries often limit the ability to interact and relate in a community, which may lead to a loss of variety. According to Wheatley (2006), there is need for people to be connected to the basic identity of the community (p. 146). She asked a question similar to one that Torti Ufere asked: “Who are we? Who do we aspire to become?” (p. 146). This question is a driving force that inspires Torti Ufere to explore through interaction and communicative relationship. Griffin (2002) argues that organizations and communities are processes of communicative interaction and joint action (p. 87). Communicative interaction is therefore essential because it can reach beyond immediate proximity with the help of information technology that makes interaction less tied to physical space.

Although information technology can easily go beyond boundaries and avail people the opportunity to interact, barriers and boundaries are introduced into the system on purpose in order to alter the rates of communicative interaction among types. Wheatley (2006) insisted that people need to reach out beyond traditional boundaries and develop an interactive relationship with peoples of all races, classes, and genders.

It is becoming common to see social and physical boundaries and barriers built to inhibit interaction in our world. These, according to Axelrod and Cohen (2000), include city walls with gates and guards, national borders with enforced immigration rules, prisons, monasteries, clan or ethnic identities, citizenship rules, private clubs, e-mail filters, and computers that are deliberately isolated from outside networks (pp. 78-80). All of these prevent some types of interactions while allowing others. People need to



connect with varieties of new information (Wheatley, 2006, p. 146) and with distant places.

Technology brings us closer to one another — both to groups we admire and to groups we despise, as well as to other simple power manipulations and undiscussable ideologies (Griffin, 2002, p. 127). However, there is an aspect of us that is biased, and it is reflected in our relationship with others and our leadership imperfections. These are some of the hard barriers (pleasant and unpleasant experiences) a servant-leader, such as Torti Ufere, has to navigate and break through in his exploratory project to make the Okpo leadership system healthier (Greenleaf, 1977). As Wheatley notes, “The novelist E.M. Foster said ‘Just connect.’ But of course, it’s not quite that simple” (pp. 146-147).

### *Relating and Adapting to Complexity*

Griffin (2002) maintained that interaction involves complex responsive processes of relating. Seen from this perspective, the individual possesses a self only in relation to the selves of the other members of the social group. Adapting to the living present where the future is perpetually under construction and being selflessly satisfied with it is important (pp. 126-127, 159, 169). In the socio-economic world, according to Fawell (2006), we frequently see a merging and division of groups due to self-centeredness that leads to controlling that greedily discombobulates rather than serves (p. 409). After taking a closer look at the post-colonial leadership model in Nigeria in particular and Africa in general, one wonders why the political leaders are the wealthiest in the continent. The absence of a middle class in many African nations gives testimony to leadership irregularities, to a lack of enduring mutual dialogue and selfless service for the led.

Furthermore, “a group of people that have been considered part of some larger nation find themselves interacting more strongly with each other and less with members of the ‘other’ group. They begin to talk of their separate identity” (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000, p. 115), leading to a wider chasm between the haves and the have-nots. To live in our quantum world,



Wheatley (2006) argues, “to weave here and there with ease and grace, we need to change what we do” (p. 39). We need to serve the interests of the led and talk to all people regardless of nationality. Perhaps doing so will help us to reevaluate our systems thinking and policies, since the application is not just an academic exercise, but also a matter of how certain powers and ideologies are often manipulated and made un-discursive. Wheatley further argued that we need to become “savvy” about fostering interactive relationship, to become better at conversing and active listening, to have equal respect for one another’s uniqueness, and to communicate well with diverse people, because these are necessary for strong interactive relationship (p. 39).

#### SELECTION AND ITS ETHICAL IMPLICATION FOR TORTI UFERE

Selection in a Complex Adaptive System is seen as the result of mechanisms such as trial-and-error learning, or imitation of the strategies of apparently successful agents (Axelrod & Cohen, 2000, p. 7). Selection reminds us of the possibility of choices, error detection, and the natural freedom to choose ethically. Many leadership theories abound in our era, but not many people are truly and ethically served by their leaders. Griffin (2002) and Stone (2002) argue that biological systems are not the only ones that select their leader(s); election of candidates is another such method of selection. The people choose their leader(s) “if invited to vote” and the leader(s) are expected to make good ethical choices based on freedom and service to the people (Stone, pp. 43, 144, 217). A person may want to identify with leaders who truly served the interests of the people, such as Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, or Franklin D. Roosevelt. This is essential because copying or imitation seems to belong to human form (Mead, 1934, p. 59). This is part of the reasons why Torti Ufer explored diverse cultures and leadership models that will benefit his people, as they have benefited other developed nations.



### *Torti Ufere and Leadership Services*

Axelrod and Cohen (2000) maintained that in “agent selection, there must be fairly substantial accumulations of resources to create a new agent, whether that agent is an infant organism, a political candidate, or a branch office” (p. 129). In the Okpo village, efforts were made to raise finances through community efforts to sponsor Torti Ufere in Western education and his exploratory projects. This is not uncommon in post-colonial Africa, which lives its proverbial dictum: “It takes a village to raise a child” (Clinton, 1996). Such a community-raised child has the responsibility of serving his/her people’s needs first before his/her own.

