Reclaiming Asaba: Old Media, New Media, and the Construction of Memory

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What happened at Asaba?

On October 5, 1967, Nigerian federal troops entered Asaba, a town in south-east Nigeria on the west bank of the Niger. The war over the secession of the predominantly Igbo[2] area known as Biafra had broken out in July; by August, the Biafran army had advanced across the Niger, through Asaba and about 120 km beyond. Federal troops mounted a counter-attack, pushing the Biafrans back across the Asaba Bridge, which they blew up behind them.

Asaba people, though of Igbo ethnicity, consider themselves distinct from those in the East. While some Asabans did side with the Biafrans, most in the Midwest officially favored the government's ideal of 'One Nigeria'.[3] When the federal troops rolled in, the approximately 10,000 townspeople were unprepared for what followed. On October 4–6, soldiers occupied the town, and some began killing boys and men, accusing them of being Biafran sympathizers. On October 7, Asaba leaders met, and then summoned everyone to gather, dancing and singing to welcome the troops, and offering a pledge to One Nigeria. People were encouraged to wear *akwa ocha*, the ceremonial white, embroidered clothing that signifies peace, hoping that this strategy would end the violence. Although there was much trepidation, and some refused to participate, hundreds of men, women, and children assembled for the march, walking to the village square of Ogbeosewa, one of the five quarters of Asaba. Ify Uraih, then 13 years old, describes what happened

when he joined the parade with his father and three older brothers, Paul, Emmanuel (Emma), and Gabriel:[4]

> There, they separated the men from the women ... I looked around and saw machine-guns being mounted all around us ... Some people broke loose and tried to run away. My brother was holding me by the hand; he released me and pushed me further into the crowd ... They shot my brother in the back, he fell down, and I saw blood coming out of his body. And then the rest of us ... just fell down on top of each other. And they continued shooting, and shooting, and shooting ... I lost count of time, I don't know how long it took ... After some time there was silence. I stood up ... my body was covered in blood, but I knew that I was safe. My father was lying not far away; his eyes were open but he was dead.

Exactly how many died is not clear; between 500 and 800 seems likely, in addition to many who died in the previous days. Most victims were buried in several mass graves, without observing requisite ceremonial practices. Along with his father, Uraih lost Emma and Paul; Gabriel was shot repeatedly, but recovered. The long-term impacts were profound; many extended families lost multiple breadwinners, and the town's leadership was decimated.

Space does not permit a detailed historical background to these events, but some context is needed. Nigeria, cobbled together by colonial Britain from disparate ethnic groups, became independent in 1960. There has long been tension between the predominantly Muslim north and other areas. The Igbo, originating in the south-east, had become the most educated and entrepreneurial group, spreading throughout the country as businesspeople and civil servants. In January 1966, a group of mostly Igbo army officers staged a coup, reportedly in protest at corruption. A short-lived emergency military government installed army officers to run the country. In July 1966, a counter-coup led by northern army officers killed the Igbo leader, General Aguiyi-Ironsi, and a 'pogrom' began against Igbos in the north. Thousands were killed, mostly by civilians with encouragement from soldiers and police. Around a million Igbo fled back to their traditional south-east homelands, which included Asaba. Colonel Chukwuemeka Ojukwu, military governor of the Eastern Region, now renamed Biafra, declared secession from Nigeria on May 30, 1967. Fighting broke out on July 6; the Biafrans

invaded the Midwest on August 7, headed for Benin City. The Second Infantry Division, under Colonel Murtala Mohammed, pushed back the Biafran forces, reaching Asaba on October 5. The war eventually ended in January 1970, with the capitulation of Biafra.

