

ROOT OF CONFLICT

Root of Conflict Podcast

Episode: African Political Philosophy

featuring
Dr. Francis Njoku

interviewed by
Christelle Inema

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Full Transcript

Reema Saleh: Hi. This is Reema, and you're listening to the University of Chicago Public Policy Podcasts. You're listening to Root of Conflict, a podcast about violent conflict around the world and the people, societies, and policy issues it affects. In this series, you'll hear from experts and practitioners who conduct research, implement programs and use data analysis to address some of the most pressing challenges facing our world. Root of Conflict is produced by UC3P, in collaboration with The Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflict, a research institute housed within the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago.

Reema Saleh: The following is a PSA from the University of Chicago's Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts, featuring The Pearson Global Forum, an in person and virtual convening on discrimination and marginalization. Join us to hear from global experts as they discuss various topics, including the social cost of discrimination, the crisis in Lebanon, and bias in media coverage of conflict. This event is free and open to all on October 14th. More information at ThePearsonGlobalForum.org.

Reema Saleh: How does African philosophy shape African political institutions, and how have they evolved separately from European models of statehood and development? In this episode, we speak with Dr. Francis Njoku, professor of philosophy at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and a visiting scholar at the Harris School. We talk about his research and how homegrown solutions to African problems can come from within.

Christelle Inema: Hello, my name is Christelle and I'm a first year MPP student at the University of Chicago. I'm originally from Rwanda, and my policy interests are at the intersection of data analytics, social equity, and development.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Hello, my name is Francis Njoku, professor of philosophy from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Presently I'm here doing a one-year sabbatical at the Harris School, and it's been a very great experience.

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Christelle Inema: So it's very nice to have you here and to get to interview you as a professor and also a visiting scholar. So my first question is: you're a visiting scholar with The Pearson Institute. Can you talk more about your work here at the University of Chicago, like the classes you're teaching, the research you're doing?

Dr. Francis Njoku: Yeah. When I arrived here in January, so we started a course on African political economy or political theory. I taught with Professor James Robinson, and it was quite an interesting course. We were able to discuss part of African philosophy, African political theory and some of them deal with African existential problems. It was interesting, we were able to interact: it was audited by a diversity of students, and it was very enriching, I know. So I think so far my experience has been great, and our research has continued on African themes like religion, politics and race and African philosophy. Because I've always thought that part of the way to solve an African problem is to find the elements from within and then address them. It must be a solution from one who's an insider actually. So that's what the research is going in on looking in Africa, the non-philosophical purpose of materials in Africa, see how they can indicate towards a way to solve an African problems, especially sociopolitical problem.

Christelle Inema: Yeah, that's an amazing answer and to that I have a couple follow-up questions. The first one, what does it mean to examine African philosophy and how do you define it? And then the second one that actually ties into using African philosophy, in terms of thinking about development. Why is it important to examine the philosophy underpinning African development, and how have you done that in your research and your work?

Dr. Francis Njoku: So I don't have to take a [inaudible]. Well, African philosophy is a certain gateway to human reality. As I start to say that, everyone deserves to know, while you say that, but to know this or that is a situated experience. So to talk about African philosophy is to take a standpoint, look at the universal human reality from a particular perspective, because you can't begin from nowhere, there is no place or position exposition. So if we move from African experience, African environment and there is the universal human reality, then Africa will make her own specific contributions, because our people say that the firewood in a place cooks for them. So if you want homegrown solutions to African problems, it is better to begin from within, to look at African environment of occurrence and find the instrument for solution and then those same instruments will cast light on how to understand the universal reality.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So that's why—talking about African philosophy, there are many ways where people have seen it differently. But just, and I call it an aesthetic viewpoint to understanding, asking the right questions, taken off from ones point of view and then looking on with the universal question of knowing, being of knowing reality, no matter the shape reality presents itself. Reality here, I mean, anything about God, environment, man, human institutions, all this come under the heading of reality. And to solve the problems... as it faces each particular group, there is an emphasis to begin from one's standpoint and then find solutions, instead of waiting for solutions to

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be imposed from outside. I'm not saying that when you must have found you have solution within your own environmental occurrence, that it cannot be generalized, it can. But as a human standpoint, you have to begin from a specific point to address the issue.

Christelle Inema: Thank you for your responses, and it really, I can relate to that as well, as a fellow African. So my other question touches on democracy, because you're talking about finding solutions to African problems from within, from thinking about African philosophy, but the concept of democracy comes up a lot whenever we talk about development. So why is democracy important to African countries? And another question is, why is it not important to African countries? Because is it important? Is there a way to disentangle African democracy from western countries and find a way to actually build institutions that cater to our needs?

