

ISSN 1554-3897

*AFRICAN JOURNAL OF CRIMINOLOGY & JUSTICE STUDIES:  
AJCS; Volume 3, No. 2, July 2008*

**LANGUAGE AND GRAFFITI OF EXCEPTIONAL  
INDIVIDUALS:  
PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES IN WEST AFRICA.**

**Williams Emeka Obiozor, Ed.D.**  
Bloomsburg University, Pennsylvania

***ABSTRACT***

*This paper establishes the place of language and graffiti practiced by exceptional individuals in the interpretation of family values, the preservation of culture and traditional heritage of the Igbo community in Southeastern Nigeria. The paper also takes a cursory look at graffiti art and exceptionality in a time when the Igbo tradition and culture were highly respected, jealously guarded and deep-rooted in the heart and soul of its people. Graffiti creations by exceptional individuals transfer both oral and visual education to documented tradition; for societal knowledge and awareness, individual wisdom, expressions against repression, pride and recognition of Igbo language and art. Unfortunately, the post-Nigeria civil war, evangelical movements with their doctrines and practices, including the influence of western culture; the highly revered expressive medium of exceptional minds are fast disappearing from the Igbo environment.*

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*Today, the contemporary Igbo society seemed to be neglecting genuine graffiti art works, turning to other forms of mass communication to pass on information, messages and protests – example, the high-tech murals, internet blogs, electronic billboards, etc. The author recommends collaboration between exceptional artists, researchers and institutions, to revive the positive aspects of graffiti art, and commitment of individual graffiti artists; among others.*

**KEYWORDS:** Graffiti, Igbo, Culture, Exceptionality, Tradition, Education, Language, West Africa.

Exceptional individuals in the ancient Igbo society were endowed with potential talents and creative skills which were displayed with great pride through different media in the community. An exceptional individual may have a disability or a significant gift or talent (Taylor, Smiley & Richards, 2008; Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003) with unique abilities and status in the society. Although such individuals may “differ from the norm” (Heward, 2006, p. 10), they strive to realize their full potentials through extraordinary creative projects which are performed to the delight of their environment. The ancient Igbo society in Southeastern Nigeria could boast of exceptional individuals with such

extraordinary abilities (Hardman, Drew & Egan, 2008) which are translated in their self-initiated art works. These art creations communicate different cultural expressions and information to its audience via visual representations, written scripts, sketches, drawings, spoken word (language), etc. On the other hand, language in its general connotation is the vehicle with which the culture and traditions of a people are transmitted from generation to generation, and it also helps to enshrine unity, peace and decorum within a given society (Daily Champion, 2004).

To people who are unfamiliar with the art, Putatunda (2008) argued that all graffiti seems the same although there are several distinctive graffiti styles. Most of these styles, according to Putatunda, are about using particular fonts to create graffiti letters or graffiti characters. The author gave some examples and uses of graffiti which are as follows:

*Tagging:* This graffiti style is used mainly for displaying penmanship, and is considered as lacking in artistic form.

*Blockbuster:* As the name of this style implies, large sized block letters are used.

*Wildstyle:* Interweaving graffiti letters with designs.

*Throw-Ups:* Graffiti drawing that is done very quickly using few colors.

*Bubble Letters:* Large graffiti letters written in a rounded style.

Each of these graffiti styles can be used to create various types of graffiti (Putatunda, 2008):

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*Hip-Hop Graffiti:* Reflecting African-American culture, this is considered to be the most traditional type of graffiti.

*Challenge Graffiti:* The intention of this type of graffiti is just to express that somebody 'was here.'

*Poster Graffiti:* Graffiti made on posters that have people's pictures on them.

*Aircraft Graffiti:* Drawing tags on airplanes, usually on the dirt on it.

*Tree Graffiti:* As is apparent from its name, graffiti that is painted or carved on trees.

*Invisible Graffiti:* Purely symbolic graffiti, like logos made on computer microchips, which although are there, can't be seen by anybody (Putatunda, 2008).

These works are peculiar and very effective cultural exhibits evident on buildings, on vehicles, on monuments, on body arts, arches, etc. Such art creation exposes the exceptional individual and community skills, creativity, wisdom and linguistic prowess of the Igbo race. There are several disturbing issues relating to language and graffiti expressions around the globe but Igbo graffiti remains a powerful vehicle for transmitting information and cultural education.

Furthermore, there's the often neglected salient and relevant aspect of language and graffiti in Igboland despite

the role these vehicles play in the education of the people, in the preservation of the culture of the land, and their positive effects on social behavior, social values and social acceptance. The Igbo graffiti had great influence on several areas of visual communication in the land before Western tradition with their evangelical fanaticism destroyed its significance. Today, wrong connotations are given to graffiti art around the world; coupled with negative practices, while high-tech internet blogs and other forms of communication have dominated graffiti as means of expression.