Media and collective memory

Zelizer (1992: 214) writes that in the modern world, 'The story of [the] past will remain in part a story of what the media have chosen to remember, a story of how the media's memories have in turn become [our] own.' By extension, if the media have *not* chosen to remember – indeed, have not told the story in the first place – the official memory is also erased. In this chapter, I address the role of the traditional media in effectively silencing the story of Asaba at the time, before showing how the rise of new media helped the narrative to emerge and spread. In doing so, I discuss the role that colleagues and I now have in contributing to the construction of a more robust official memory. We were invited by Asaba people, both in Nigeria and in the US diaspora, to assist them in the development of a permanent remembrance – in part using new media forms such as a website (www.asabamemorial.org); our interdisciplinary team is recording oral histories from survivors, and a coherent narrative of events is emerging.[5]

Assmann (1995) makes a distinction between everyday 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory'. Everyday memory is a collection of individual recollections and stories, and is heavily influenced by first-hand experiences and accounts. Cultural memory 'consists of objectified culture, that is, the texts, rites, images, buildings, and monuments which are designed to recall fateful events ... As the officially sanctioned heritage of a society, they are intended for the *longue durée*' (Kansteiner, 2002: 182). Assmann notes that 'The ... crystallization of communicated meaning and collectively shared knowledge is a prerequisite of its transmission in the culturally institutionalized heritage' (1995: 130).

For almost 40 years, the massacres at Asaba existed primarily in communicative memory, not crystallizing into formal recognition, in Nigeria or internationally. A key reason was the absence of media accounts in the first few months of the war. Biafra did become world-famous, but its public, international narrative developed after the retreat of the Biafrans back across the Niger, after which the federal government imposed a blockade, effectively starving the east into submission between 1968 and 1970. The international cultural memory of Biafra is dominated by military defeat and heartbreaking images of starving children. The federal

government's stated position that starvation was a legitimate weapon of war reverberated internationally (Bartrop, 2002). This vivid cultural memory was facilitated by photojournalists such as Don McCullin in Britain and Gilles Caron in France. Caron made three visits to Biafra for *Paris Match* magazine, the first in April 1968 (Cookman, 2008). Cookman noted that the magazine described Biafra as the 'ignored war' until Caron offered the 'first major reportage ... in the Western Picture Press' (2008: 227). Such reportage defined the war for ever. In 1995, Paddy Davies, a member of the Biafran Propaganda Directorate from 1968–70, told the BBC about the early lack of interest by the international press: '[Biafra] had tried political emancipation of oppressed people. It had tried the religious angle; it had tried pogrom and genocide. These had limited successes, but the pictures of starving children ... touched everybody.'[6]

The intense, post-1968 media coverage contrasts dramatically with the dearth of attention in 1967, when the Mid-West Igbos suffered most. The massive Igbo population movement following the 1966 'pogroms' was minimally reported, prompting noted Irish writer Connor Cruise O'Brien to comment in December 1967, 'if the movement had taken place across international frontiers, it would have attracted worldwide attention. Because it was in the geographical unit called Nigeria, it drew no public comment and won no world sympathy' (quoted in Mwakikagile, 2001: 32).

In today's highly mediated world, it can be hard to remember a time when traditional print journalism was the most important source of information; if no reporters were present, many stories remained untold. Such was the case with the recapture of the Midwest; the international press was largely absent, and in Nigeria itself, news was suppressed. A search of the Nigeria *Daily Times* turned up only five war-related stories in October 1967, none mentioning any specifics about the ongoing Midwest military action. Gowon had broadcast to the nation on October 1, stating that Biafra was on the brink of collapse; now he planned for an end to the war and for reconciliation with all Igbo people. *Daily Times* opinion writer Dan Abasiekong, writing on the day of the Asaba massacre, noted, 'Gowon has shown the way Nigerian hearts have been warmed by his latest gracious gestures to the Ibos.'[7] Abasiekong continued that 'the national objective is not to destroy the Ibos'. 'After all they are still bona fide members of the Nigerian family, their frequent delinquent acts and misdemeanours notwithstanding.' Nevertheless, he concluded that no matter how well they are treated the country should be prepared for 'hostility and treachery' from many implacable Igbos.