Dr. Francis Njoku: Yeah. Democracy is a form of government, and surely Africans would like that. But when I talk about homegrown solutions, I think it's better to look at African institutions and African people, and then see the specific form of government that can be well adapted to it. So we have this understanding that democracy works everywhere, whatever that means. Even autocratic governments call themselves democrats, so I don't know what that means. And if you look at history of sociopolitical theory, not many like democracy. If you go back to Aristotle and Plato, actually democracy is actually a degeneration of the third best in terms of, I mean, systems of government. Someone like Plato who think that their best form of government to be a monarchy or aristocracy, and then you have their degenerations. So the best term from political degeneration started, it gets to democracy, which is the worst. It's not even the third best, but the degeneration of the third best.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So I'm not saying the democracy, if you, the only thing that salvages democracy in all these things is a rule of law. The problem with African countries is that people don't obey the rule of law, if you obey that. But coming down home, my people say that if you know the partridge egg, you know how to handle it, call it the egg of a dove... first, why do you have to know it? If you see a set of egg, you know that the egg might resemble that of snake. One is to have the caution to distinguish snake eggs from the eggs of a dove. If you make that fundamental mistake without distinguishing well, you are in trouble. The wisdom there is, you need practical reasonable need to make proper distinctions. Not only will you use that knowledge to identify something, but you need some practical reasonable needs to know how to handle it.

Dr. Francis Njoku: If you don't know a situation, if you don't know who the African is, it is difficult to address realities about him, it's difficult to manage him and his affairs. So the first philosophy 101 about the African is to have these two versions. Knowledge of what is doing and practical reasoning as to how to respond to those problems. Because if this is the egg of the snake, certainly you don't collect the eggs and put it inside your pocket, already that your knowledge is translated into rules of action.

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Dr. Francis Njoku: So if you look at the African environment, look at the institutions, and then you can begin to divide a form of government that derives from what people know. I use the **e-work** example, our people are very egalitarian, and if you look at available instructible institutions, people like to come and discuss their problems, instead of waiting for someone to oppose it. Discuss, no matter your opinion, make your thoughts known, they can agree and disagree. At a point, they have a consensus, they agree on what to do and everyone works towards that.

Dr. Francis Njoku: That is also a form of democracy, should mean government of the people. But in actual sense, if democracy is government of the people, this is the initiated democracy from grassroots level, because people will gather and discuss and take a position on a particular issue. Unlike modern democracy, where the so-called people who claim to be representatives of the people, impose it on the people, make laws in their so-called headquarters and then bind them. But democracy, if one would be serious, the people are sovereign, and this is the sovereign that makes the laws, as simple as that.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So go back to the roots, the people make the rules, and those guys over there are their representatives, not the other way around, you make a rule, impose it on people. That is why consensus democracy you might call it, or what I call initiative democracy, is better than the so-called representative democracy which we cooperate. And that democracy now has been hijacked by people with all kind of influences, money and the rest of them. And each year you see a dichotomy between the people, the so-called sovereign marginalized by their trustees.

Dr. Francis Njoku: If you look at Loc, Loc System will say the people formed a political society, so the government accounts to them, those they appoint to rule them or to work in government as trustees. So the agreement was meant, the people made an agreement, not with the government, they didn't make any pact with the government. They made a pact with themselves and then appointed trustees to take care of everything. But I don't know whether that is what you see in the so-called representative democracy. I'm not saying it might work, but it might not work. I'm not saying that it might work in that place, but if we want to have an African blend, we must pay attention to this understanding of reality from within, from the grassroots. People initiate political action and then there it develops to the center. That's the point I'm making.

Christelle Inema: Yeah, and that's perfectly explained, and I truly believe that kind of democracy is how people can actually gain access to the institutions and define what development also looks like for them.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Yeah. You see, if you create a social reality through dialogue, construction of reality and people will see themselves as part of it, it is sustainable. Now from there we can derive a system of development or government. Now if people come together, make decision, and take a decision: its Africans are known for making pacts or covenants. They give the roles to themselves, they agree on something, they have a social pact for it. Everyone knows that, and I used to call it