### **Historical Perspective**

The phenomenon, which we can observe all over the world, in colloquial speech, is called graffiti (arthistory, 2008). Graffiti are marks or writings made on a wall with paint or spray paint (paint that is sprayed from a can). It can take the form of art, drawings or words (Putatunda, 2008; arthistory, 2008; Wikipedia, 2007; Philips, 1996). Historically, the art of drawing graffiti began making its way on public walls in the latter part of the 1960s, which the famous international folk singer duo, Simon and Garfunkel expressed in their song of the '60s, 'Sounds of Silence': "The words of the prophets were written on the subway walls and the tenement halls... (Putatunda, 2008)"

Furthermore, researchers on graffiti art, Philips (1996) and Thiel (2000), revealed that graffiti has been practiced since prehistorical era, and could be viewed as all

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signs, marks and symbols which could be communicated visually by applications of information through various means (charcoal, nail, spray can) onto walls with and/or without any proprietor's previous permission. Such marks are made by an individuals or individuals (not generally professional artists) upon a wall or other surface that is usually visually accessible to the public. It is a cultural phenomenon created by exceptional individuals. They make it in towns and cities, in villages and hamlets, on housing estates and in suburbs . . . It is to do with self-expression and social needs (Braden, 1978). Thiel explained that children used to walk along walls using tools they found to unconsciously scratch the surface out of curiosity, which in turn provides valuable information. Graffiti, according to Thiel, could be found at all accessible places from mountaintops to caves, underground systems to toilets, barracks and even prisons. There seems to be some automatic drive of man to "leave a mark" displaying aspects of "territorial behavior"(ethnology). At specific places (e.g., - the Tower of London, universities "Karzergraffiti"), we may find famous graffiti left by well known personalities (Goethe, Byron, Boone) that now are being protected as "national monuments" whereas a poster on wall (at same time) may tell you "not to deface surfaces..."(Thiel, 2000).

Today, many graffiti are very complicated mixtures of writing, symbols and pictures. The tradition of graffiti - often viewed by some people as illegal writing and art on public

walls - goes back at least to ancient Greek and Roman empire. In Pompeii, there were scads of political slogans and profane sayings, prompting one first-century graffiti writer to scrawl, "Wall, I am amazed that you haven't fallen in ruins considering the weight of your disgusting inscriptions (Patel, 2007)." Individualized or popular graffiti include bathroom wall marking (called latrinalia), signatures, proclamations of love, witty comments in response to advertisements, and any number of individual, political, or social commentary (called folk epigraphy). In general these graffiti have no affiliation beyond the scope of the individual. It is close to impossible to locate their source (Philips, 1996).

In the United States, Demarco (2006) cited famous mural painter, Lee Quiones' revelation that graffiti culture emerged as a street art movement, which began as a reaction to the political and social climate of New York City in the early '70s. This included the pressures for the end of the Civil Rights Movement and the end of the Vietnam War. Again, graffiti became a form of vandalism and protest among African-American youths during the early hip hop era, a declaration of personal and cultural identity, and a way to reclaim neglected spaces. Now practiced as much by white skate-punks as by black youth, some graffiti has achieved remarkable beauty and skill - even making it into art galleries - while remaining vandalism in most places (Patel, 2007).

The Igbo tribe of Southeastern Nigeria is among the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria (the others are Yoruba and Hausa). The Igbo share linguistic ties with their

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neighbors - the Bini, Igala, Yoruba, Nupe, Ijaw, Ibibio and Idoma, with the split between them probably occurring between five and six thousand years ago. The earliest surviving Igbo art forms are from the 10th century (Igbo Ukwu) and the fine quality of those copper alloy castings suggest that Igbo society had already achieved a level of technology rivaling contemporary Europeans (Africart, 1998; Slattery, 1999).

Within all of Africa, the Igbo homelands are probably one of the most densely populated regions. It is believed by many that this area and its people were one of the driving forces in the early development in the Iron Age which has helped mold the world as we know it. Their culture has brought much to enrich the world . . . . The Igbo have a very unique and distinctive language. It is said often to be one of the hardest to learn. The difficulty of the language often stems from the fact that it is not spoken anywhere else in the world. It is a rich language with many variations. With heavy cultural roots directed at change for the better, the Igbo seem to be just as diverse as the changing language they speak . . . . (Uchendu, 1965; Okere, 1983; VanderSluis, 2000).