Although not all village-raised leaders elevate the needs of their community over self-interest, Torti Ufere did. He started with the desire to serve his people. As a servant-leader, he identified with the Greenleaf (1991) concept of servant-leadership, which is crossing cultural borders demonstrating that the message of servant-leadership is spreading and gaining an increased level of acceptance (p. 156). Torti empowered his people through awarding academic scholarships, investing in education, and reconciling and uniting conflicting tribes. Also he advocated for the marginalized Nigerian villages and involved the led in mutual dialogue on matters concerning their individual and communal well-being. This is an act of servant-leadership (Spears, 1998).

Laub (2005) studied a Delphi survey to determine servant-leadership characteristics leading to the concept’s definition as “an understanding and practice of leadership that places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader” (p. 158). Laub sets a table of servant-leadership variables similar to the one found in Axelrod and Cohen’s (2000) leadership agent. These variables model Torti Ufere’s leadership exploratory voyage. They include: 1. Valuing people: (a) by trusting and believing in them (variation); (b) by serving others’ needs before one’s own (interaction); and (c) by receptive, non-judgmental listening (selection). 2. Developing people: (a) by providing opportunities for learning and growth (variation), (b) by mod-



eling appropriate behavior (interaction), and (c) by building others through encouragement and affirmation (selection). 3. Building Community: (a) by building strong personal relationships (interaction), (b) by working collaboratively with others (selection), and (c) by valuing differences of others (variation). 4. Displaying Authenticity: (a) by being open and accountable to others (interaction), (b) by a willingness to learn from others (variation), and (c) by maintaining integrity and trust (selection). 5. Providing Leadership: (a) by envisioning the future in the now (variation), (b) by taking initiative (interaction), and (c) by clarifying goals (selection). 6. Sharing Leadership: (a) by facilitating a shared vision (variation), (b) by sharing power and releasing control (interaction), and (c) by sharing status and promoting others (selection) (p. 160). Torti Ufere embodied and exemplified these variables that characterize a true servant-leader.

Coming from a pre-colonial paternalistic leadership model in Okpo where a few wise and virtuous elders, who are appointed by their traditional priest, rule (James O' Toole, 1995, p. 185), Torti Ufere identified and practiced a servant-leadership model which, in Laub's (2005) A-P-S (Autocratic-Paternalistic-Servant) model, takes priority (p. 162). While the leader as dictator (autocratic) treats others as servants by putting his or her needs first, the leader as parent (paternalistic) treats others as his or her children by putting the needs of the organization first, while the leader as steward (servant), which Torti Ufere represents, treats others as his partners by putting the needs of the led (Okpo) first. Thus, Laub (2005) argued that paradoxically we become the most powerful when we give our power away. The aim is to empower others to act and build a community of care in which the needs of all are served, and the community is capable of putting its energy into fulfilling its shared mission and vision (pp. 165-166).

Servant-leadership, according to Laub, "involves issues of the heart and of the soul" (p. 174). This reminds me of Greenleaf's (1976) interpretation of leadership:

The servant-leader is servant first—as Leo was portrayed. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious



choices bring one to lead. The difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant—first to make sure that other people’s highest priority needs are being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants. And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived? (p. 269)

Each sentence from the quote is represented to a great extent in Torti Ufere’s account. He made a conscious choice in assuring other Okpo’s highest priority needs were being served, and to serve them in such a way that they became healthier, freer, wiser, less deprived, and servers themselves. As a servant-leader of Okpo, he made efforts to raise the village’s status. He contributed immensely toward building and equipping the local schools, in addition to giving scholarships to many so that the least privileged were no longer deprived of a standard education. Torti engaged conflicting communities in mutual reconciliation dialogue without taking sides.

Also, as a senator, “Torti was quick to make friends with members irrespective of party affiliation” (Ufere, 1993, p. 62). Within a three-month interval, he was able to help pass an economic amendment bill to Senator Dafinone’s 1983 Nigerian economic motion (pp. 62-70). Accountability, equitable distribution of national natural resources, such as oil, and fighting corruption within the government were all crucial for Torti Ufere. Most importantly, he served in such a way that many people were empowered to freely serve first and to realize their potential. He served by helping “others to see possibilities and to free themselves” (Bagley & Cancienne, 2002, p. 134), a model learned partly from the exploration of democratic leadership model in the U.S. in the ‘60s and early ‘70s.

This was an exercise in visible leadership, because, according to Axelrod and Cohen (2000), when adaptive leadership agents such as Torti Ufere and Okpo reside in a fast mutable environment, “they tend to look to other agents to see which performance measures tend to work and which ones tend to fail. . . . Nevertheless, following the practices of those with more experience or success is often a good strategy in an uncertain world” (p.



148-149). In a complex adaptive world, the Okpo people and their neighbors must learn to be socially, politically, culturally, and economically interdependent, with each person resolving to serve the best interests of others without condition. Thus, an Okpo agent who is to lead in line with Torti Ufere's legacy has to find value in making sacrifices for the well-being of others.

