

VERA JOHNSON PATRICKS SPEAKS ON THE INCREASING VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA - *Gnpai Seminar January 2013*

It is indeed a great privilege to stand here before you today to speak on a subject as sensitive as violence. There is no doubt that Nigeria in the past years have witnessed a sharp rise of this gigantic evil we call violence. And they come in various forms, everywhere you look today, armed robbers are busy doing what they know how to do best, people are disappearing from their homes, offices, roads, or public functions all in the name of the latest business/violence in town they call kidnapping and innocent victims are parting with hard earned monies in payment of ransom in order to get back their loved ones alive, not to talk about suicide bombers whose stock in trade and mandate is to bomb churches and kill innocent worshippers in the name of jihad, or is it the ethnic cleansing that's going on in some states especially in plateau state? Or the endless reports of ritual killings that have engulfed most parts of the country the list goes on and on.

Now the questions on the lips of Nigerians are; what is happening? Why are all these things happening to us? What went wrong? Where did we miss it? And what do we do to put a stop to all that's happening?

I will try as much as possible to expanciate on my own understanding of violence and possible solutions. Let me start by borrowing some quotes from some intellectuals concerning this topic.

Isaac Asimov said: "violence is the last refuge of the incompetent." While Thomas Edison explains that the root of violence is wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without

character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, and politics without principles.

Personally I believe there are only two forces in this world “ the sword, and the spirit”. And in the long run the sword will always be conquered by the spirit. Yes, because evil can never conquer evil, only the good can. So, my honest opinion as I stand here today is, I object to violence because when it appears to do good ,the good is only temporary, but the evil it does is permanent.

We all need to know that violence is not merely killing another; it is also violence when we use a sharp word, when we make a gesture to brush away a person, when we obey because there was fear. So violence isn't merely organized butchery in the name of God, in the name of society or state, or ethnic cleansing, kidnapping or robbery, violence can also be much more subtle, much deeper, as we can see it by inquiring deeper into the depths of violence.