Furthermore, there is a fundamental scourge on the cultural milieu in Igboland that requires the urgent attention of the Igbo people. It is obvious that the Igbo language and culture



is endangered and facing extinction just because of the huge decline amongst Igbos to accept its richness and power as the vehicle of our culture (Afuba, 2006; Daily Champion, 2004). The Igbo language is one of the three major languages of Nigeria, the others being Yoruba and Hausa. Native speakers of Igbo, estimated to be between 50 and 60 million people, reside predominantly in Eastern and the Midwestern Nigeria (Eze, 1997).

This paper shares personal experiences and takes into consideration the efforts of other cultures in the struggle to preserve their traditional heritage through various media. These cultures have achieved such innovative strides through myriads of avenues particularly via the formation of associations or community groups. A good example of such cultural preservation could be seen among the Europeans who have identified graffiti festivals as a crucial source of preserving their art and cultural heritage. In March 2007, twenty-one European countries waited anxiously for membership confirmation from the National Campaign Committees on Graffiti, to join in the 2008 summer festival celebrating graffiti, tagged, "*United Colors of Europe, a hot season for Graffs.*"

According to the European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation (2007), all across Europe, colourful walls with the slogan of the campaign will remain as witnesses of the strength of the voice and commitment of young people. This has become a culture Europeans promote and sustain for every generation. The same situation is peculiar in the United States, and other

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societies that utilize creative art expressions to promote their language and culture.

**Graffiti And Education**

The Igbo people has common but richly endowed cultural identity, ancestral insignia and native trademark, which have been a source of education and pride over the centuries. The Igbo race speaks the same language and share the same customary rites, artistic and religious practices. Graffiti has been significant in Igbo traditional identity, pictures, symbols and writings and language expressions through spoken words and songs, among exceptional individuals (both the young and old), with great ancestral and family values; knowledge contents are passed on from generation to generation in the process.

Exceptional graffiti artists create and paint all kinds of slogans in pidgin or broken English and local Igbo dialects, including subjects on events and life tasks, on the greater number of surfaces - walls, cars, trucks (Gwongworo) and buses, arches, pavements, bridges, sculptures, display visual stories, local galleries and exhibitions, banners, posters, etc. The Igbo ethnic group conducts effective informal education and training of young people at home and village settings through such cultural projects. Parents are obliged to enlighten and teach the meanings of such

expressive sketches, writings, drawings and materials to their offspring (whether they have positive or negative connotations); relate them to past events, wars, conquests, warriors, ancestors, fetishes, rites, feasts and festivals in the community.

The graffiti creations could also be in form of distinct art products with some form of calligraphy; auditory materials - idioms, proverbs, folktales, folksongs; philosophical writings or attractive pictures capturing local historical events and brightly displayed or performed for all to admire. Some illustrations, which easily come to mind, are the portrayals in the book, *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe, among other literatures written by Igbo writers.

### **Oral Graffiti And Igbo Music**

The Igbo society has great exceptional performers, composers and creators of good music. The lyrics and rhymes have emotional, philosophical and educational significance to the listeners. Highlife music and Egwu ekpiri (*minstrel sounds/folktale songs*) are the major brands of music played across the Igbo society. The highlife music is a popular musical genre found in West Africa, characterized by jazzy horns and multiple guitars with acquired up-tempo, synch-driven sound (Wikipedia 2007, "Highlife") which creates and provides basic musical language expressions that bring happiness and messages of goodwill to the people. The role of what this writer calls oral graffiti has played in

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songwriting among Igbo musicians is enormous, and they not only entertain their audience but educate all on the preservation of the peoples' traditional values, history and sport, financial independence, provide hope and comfort, love for one another, unity and peaceful co-existence, religious obligation to the *Chi* (God), etc.

The people play music for various cultural events and performance of different traditional rites. Other activities which witnesses recitations, songs and music include, folklores, folk stories, moonlit night gatherings at the village squares, wrestling contests, initiation rites into adulthood, and other celebrations. Igbo musicians and minstrels alike (similar to the kora playing Mandingo griots from Guinea, Gambia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Senegal), create renditions that trace peoples' origins, values, influence their life styles and traditional heritage. Children learn and acquire life skills in the process.

Furthermore, the Igbo tribe has exceptional musical icons whose legendary compositions and singing prowess influenced Igbo thoughts, feelings and lifestyles. In most cases, they sing in idioms and proverbs as they emphasize deep-grounded philosophy of traditional Igbo customs and heritage. An interesting post-Nigeria civil war graffiti which became a hit song in Igbo nation included: *Onye ube ruru, ya racha* –literally meaning, *whoever gets an opportunity to enjoy the good life should not hesitate to do so* - referring to the First Lady of post-war Eastern Nigeria, Chinyere Ukpabi

Asika. When Mr. Asika was ousted from office; it became the landmark graffiti on lorries (*gwongworos*) and the subject of Eddy Okwedi's hit song.