In three other stories, the central point was to support Western press calls for an end to the war, demonstrating the high prestige of foreign commentary. On October 6, an uncredited story liberally quoted a *New York Times* editorial[8] urging the government 'to demonstrate a will and capacity for the national reconciliation and reconstruction it has promised'.[9] *The New York Times* mentioned Gowon's conduct code for troop behavior: 'He told the troops they were not fighting a war with a foreign enemy, "nor were you fighting a religious war or Jihad".' On October 7, another story noted that 'influential foreign newspapers have ... drawn attention to the stark fact that the game is up ...'[10] The story quoted extensively from the UK's *Guardian*, which praised Gowon and the 'remarkable prowess of the Army', and again invoked the *New York Times*, 'an influential journal of opinion'. A week later, the *Daily Times* quoted the Italian *Corriere della Sera*, which blamed Ojukwu's 'blind determination' for the downfall of the Igbos, while Gowon was 'scrupulous, fair, absolutely free of political ambition'.[11] The story also quoted the permanent secretary to the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Industries, Philip C. Asiodu, telling a press conference in Germany that the government's goal was reconciliation: 'there is no question of massacring Ibos in the captured areas'. Asiodu did not then know that his younger brother, Olympic athlete Sydney Asiodu, had been killed in the Asaba massacre a few days earlier. In 2009, Asiodu described how slowly and incompletely word of the event reached Lagos.[12] By October 27, the *Daily Times* was reporting that the Midwest military governor had decreed it would now be an offense to refer to the people of the Igbo-speaking areas (Ika, Asaba, and Aboh) as Igbo, and 'appealed to the people to learn to forgive and forget'.[13]

Clearly, the Nigerian press was mostly reporting official pronouncements or the opinions of the foreign press, which also had few first-hand accounts. The federal government kept a tight rein on dissent; for example in October 1967, celebrated writer Wole Soyinka was arrested as a spy after he met with Ojukwu in an attempt to broker peace. He was incarcerated for two years, later describing in his prison memoirs the large numbers of Igbos housed in the same prisons (Soyinka, 1972). Possibly among them was Asaba native Sylvester Okocha, a senior civil servant, who in 1967 was arrested, incarcerated, and tortured after he attempted to send a letter to the Red Cross describing the Asaba killings.[14]

The British media in the immediate post-colonial period were extremely influential among elite Nigerians, and thus especially important in defining the story both to Nigeria and the world (Akinyemi, 1972). Yet they reported little in 1967. Journalist Frederick Forsyth

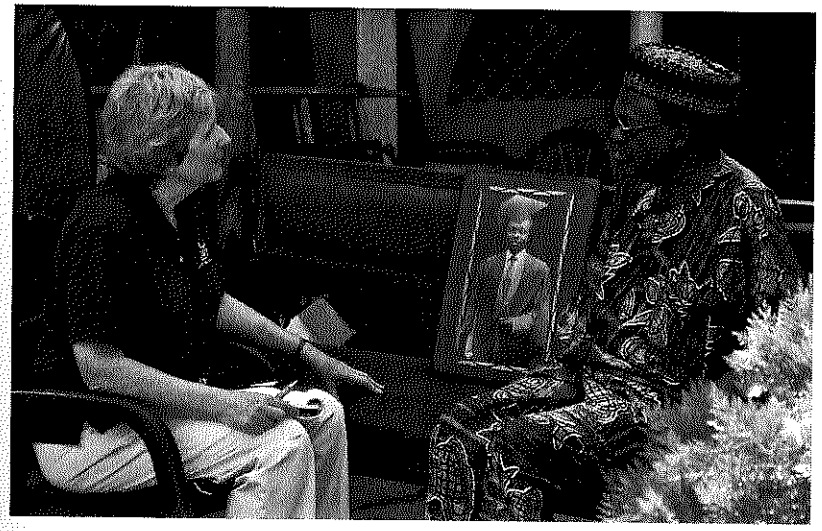

Figure 3: Elizabeth Bird interviews Mr. Felix Onochie, who is showing her a photograph of his brother, Emmanuel, a victim of the Asaba killings. Photograph: Fraser Ottanelli.

