

"Drop Gun, Come 1 on 1, If I no Commot Your Teeth Just Now!" (Posted on Facebook on 10/23/2020)

I used this imprint on a protest poster produced during the present carnage in Nigeria to start the virtual lecture about "Guns and Society in Nigeria," given earlier today to the University of Bologna (Italy). I thank Davide Casciano for this virtual invitation to Italy!

Excerpt from the lecture:

"Drop Gun, Come 1 on 1, If I no Commot Your Teeth Just Now!" is an imprint on a protest poster of the ongoing campaign against police brutality in Nigeria. This poster affirms a crucial fact about violence--access to guns shape the dynamics of power. It is the fear of guns that compelled victims of police brutality be to robbed or even killed by people meant to protect them. But gun violence alone cannot explain the agitation of Nigerians--decade after decade of corruption, maladministration, and political incompetence was crowned by the emergence of Muhammadu Buhari as the head of the most insensitive government in postcolonial Nigerian history in 2015.

Yet, guns remain the most important factor in the dynamics of violent state conflict. The peaceful protest that started over a week ago, became violent when the army began to shot at the crowd on October 20, 2020. The physical attribute of a gun to wreak havoc and its psychological power to force people into silence have historically placed firearms at the center of political power control. Apparently, it is gun legitimacy and superior gun masculinity that kept the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) on a higher pedestal in the deployment of violence against Nigerians.

To understand the context in which the imprint "Drop Gun, Come 1 on 1, If I no Commot Your Teeth Just Now!" emerged, we need to go back to how certain classes of guns were restricted to the police, and why Nigerians did not consider a Dane gun a "real" gun in their political, social, and technological framing of firearm lethality.

Two years ago, I published a book entitled "Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria: Firearms, Culture, and Public Order." The central ideas of the book are many. But the questions I asked and attempted to answer were informed by contemporary dynamics of power, violence, and inequality. I wanted to understand why colonial Nigerians could own some types of guns, which they would never be allowed to have today, within the context of citizenship, race, class, and state monopoly of technology of violence. I discovered that colonial Nigeria had a gun society similar to what the United States has today. And that to understand the intersections of power, violence, and gun technology, we need to unravel how powerful people, institutions, and the government define access to guns yesterday and today.

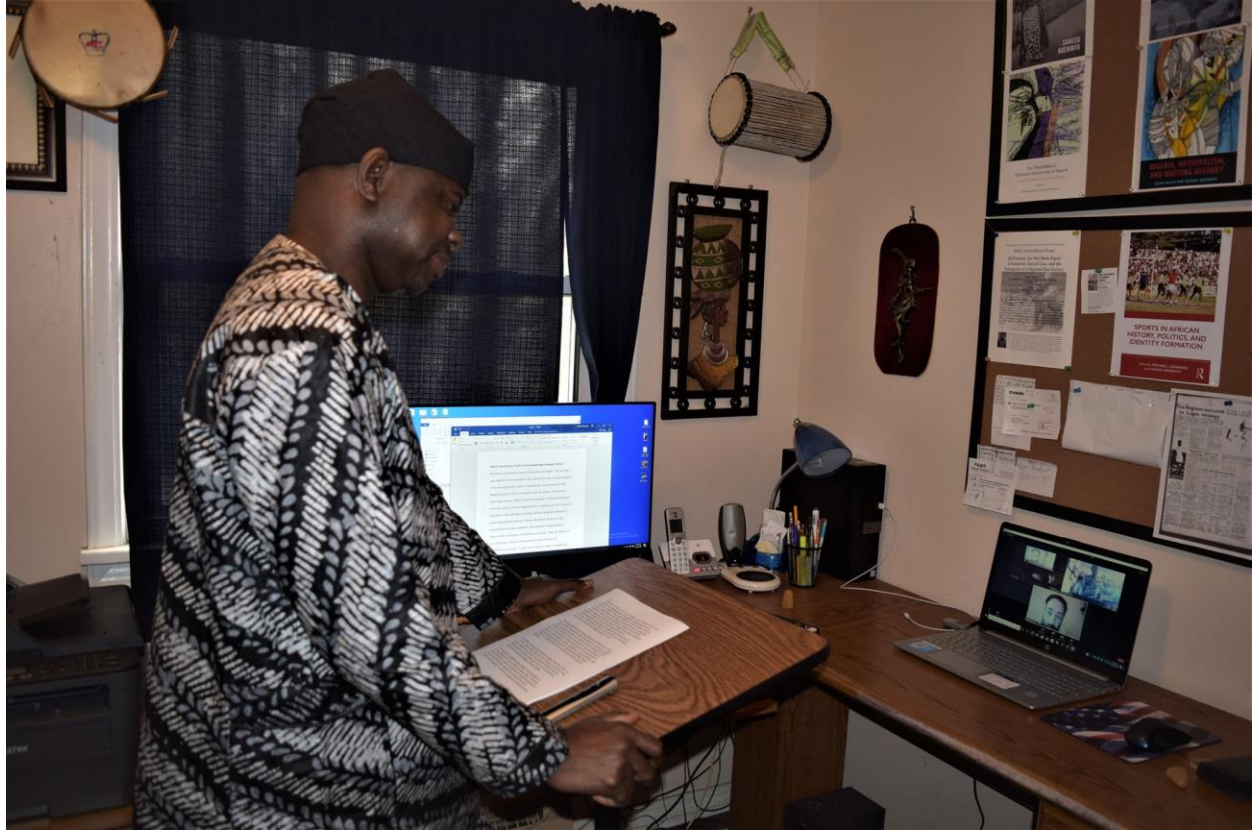


Photo Credit: Olamide Aderinto