Landmark graffiti on *Gwongworos* included, *Ije-enu – journey to the unknown*, another hit song with significant philosophical messages from the musician Celestine Ukwu; *Ogologo Long John* (*ogologo* means *tall* or *long*) by Okonkwo-Assaa (alias Seven-Seven) of Enugwu Ukwu; *Osondi Owendi* (*what makes one person happy, angers another*) by Osita Osadebe; *gambling story* by Leonard Okpala; *Ikwo-kiri-kwo n'Ikenga* (*dance music*) by Ikenga Super Stars. Others are *Anam elechi* (*I'm looking forward to God*) and, *Nwa Ada di mma* (*beautiful girl*) by Sir Warrior, DanSatch and Kabaka of the famed Oriental Brothers and; *Christiana* by Prince Nico Mbarga. Other star performers with great song writing skills who provided translations and transliterations of Igbo graffiti through their creative works were Afam Ogbu-otobo, Perry Como, Morocco Maduka, Ali Chukwuma, Muddy Ibe and his Nkwa Brothers, Olariche, Oliver De Coque, Mike Ejeagha, Zeal Onyia, and Laz Ekwueme (legendary music composer). Among the musical greats also are, Eddy Okonta, Nelly Uchendu, Bright Chimezie, xylophone expert known as Area Scatter, gospel singer Patty Obasi, Egwu Abibo (music) of Mbaise, Nkwa Umuagbogho group, *Mkpokiti* and *Atilogwu* dancers, *Ijele* and *Oji onu* masquerades, etc.

The aforementioned artistes and musical groups brought glory to the Igbo society through their contributions in the past. However, things are changing

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drastically since the emergence of Western civilization. Obi (2006) recalled when highlife music ruled the airwaves in Nigeria in the past decades, voices of Igbo musicians and others of Southeast extraction added to its popularity. Obi lamented, in the burgeoning contemporary music scene in Nigeria, the distinct voice of Igbo music has become muffled, and almost frazzled out to near extinction. The social commentator argued, "This is not as a result of marginalization by the political class that has subjugated the east development-wise, but a phenomenon that is Igbo-driven. Igbo music has become so sequestered that the classic tunes and rhythms for which the Igbos were known for have become a rarity in Nigerian parlance." The implication of this condition calls for the revitalization and rejuvenation of the Igbo musical culture and heritage for the young generation - just like the advocacy to revive ancient Igbo graffiti arts.

**Graffiti And Traditional Igbo Rites**

The traditional Igbo graffiti, which transmits philosophical orientation, knowledge and interpretations, reflects different creative works, leisure, native rites, childbirth, funerals, and festivals, celebrated in honor of the gods and goddesses of the land, or to mark important events. The beginning of the planting season, as well as the harvest

season, udummiri (rainy season), okochi (dry season), ofala (royal anniversary) festival, Ijele dance, *Ikeji/Fejioku/Ahiajioku* or New Yam festival, celebrated as thanksgiving to God (*Chukwu or Chi*) by everyone, could be seen in all kinds of graffiti. This, includes, creative works of art produced by exceptional graffiti artists in the villages - carved doors, stools, walking sticks, traditional flutes, mortars, gongs and pestles. One work of graffiti art worthy of note in Igboland is the traditional "Akwete" cloth in Abia (Lekwauwa, 2007).

There are unique body tattoos which were another form of Igbo graffiti that exceptional individuals utilize to proudly communicate and express beauty, amorous thoughts and feelings. The Igbos subscribe to acquiring royal tribal marks called "*Igbu-ichi*" and the use of "*nzu*" (traditional chalk) by titled men, medicine men and native priests during rituals; including the application of "*uli*" (locally made colored clay of cam wood) for female beautification purposes. These are typical Igbo body tattoos – a form of expressive/visual graffiti which is fast disappearing from the local environment.

### **Some Idioms, Proverbs And Incantations On Graffiti Form**

This has been a widely practiced form of oral graffiti art which Igbo elders and chiefs utilize in the training and socialization of young boys and girls in the community.

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Idioms, proverbs and incantations are other communication and pedagogical tool utilized by the Igbo ethnic group. They are scribbled mainly on commercial vehicles, luxury buses and taxis plying the different routes in various parts of Igboland; communicating all kinds of messages, relaying news and expressions of the heart – some funny, some distasteful, and some challenging the status-quo. The sketches and drawings also could represent sad tales and experiences, prayers of a better tomorrow for the downtrodden, while others, make cautionary statements. Example of such graffiti writings with entertainment and educational touch, include the following, according to Mmadufo (1997).:

*Okuko n'akpa nri, anya ufie akokwalaya* (while a chicken scants for food, it should not lose sight of other odd happenings around it): a brief but all encompassing statement of wisdom used to capture the essence of guarded sovereignty (Daily Champion, 2004). This means that the pride of liberty is eternal vigilance. This is an excellent Biafran mantra which every Igbo citizen will identify with. *Osita diwa nma, odiwara na gbo!* – A better life or situation never comes late.