(later a successful novelist), recalls being told by the BBC 'about six months into the war' that 'it is not our policy to cover this war'. He notes, 'I smelled news management', and went to Biafra in early 1968 as a freelancer, publishing the book *Biafra Story* in 1969.[15] A search of the archives of the *Guardian* and *Observer*, both prominent UK newspapers, turned up extensive coverage of the war, in which Britain's government officially supported Gowon's regime, from 1968 onward. However, no British paper reported directly on Asaba or any of the other killings that accompanied the retaking of the Midwest.

Shortly after the end of the war, Akinyemi (1972) offered an analysis of UK press coverage of the conflict, taking an unambiguously pro-federal government position. In particular, he admired the dispatches of *Observer* correspondent Colin Legum (a noted journalist of Africa), writing: 'When cries of genocide were rife, Legum personally investigated alleged incidents in Asaba and Onitsha and concluded that the use of the word "genocide" was unjustified' (Akinyemi, 1972: 420).

Akinyemi was referring to the one *Observer* article that reported on Asaba, almost four months after the event,[16] in which Legum acknowledged credible reports of previous massacres, and confirmed that federal

troops took part in the killing. His account in effect offered an excuse, saying that the Asaba people were 'split over how they should receive the troops'. One group welcomed them with dancing, while another, who remained 'implacably hostile', attacked by surprise as the soldiers relaxed while watching the entertainment. 'The soldiers' instinctive reaction was to scent "Ibo duplicity and perfidy." In this blind mood of anger all Ibo males were rounded up and shot.' This account is dramatically different from the survivor testimonies we recorded, which describe soldiers having disguised their machine guns with branches, before launching a systematic and unprovoked attack. And clearly Legum's story stems not from 'personal investigation', but from second-hand reports. As he wrote, 'there are no war correspondents on either side'. *The Times* of London reported on October 4, 1968 that 'international observers ... found that Ibo people were afraid of Federal soldiers because of Biafran propaganda, but that the fear went when the villagers made actual contact with Federal troops'.[17] A year later, on July 21, 1969, *The Times* reported that there was no evidence of any atrocities. Poland's neutral observer informed *The Times* reporter, 'I tell you that we have been unable to find one single trace of mass killings of Ibos.'[18]

The US government remained officially neutral on the war and the Google news database reveals almost no US news stories during July–December 1967, except when war broke out. On September 24, however, Alfred Friendly of the *New York Times* reported that civilians, encouraged by soldiers, had killed over 900 Igbos in Benin City, following federal troops' arrival on September 20.[19] Later an uncredited *New York Times* story reported that in Warri, Western businessmen who remained there estimated 400–500 Igbos were killed by 'civilian mobs' celebrating the return of the army, and a similar number in Sapele.[20] While there was no direct report from Asaba, the article continued:

> In Asaba ... a few women huddled last week in compounds under the protection of Nigerian priests. They refused to go out into the surrounding forests and coax their husbands back to the shattered town ...

Earlier, Friendly had reported that all 10,000 people in Asaba had fled as federal troops advanced:

> the bodies of two that did not leave in time lay near the main road. Vultures picked at the skeletons sprawled amid the pathetic rubble of panicky flight: empty, battered suitcases, and ruined bedding. Bullet scars pocked the façade of every house on the main street.[21]

Beyond these two stories, no accounts of the fate of Asaba can be found. Much later, in November 1968, Jack Shepherd of *Look* magazine reported in an analysis of the situation in Nigeria that 'perhaps 8,000 Ibo civilians died when the Midwest was "liberated" by troops under Col. Murtala Mohammed'.[22] Shepherd noted only one specific incident, in which troops 'cleared' the village of Ishiagu, killing men after separating them from women and children.