### *Torti Ufere and Emulation*

In addition to Greenleaf (1977), Griffin (2002), Mead (1934), Wheatley (2006), Axelrod and Cohen (2000), and Gardiner (1995) argue that many tested forms of inspirational leadership, such as servant-leadership, work in a similar emulative fashion. For example, Gandhi's leadership criterion of nonviolence was largely successful and advanced throughout the world because he visibly embodied the very values he was advocating (p. 123). This led others to emulate not only his tactics, but also his values.

In a similar visible leadership model, Jesus' *mandatum novum do vobis*, a new command given to the apostles to serve the led, is an encapsulation of servant-leadership. Here Jesus, with a towel and a basin, washed the feet of his servants and commanded them to copy from his exemplary life by washing one another's feet in love (Blanchard, 1992, pp. 26-28; John 13: 13-17). Greenleaf (1977) was inspired by this example of Christ washing the feet as a central image of servant-leadership.

Agents such as Torti Ufere and others apply certain selection and ethical choices that, according to Axelrod and Cohen, "are a very attractive alternative. Especially when they become internalized, norms regulate not through fear of consequences but through the belief that some actions are right and others wrong" (p. 150). The right actions are worthy of emulation and implantation (Kant, 1993). Torti selected and rightly applied leadership principles identifiable with servant-leadership characteristics. This is partly because, as Greenleaf (1977) pointed out, "My hope for the future rests in part on my belief that among the legions of deprived and unsophisticated people are many true servants who will lead" (p. 14). Torti could have





remained in the United States, as many Africans do, but he left a more profitable opportunity in the U.S. to serve the larger need of his people trapped in complexity. This conscious choice was made perhaps to assure that Okpo and their neighboring villages' priority needs would be served. Ufere attempted to serve their needs in such a way that most of them were better able to adapt to complexity, and became a little bit healthier, freer, wiser, less deprived, and servants themselves.

#### EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

It seems to me there is an aspect of power difference and separation that should be minimized to accommodate all to make relationship and interaction ethically easy without having anyone struggling to dominate and exploit others. Stacey, Griffin, and Shaw (2002) hold that humans are members of the complex networks they form (p. 185). As a result, it is quite improper for someone such as Torti Ufere to stand outside of such a network (the Okpo/Ihechiowa community) in order to objectify and model them. With this intersubjective voice, people speak as subjects interacting with others in the co-evolution of a jointly constructed reality. This voice argues that self-organizing processes and their creative potentials in a complex system are radically unpredictable. It advocates for diversity, selection, interactive participation, and decentralization due to the nature of community complexity (Griffin, 2002, p. 209) and human freedom to choose.

Kant (1956) suggested that although it would be better not to maintain that we are free, it is proper to actively bear witness to our belief that we should be free (Griffin, p. 41). We should be free to ethically choose to act as servant-leaders, explore diversity, and interact beyond boundaries, as Torti Ufere did.

Generally, it was Torti Ufere, in collaboration with the Okpo, who defined the whole and applied the vision and value in their community. The visions of what the leaders want to achieve often place undue importance on using any means to justify an end (Mill, 2001, 7). Thus, servant-leaders must not only explore and evaluate in correspondence with the followers



the servant-leadership education model (Crippen 2006, 109-138) that will benefit them, but also “have got to really, genuinely, walk the talk, practice what they preach, live out what they say” (Wheatley, 2006, p. 130).

It is not enough to predict the future through having “groups of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent components that form a complex and unified whole” (Anderson & Johnson, 1997, p. 2), as if humans cannot get things done by focusing on the present. Focusing on the future through systems thinking often neglects a lot about what is here and now around us (Griffin, 2002, p. 53). Torti Ufere was constructing the future in the present, and did not at any point during his exploration lose sight of the condition of his people. As an exploring servant-leader, Torti Ufere’s (1974) focus was always on how to improve the present condition of the led, and this was reflected in the title of his book: *Getting at the Needs, Values, and Futures of People in the Southwestern Wisconsin Region*.

In 1983, a senatorial seat was zoned to Torti Ufere’s county, Arochukwu/Ohafia, and he was elected the first Nigerian senator for the county. His dedicated efforts toward bringing a servant-leadership model to improve the lot of his people and their neighbors were unquestionable. Torti Ufere’s tenure was, however, truncated by the Buhari/Idiagbon coup that took over the nation’s leadership and replaced it with a military mindset that militated against the democratic dream of the nation. A rigid and intolerant dictatorial leadership system was introduced in Nigeria and lasted for about twenty years, as one military junta gave way to another via coup d’état. The military regime that promised peace fueled the chaos and fanned revenge.

Although a senator, the servant-leader Torti Ufere neither lasted three months in office nor lived beyond a year after the coup. However, he made a big difference in a short time in his community. Torti Ufere explored the world variations, valued the need for mutual (local and global) interaction, adapted and made ethical decisions (selection), and built a healthier community. The people of Okpo and their neighbors felt served by Torti Ufere. Thus, I conclude with Greenleaf (1991) that “among the legions of deprived



and unsophisticated people are many true servants who will lead, and that most of them can learn to discriminate among those who presume to serve them and identify the true servants whom they will follow” (p. 14).

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