*Chukwu na echerem echiche oma* - God has good plans for my future. God's kind intentions for me are grand. *Agu ijiji wu na nsi na ewu* – Literarily: it is the gathering of the flies that flatters human faeces. Meaning that the



hallmark of a man's popularity is an accompaniment of the following a man commands among his kinsmen.

*Agwo aghaghi imu ihe ogologo* – A snake's offspring must be long and curly. Simply means a chip off the block

*Ajo ihe n'ato ochi* – Bad things create laughter. A despairing, despondent, or disconsolate situation that elicits fun and laughter

*Aku rue ulo owuru eziokwu* – When wealth spreads across the family, it becomes a reality. The trapping of success is only true when it becomes obvious.

*Iwe dike k'ala 'ewe* – The hero is usually the target of unending envy and jealousy.

*Oje mba enwe iro* – A sojourner need not make enemies of his host. A sojourner's span and destination defy all known boundaries.

*Mbe ako n'ilu* – The tortoise (meaning wisdom) is never lost in proverbs or history. Notoriety is the authentication of recalcitrant behavior.

*Ihe onye n'ato onye* – What one owns is his or her pride or happiness.

*Nmiri enweghi iro* – Water has no enemy.

*Ubochi nke nwanne, oyi ana* – On the day of the relatives, good friend is unrecognized.

*Aku fecha odara awo* – The flight of the winged termite terminates at the tongue of the toad.

*Osondi owendi* – Things that makes one happy may make the other sad. One man's meat is another's poison.

*Oso ndu agwu ike* – Race for life is never tiresome; i.e. resilience and determination beget success and victory.

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*Ike ga agwu ndi asiri* – Gossipers would be exhausted with their gossips; i.e. malicious babbles and campaigns of calumny only weakens the talebearers and meddlers

*Abu onye jiri to okorobia ka oji aru ji* –Whatever one knows and believe in, sustains him or her; i.e. knowledge is the foundation of great achievements and success.

*Adighi eji egwu onwu gbaghara ugu* – You do not flee from a fight for fear that someone might get shot; i.e. bravery can only be found in the face of crisis.

*Ndi mmadu choro asusu Igbo*—People need Igbo Language; i.e. language is the greatest vehicle of a people’s culture.

*Ugba masiri ndi Igbo*—Igbo people like oil-bean seed.

*Amerika mepere emepe*— Ode to the American technology.

*Agwa oma di mma*—Good behavior is good; i.e. positive conduct is golden.

*Ala Igbo di mma*— Igbo Land is good; i.e. taking pride in what one has is a form of identity (Mmadufo, 1997).

All these are applied in the daily training of young people in Igbo land, and they grow up to relate to them in their daily living experiences. Every parent is expected to share such knowledge skills with their children as they grow from their teenage years into adulthood.

### **Societal Problems With Graffiti**

Unlike the Igbo society, graffiti has received negative connotations in their displays, which is evident in most developed countries, such as the United States and Europe, where juveniles paint negative graffiti on private and public buildings, trains, walls, cars, etc, causing vandalism (Patel, 2007; Putatunda, 2008; arthistory, 2008; Thiel, 2000; Braden, 1978). Although graffiti can be thought of as a part of hip-hop or street protest, it is often but not always illegal argues Thiel (2000). The author stresses that some exceptional individuals and artists have negatively channeled their creative energies to providing negative images and writings like the anti-Semitic graffiti, graffiti illustrating imperialist behavior, making political statements, committing visual terrorism, spreading social disintegration propaganda, committing psychological suicide, among others.

Moreover, "Graffiti can also be used to determine which gangs are fighting among themselves. This is usually indicated by the frequency of aggressive inscriptions in which taunts are hurled back and forth between gangs," argues Abel and Buckley (1977 p.145) in their book *The Handwriting on the Wall: Toward a Sociology of Graffiti*. The authors added that graffiti inscriptions usually consist of signatures, nicknames, boastful slogans, and so on.