Thus the world's media produced no detailed coverage of the 1967 Midwest military operations. Probably because of this, more scholarly accounts written close to the time also typically offer only brief mentions (if any) of civilian killings. In 1970, Oxford historian Margery Perham recalled a visit from a friend who delivered a first-hand account of the massacre at Asaba. She writes that while troubling, it was the kind of 'isolated incident' (1970: 237) that is inevitable in war. John de St. Jorre's much-cited war history expressly acknowledges the work of Colin Legum, and essentially restates his explanation that the massacre 'was sparked off by a Biafran attempt to kill a Nigerian officer and organized by a bitterly anti-Ibo Midwesterner' (St. Jorre, 1972: 285). In his usually meticulously footnoted book, St. Jorre offers no source for this account. Former colonial administrator Sir Rex Niven (1970) offers an unabashedly pro-government war account, acknowledging the full cooperation of the Federal Ministry of Information. Discussing the Midwest action, Niven makes no mention of atrocities against civilians; in an 'author's note' he comments that 'deaths among the civilian population are still a matter of conjecture' (1970: vi). Only one contemporary commentator, Charles Keil (1970: 2), angrily attacked the prevailing desire to move on, arguing clear genocidal intent:

> the seasoned army of 7,000 that led the pogroms in 1966 ... should have suggested intent to the most disinterested scholar: the enlarged army of 70,000 that massacred civilians foolish enough to remain behind at Asaba and other captured cities earlier in the war should have suggested intent.

However, such comments were rare, becoming more so as time went by. Orobator (1987), analyzing the role of the Midwest in the war, made no mention of any massacres. Kantowicz, in a historical overview, concluded that 'During the fighting, civilians and some Nigerian soldiers

slaughtered Ibos at the cities of Asaba and Onitsha, but these massacres were exceptional and were not ordered by the Nigerian commanders' (1999: 244).

Reclaiming Asaba

For decades, the story of Asaba remained obscure outside the immediate locality. Our informant Ify Uraih recalls that in college he came close to blows with another student who refused to believe it could have happened; many interviewees also reported disbelief. Perhaps understandably, the immediate impulse after the war was to reconcile and bring the union together, inspired by Gowon's famous statement that in this conflict there would be 'no victor, and no vanquished'. Generally, reprisals against the Igbo were avoided, and a measure of peace prevailed for several years. However, as Ukiwo (2009: 27) noted, resurgences of violence against Igbos since the 1980s engendered feelings of grievance,[23] leading to 'the excavation of collective memories of violence before and during the Civil War, while bracketing the period of reconciliation after the war'.

Ukiwo documented the development of movements either specifically to revive Biafra, or more generally to advocate for Igbo rights. Many began outside Nigeria, among diaspora communities in the United States. Along with other atrocities, Asaba was discovered by such groups, a process greatly facilitated by the development of the Internet in the last decade of the twentieth century. A catalyst was the 1994 publication of *Blood on the Niger*, a book about Asaba written by expatriate journalist Emmanuel 'Emma' Okocha, whose father was killed in the massacre. Okocha's book, based partly on survivor testimony, received attention in Nigeria and among US-based Nigerians, and information from it was introduced at the 2001 Nigerian Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission (HRVIC), often known as the Nigerian Truth Commission or the Oputa Panel, after its chairman (Nwogu, 2007). Some survivors, including Uraih, also testified to the HRVIC. Unlike Truth Commissions in South Africa and Sierra Leone, the Oputa Panel was not designed to attribute blame or take action. It produced a lengthy report, which was never officially released, but became quickly available on the Internet. Another landmark occurred in 2002 when Gowon made a public apology to the people of Asaba, saying he had not ordered or known about the massacre. An apology constitutes an acknowledgment, which can be the first step toward reconciliation, since it 'involves the admission that ... wrongful acts were committed, that such acts should not have been committed, and that those who committed them were responsible for having done so' (Govier, 2006: 15).

The Oputa Panel, Okocha's book (reissued in 2006), and the Gowon apology provided concrete information that was eagerly taken up in online forums that connect the extensive Igbo diaspora with those in Nigeria, and a new collective memory is developing, with many learning about Asaba for the first time.[24] And with the migration of the story to the virtual world, it inevitably mutates. In February 2009, for example, the neutral discussion site, Nigerian Village Square, hosted a commentary about Murtala Muhammed, the commander of the Second Infantry Division that perpetrated the massacre. Muhammed later toppled Gowon in a coup, and became President; many revere him as a national hero. This commentator (Nwobu, 2009) refers to him as the Butcher of Asaba: 'In a rain of blood, tens of thousands of innocent youths, some of them just 6 years old were lined up on the streets of Asaba and executed in cold blood on the direct orders of Murtala Muhammed. The Asaba massacre ... remains one of the bloodiest ... in the history of the African continent.'

The 'tens of thousands' description is clearly an exaggeration, but has been repeated in subsequent Internet forums, as a narrative develops that is independent of the personal memories of survivors. The discussion that followed Nwobu's post points to the complexities of developing a new collective memory that honors the dead without inciting an urge for revenge. Many forum posters comment that they are hearing this for the first time; some pick up on Nwobu's call for action, while others argue against the value of such memories. For example, 'Draftman' writes:

> When are we going to stop the finger pointing ... let's look at all the killing that Lt. Col. Ojukwu did, he has blood on his hand too ... The war is over, and the Biafra agitators lost, so let's move on.

'Agidimolaja' writes a long account of the events leading up to Asaba, concluding, the 'Asaba massacre did not just happen, one thing led to another'. 'Tony' weighs in:

> War ... does not give anyone the right to target and indiscriminately kill civilians as Murtala ... did ... this is why there is an international criminal court in the Hague to try people guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity ... You would scream to high heavens if your people were the victims ... Your Nigeria that you claimed to

have fought for is a shameful disgrace of a nation where injustice and massacres is the order of the day ...

Discussions like these can be found in Nigerian forums all over the Internet, and point to the way that new media have been able to bring previously silenced histories to light, while also opening the door to inflamed passions, exaggeration, and unsubstantiated claims.

The Asaba Memorial Project

Our research team entered the picture in 2009, following a contact by Okocha, who on behalf of a committee based primarily in the United States, invited us to help 'reclaim' the history of the massacres, validate the experiences of survivors and descendants, and eventually assist in the development of a permanent remembrance. As Minow (1998: 1) writes, one of the most destructive consequences of such atrocities is 'the destruction of remembrance ... as well as ... lives and dignity'. Hirsch argues that the move of positivist social scientists into genocide studies has been problematic, based on quantifying and defining genocide, rather than valuing the personal stories of survivors: 'Scientific analysis cannot communicate the sheer human tragedy ... nor can it accomplish the goals of enhancing understanding and of prevention' (Hirsch, 1995: 80). In addition to pointing to the need to study the impact of atrocities on communities, Hirsch argues for the importance of compassionate academic input into the construction of memorials and reconciliation efforts.

Our project now sits at an interesting juncture in the development of formal memorialization, and potentially gives us an active role in that development. Schudson (1997) points out that most contemporary work on collective memory has focused on formal commemorative activities like monuments and museums. He argues for the importance of studying the process of 'non-commemorative collective memory' – the way stories of the past live on through social communication. As he notes, 'formal commemoration often acknowledges not the power of living memory but its fading' (1997: 3), and the impulse to commemorate grows as people are distanced from direct experience. In the case of Asaba, this distancing is through both time, as older generations pass away, and space, as emigrants in the diaspora now seek to know and acknowledge their heritage.

In two visits to Nigeria, we have interviewed more than 40 people whose lives were directly affected by the massacres. It is clear that an oral, non-mediated narrative about the events is established in Asaba – with the killing in Ogbeosewa as a central trope illustrating a unifying theme of outrage – that Asabans had no reason to expect this atrocity, as innocent, unarmed civilians who supported a unified Nigeria. In reality, the varied experiences of suffering described by many individuals paint a much more complex picture, which will have to be addressed in any memorialization efforts.