In the light of the above, certain graffiti postings in different societies have their implications: sometimes, they result to aggression towards authorities, violence, vandalism,

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crimes, government sanctions, arrests and even imprisonments of such perpetrators or exceptional individuals. There are also some beautiful sides of graffiti especially the display of exceptional creativity at private and public places. Despite the highlighted problems, the graffiti culture in developed societies, European graffiti organizations have been on the forefront in an effort to preserve the tradition and values of the art in Europe. These organizations are putting together graffiti festivals to promote the good conduct campaign on the art of graffiti; identify with urban youth, and fostering the application of graffiti as means of expression (European Youth Campaign for Diversity, Human Rights and Participation, 2007).

The Igbo graffiti art practices are no longer what they used to be; they are bound for extinction if not revived. Igbo graffiti has the insuppressible gallery of 'thoughts meet expressions' at the Onitsha (River Niger) Bridge Head. It is today, about the largest known collection of simple graffiti anywhere in West Africa (or probably Africa). The graffiti art are creations of presumably local Onitsha traders and the nomads from the North and the Middle Belt of Nigeria. They found graffiti as means of communicating among themselves and plastering relics which are accredited form of communication ever since the Egyptian hieroglyphics. They are written and painted in Pidgin English and translated in various forms – some of the graffiti makes a caricature of the Hausa nomads of Northern Nigeria.

As graffiti expressions continue to face harsh criticism and challenges in modern Igbo society, the Christian religion with massive evangelical influence have played a destructive part in its demise. The church in contemporary Igbo society has decimated several cultural values and belief systems of the people, with overzealous converts attributing different forms of traditional graffiti as evil and contradictory to the Christian doctrines. Exceptional individuals involved in graffiti art creations whose kinsmen are converts of the western religious faith have the tendency to discourage the practice of this vocation.

Igbo diviners and priests—those empowered with *ofọ*, the symbol of authority, truth, and justice—interpret the wishes of the spirits, who bless and favor devotees as well as punish social offenders and those who unwittingly infringe their privileges. They also placate the spirits with ceremonial sacrifices. Most of them however no longer engage in such revered traditional duties because the church condemn such practices in contemporary Igbo society (Advameg, 2007).

Presently, graffiti adorn our pathways to school, stream, market, and village squares. It is a common feature on our monuments, royal arches, gates and buildings, and on vehicles, etc. It is important to preserve this culture and traditional heritage of the Igbo society. These graffiti art are disappearing in our communities since people are disregarding customary beliefs and traditions. Language and graffiti have been continually employed to impart knowledge and education on our children from generation to generation via oral and visual media. Although graffiti could possess

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destructive tendencies, it could be quite constructive when the exposition is right.

As the developed nations grapple with non-commissioned and illegal graffiti, some have developed the art as the admired aspect of their urban landscape. Large pieces have been used as backdrops for advertisements, videos and films, argues Young (2007) while in some places; they have seen the need for the provision of an area for young, creative artists to express themselves freely. This is the true spirit of graffiti because the knowledge derived is enormous. The Igbo society should emulate such efforts to promote and preserve the graffiti spirit amongst exceptional individuals, the youths and entire community.

**Conclusion**

This paper discussed Igbo language and graffiti with its pedagogical implications to the development of an African ethnic group especially in the area of socialization and community education. A progressive community can learn so much from graffiti, as part of the language and communication process. Simply put, as proverbs and idioms, graffiti is a cultural vehicle that should be preserved but it is today threatened with modern evangelization. Exceptional individuals in graffiti art inspired people by presenting Igbo calligraphy in different forms. By mixing Igbo art values, idioms, proverbs, folktales, minstrels and graffiti, which

passed on different kinds of communication to the society. These artists fuse different artistic forms by drawing on their cultural values, religious faith, the energy of the communal life and environmental surroundings to create styles which portrayed reality and aesthetics. This makes graffiti art a unique source of communication and learning for every generation. Philips (1996) concurred on the essence of graffiti in our environment when she stressed that:

Graffiti are cross-cultural phenomena common to every literate society. Within the variable contexts of their production, graffiti personalize de-personalized space, construct landscapes of identity, make public space into private space, and act as promoters of ethnic unity as well as diversity. Graffiti can be understood as concrete manifestations of personal and communal ideologies which are visually striking, insistent, and provocative; as such, they are worthy of the continued attention of art historians, social scientists, and policy makers alike (Philips, 1996).

Presently, graffiti is no longer having the same momentum it had during the time of our ancestors. Chinua Achebe lamented in his book "Things Fall Apart" that the Igbo race had developed a sophisticated society, religion, and justice system long before the Europeans arrived. The missionaries tried to weaken the Igbo people by putting a knife to the things that held them together. At first the Igbo people didn't fear the religion of the Europeans because it didn't interfere with their lives. However, the story of the Igbo land

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and culture has taken a different dimension with the proliferation of churches, western culture and graft.