The youngest direct survivors are now in their late fifties, and most of those who were adults at the time are dead. A recurring message we received was a sense of urgent concern that the orally transmitted local narrative might die; as Schudson's discussion might suggest, this is when the desire for a 'commemorative memory' begins to grow. Following our most recent visit, we have agreed to work with community leaders and academics in Nigeria, as well as diaspora representatives in the US, to seek funding for an educational museum exhibit that will become a resource for Asaba.

As we proceed, media of all kinds will play a central role. Traditional media helped create the silence; new media have helped break it. Our developing website, which includes video clips of survivor testimony and a virtual archive of relevant resources, is already an intervention in the often-heated diaspora chatter about the memory of Asaba, and is now being followed by some people in Asaba. However, in Nigeria there are major limitations on the ability of new media to reach the general population. Most people do not even have reliable electricity, and only 16.1 percent of the population uses the Internet regularly.[25] The 'best' secondary school in Asaba (which is the capital city of Delta State) has only one, old, donated computer in the headmaster's office; the pupils have no access to the Internet.

In the days ahead, engagements with media will be inevitable and needed. As a first step, we hosted an Asaba Memorial Symposium in October 2009, attended by scholars, survivors, and members of the diaspora community in Florida. Press accounts appeared in the US and Nigeria, with extensive commentary in the *Vanguard*, a national Nigerian newspaper with a large online presence. Accounts of the symposium then found their way onto Nigerian blogs and discussion forums.[26] During our last visit, in June 2010, we added a blog to our own documentation of the project (www.asabamemorial.wordpress.com). Now we face two distinct challenges (in addition to the need to find further funds!). First is the challenge posed by new media, as everything we do makes its way into the virtual world, where diaspora voices dominate. Second

is the challenge of working in the real world with community leaders in Asaba, where they hope to use more traditional communication approaches, such as town meetings and local media, to create awareness and support for the project. In both contexts, competing visions of correct commemorative memory have emerged and will continue to do so.

We do not claim that the story we will eventually tell will be 'the truth'; all narratives filter, frame, and select, and the role of our community partners will be as central as ours. We are learning to negotiate the political complexities of both literally and figuratively exhuming the evidence that many prefer to forget. As Ferrándiz (2006: 7) writes in relation to forensic exhumations of massacre graves, 'the regimes responsible ... become the subject of heated social debates challenging hegemonic versions of an uncomfortable past and provoking disputes about the politics of victimhood'. We will not be able to control the direction the story takes as the process of commemorative memory formation develops. Nevertheless, breaking the silence is surely the right thing to do.

Notes

1. I would like to thank my research partner, Fraser M. Ottanelli, for his advice and continued collaboration on this project. Thanks also to graduate student Nolan Kline for his assistance in locating and searching relevant newspaper stories. This research was supported by grants from the Humanities Institute and Office of Research, both University of South Florida.
2. While the preferred contemporary spelling is Igbo, the older variant, Ibo, is still often seen.
3. For instance the *Daily Times* of Nigeria reported on July 24, 1967, that the 'Organisation of Ibo-Speaking Midwesterners', representing people from Asaba, Ika, and Aboh, had signed a declaration that asserted their loyalty to the Governor of the Midwest Region, 'and strongly condemned the idea of a merger with the East Central State' (Biafra).
4. The account that opens this chapter is derived from survivor testimony, recorded by the author and collaborator Fraser Ottanelli.
5. The team comprises myself, Ottanelli, and forensic anthropologist Erin Kimmerle. At the time of writing, Ottanelli and I have interviewed 42 survivors in the US, Lagos, and Asaba.
6. Davies was interviewed for the 1995 documentary, *Biafra: Fighting a War without Guns*, in the BBC Timewatch series, which also discussed the role of the public relations firm MarkPress, retained to tell the Biafran story.
7. 'How to Bring the Ibos back into our Fold', Nigeria *Daily Times*, October 7, 1967, p. 5.
8. This editorial, 'Way to Peace in Nigeria', was published on October 6, 1967 in the *New York Times*.
9. 'The Ibos Miscalculated in Seceding – Says American Newspaper', Nigeria *Daily Times*, October 6, 1967, p. 3.

10. 'Ibos were Victims of Ojukwu Propaganda – Says UK Paper', Nigeria *Daily Times*, October 7, 1967, p. 2.
11. 'Ibo Blindness Killed Peace Moves – Italian Paper', Nigeria *Daily Times*, October 13, 1967, p. 7.
12. Asiodu was interviewed on October 9, 2009, in Tampa, Florida. He describes how he was unable to confirm his brother's fate until weeks afterwards. The transcript of his interview is available at www.asabamemorial.org
13. 'Now No More Ika Ibo – By Order', Nigeria *Daily Times*, October 27, 1967, p. 8.
14. We interviewed the 96-year-old Okocha in Asaba, December 15, 2009.
15. Forsyth was interviewed for the 1995 documentary, *Biafra: Fighting a War without Guns*.
16. Colin Legum, 'How 700 Ibos were Killed by Mistake', *The Observer*, January 21, 1968, p. 2.
17. Michael Wolfers 'Nigeria Observers Find no Evidence of Genocide', *The Times*, October 4, 1968, p. 8.
18. Julian Mounter, 'No Evidence of Genocide in Nigeria', *The Times*, July 21, 1969, p. 5.
19. Alfred Friendly Jr., 'A City Shows Scars of the Nigerian War', *New York Times*, September 24, 1967, pp. 1, 3. The *New York Times* seems to have been almost alone among US media in having journalists on the ground in the autumn of 1967. Two interviews (Sylvester Okocha and Emmanuel Nwanze, both recorded December 15, 2009), vividly describe the active involvement of troops in these massacres.
20. *New York Times*, 'Race Hatred in Nigeria, October 22, 1967, p. 3.
21. Alfred Friendly Jr., 'Battle Continues for Nigerian City', *New York Times*, October 13, 1967, p. 1.
22. 'Memo from Nigeria: Old Headaches for our New President', November 26, 1968, p. 74.
23. Ukiwo cites many violent episodes between 1983 and 2003 that he believes radicalized the Igbo, including serious ethnic riots in Kano in 1991.
24. For example, in a long response to the revelations at the Oputa Panel, posted on BNW: Biafra Nigeria World Message Board, attorney Chuck Nduka-Eze wrote: 'it is however crucial to consider where we go from here. Are we simply going to move on as though nothing has been said or simply regard it as something that happened in the past? So far, there has been silence although the scale of the atrocities stunned the public. This country has gone through much that is shameful and perhaps, it is about time the public wake up to their civic responsibilities ...The killing field at Asaba, Isheagu, Ibusa, Ogwashi-Ukwu and other locations remain a wound in the flesh of humanity' (May 24, 2001, http://messageboard.biafranigeriaworld.com/ultimatebb.cgi/ubb/get_topic/f/1/t/000130/p/2.html. See also A. Ehirim, 'Apologies, Reparations, and the Path to Healing', January 31, 2001, on Nigeria Exchange forum (http://www.ngex.com/personalities/voices/aehirim013101.htm). Ehirim mentions the Asaba massacre and describes Mohammed as 'a looter, a brute and an avalanche of insanity'.
25. Internet Usage and Telecommunications Reports, Nigeria, 2009 (http://www.internetworldstats.com/af/ng.htm).
26. E.g. the blogs 'Chxta's World' (http://chxta.blogspot.com/2009/03/even-heavens-wept.html) and AFTRES (http://aftres.blogspot.com/2009/10/

take-them-and-work-on-them.html) both reprint the public testimony of Ify Uraih, who spoke at the October 2009 symposium, at the University of South Florida, and who has become a key informant and collaborator. Video of his public testimony is also posted on YouTube. See also I. Emewu, 'Turn-by-turn genocide', May 30, 2009 (http://www.sunnewsonline.com/webpages/columnists/thoughts/ikenna-may-30-2009.htm).

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