As we reflect now on the graffiti and pedagogy, Demarco (2004) reminds us that it is only starting to have a home in the academia. This is therefore, a challenge to traditional artists, educators and stakeholders of Igbo culture to reflect on the opportunities graffiti art provided in the past which enabled them to challenge the status quo; express their minds for developmental change and expose exceptional talents to all.

The author recommends that schools, institutions of higher learning and art researchers collaborate to revive the positive aspects of graffiti art. Parents and teachers should encourage children and students to engage in the creative arts sector, and highlight the positive sides of graffiti. Schools should broaden their curriculum to reflect diversity and the cultural gains of graffiti, as well as conduct instruction and opportunities for further research and practice in the field. There should be periodic graffiti art exhibitions and awards in schools, art centers, galleries and museums to attract creative artists and exceptional individuals interested in the area of graffiti art.



### **Author's Note**

This article was supported by documented and oral materials from various Igbo authors and related researchers in the field of language, graffiti and exceptionality, as well as data collected from various sources. The opinions expressed within do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of this journal.

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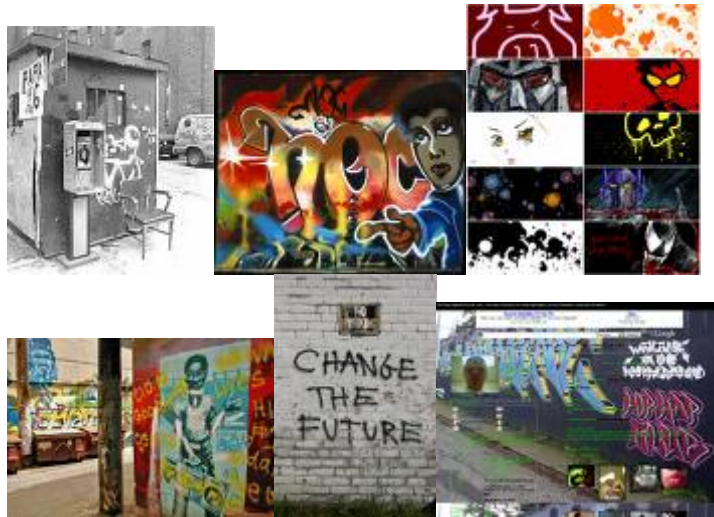
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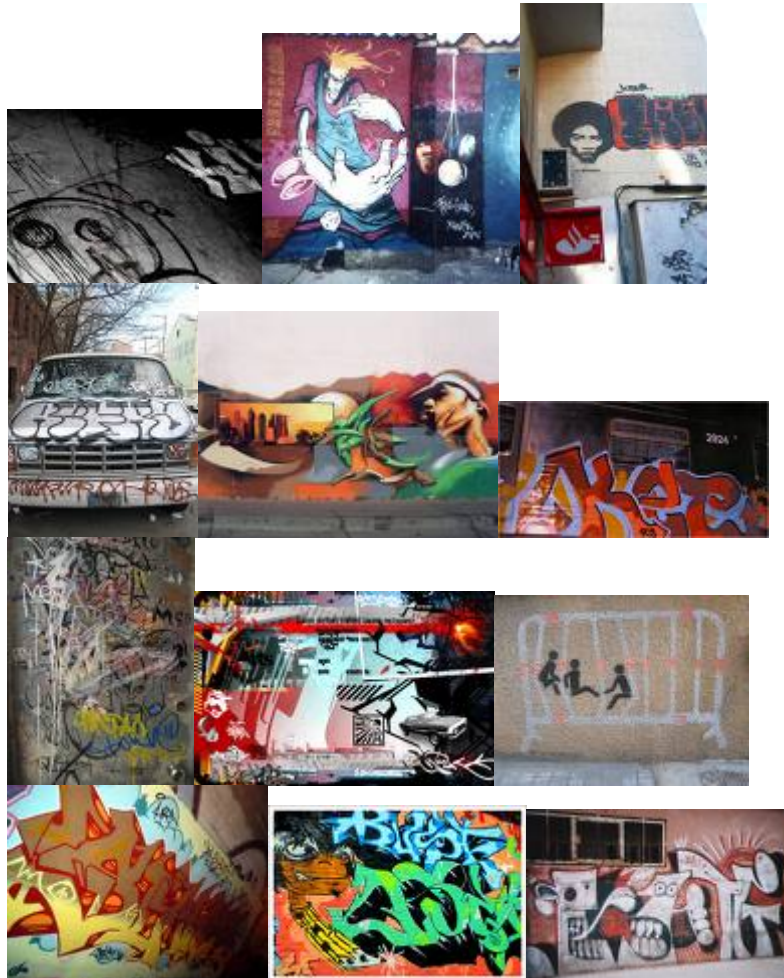
**APPENDIX**

**Graffiti Samples from various Cultures  
*Courtesy of the World Wide Web***



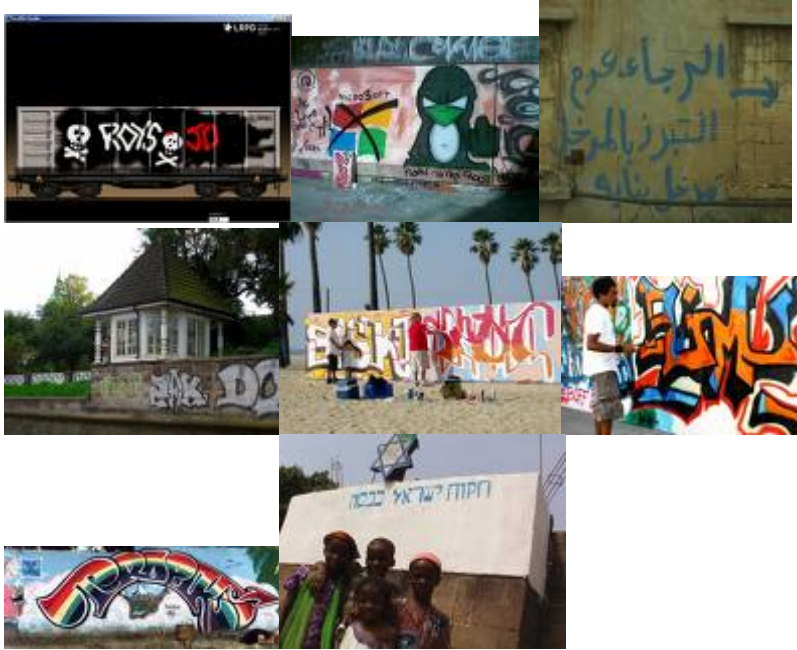
ISSN 1554-3897

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AJCS; Volume 3, No.2, July 2008*



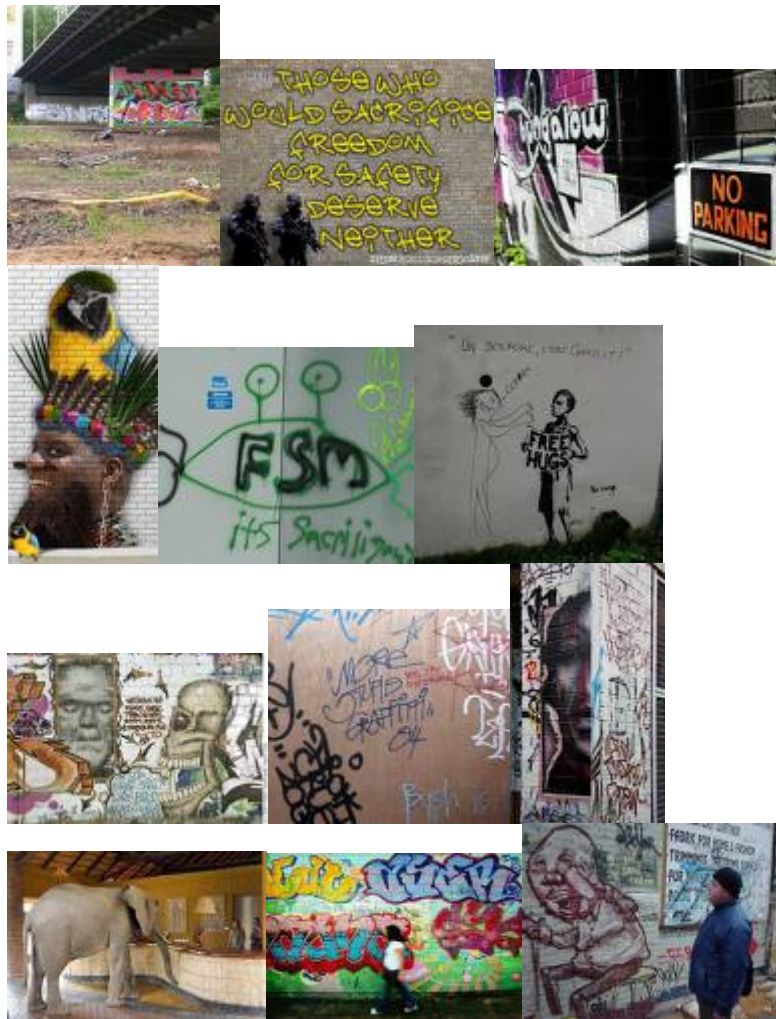
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