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covenants, a solemn promise made by them by an oath. It doesn't have to have involve blood, but the important thing is that people come together through their differences, their dialogue. They may have even enemies before, but important thing now through dialogue, discussions, they're able to create a central reality and bind themselves to it.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Now if you have this form of thing, if you have this form of this setting, things come up. Now you begin to have a new reality created that will be a basis for future relationship. If I make a pact with you, a social pathway agreement, an ethics of encounter will come up. How I now relate with you in the new dispensation, and also, some system of laws will come up, it's no longer business as usual. So from there we can make laws about ourselves, about our institutions. We have ethics of encounter, how we relate to one another, these things they match. And what is very important, one element that is always there in covenant making in Africa, is what you call the third person, the witness in a covenant. In marriage ceremonies, in pact between communities, there's always a witness. Now the witness is not a member of that pact, he's there as a witness, the pact between those persons. He's there to ensure there is impartiality.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Now if at the end of the day, the covenant runs to into a problem, those who are involved, the participants will call the attention of the witness, who will come and try to reconcile them. So the system of covenant has an inbuilt mechanism for taking care of conflict resolution. They come here because the other man has fallen away from their pact, then you carry on, gone. No, there are systems, even in marriage, if the union is not working, you report to the parents, if they're not, the parents will go back through the witness. There are steps, it gives the human that robust human situation to come back again.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Then another thing, when I propose that theory is, if you have created a reality where people come together as participant in a covenant... there are two possible systems of government that can emerge. With a covenant you have created some kind of society, two systems of government that can emerge. First, I call the first-person perspective. You can elect a member of the covenant, those participants, one of them to take care of the goods of the members. So if you know you are organized, you are managing property, a common good you are also a part of. So there's every indication that you do it as your thing, because you have a share in it, so you are engaged.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So that's one system. So see a leader as someone who knows your "doing" is part of the game, is part of that common good, he's sharing in it. So you put everything you have in it. That's one form of governance. So if our leaders can see themselves, not our people who bought all kinds of ways and then got there, and they don't talk the public good as they're good, they don't see themselves as part of the whole, they're there to represent their own interest. That's part of the problem in Africa.

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Dr. Francis Njoku: Another system of government is from what I call the third-person perspective. This is built on the witness, who is called to be a leader of the covenant group administer the goods of the covenant. In the 15th-century, Italians had this, they call it the podesta. So the podesta was a member of another city, for example, maybe someone from Massachusetts, Northern American maybe, you call him to Chicago to be the mayor, but he was a paid worker. So his job is there to grant justice and be impartial. He's not part of that covenant, but he's paid to make sure that the rules are followed and justice also. So if you use this third person perspective, you are invited now, paid, to administer this set of rules for the people. You are likely to do it well, you are paid, you don't have any sectarian interest. Basically, you just take the position of the witness, whose position in the covenant was to maintain justice, to make sure that no side cheats the order.

Christelle Inema: That's a very interesting take, actually, that I hadn't thought about, because usually we think of leaders as having to be from the communities in order to lead well. But I also think there is power in having someone from the outside, who actually has no stake in it, who is able to be impartial. And another thing you touched on that was really interesting, is people coming together to solve their own problems. And I saw an example of that from Rwanda, where I come from, where after the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, people came together under Gacaca to actually solve the issues and talk. Do you see it happening elsewhere in Africa? For instance, in Nigeria, there has been some conflict over the years. Have you seen any indication that that can happen, or what would be the best way to bring people together when conflicts are still emerging to this day?

Dr. Francis Njoku: See, Nigeria has not faced that. People have been calling for a national conference, that the constitution being used now is a fraud. Nigeria government doesn't want to listen, because too many people are benefiting. People want to talk, that's why people, some want to go, so we cannot be in this union again, there's nothing there for us. Based on discrimination and all kinds of evils, so let's dissolve it, but Nigerian law doesn't want to do that. But that call, people call for discussion, it's an African way, at least for discussion. Let's go back to the drawing table to see what is happening, you know. Look at what happened in there, people came back and discussed, took on to unbelief, but Nigeria doesn't want to serve them.

Dr. Francis Njoku: What our problem is that this is something from, is not a system that is from our side. Given our people, the way we behave, the institutions, we can come and discuss and say this is what we want. We don't need to stay there and let another person to come and do it for us. No, it's our own problem, we can solve that. And you create a disposition that some of those people already know. They know what it means to have covenants, and they take it seriously. Those pacts, they take relationships of in-law, friendship, they take it seriously, and they know when you make a pact with people, you can collaborate. There's nothing to fear, they're not going to poison you.

Dr. Francis Njoku: The closest you want to come in a covenant relationship is brotherhood. If someone is abroad, you can't get closer than that, because it is stupefied by the sense of blood, closeness of familyhood. In Nigeria, we talk about familyhood, everyone's talking about familyhood,

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the which man has familyhood, you treat other person as your family. The basis for familyhood is actually blood. So what they're doing in that covenant situation is a ritual in a very performative sense, to say that this communion we have shared this closeness we have now: we define it as a blood closeness. This water we drank individually from the same cup. We have done that as a member of family, and we hold it that we have shared somehow in that same blood that holds family together. That's the performance—and since we have said it, committed ourselves, then it is and then you begin.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So imagine in a country where those diverse persons take themselves as brothers, they are people that can relate with, you know. It's going to change, but in Nigeria it's not there. No one has been persecuted in Nigeria for discriminating against another person. Your name says what you did. In fact, if you mention your name, that you're from Nigeria, if you mention your name, I can tell you where you're from. Whether you're from south or east to west, which doesn't happen here. You can answer to Jackson or anything you like, but Nigeria, those names.

Dr. Francis Njoku: And another thing I observed, I said, that's not been strong civil society as a nation, people saw themselves. I mean, the British came, and they organized a certain society for their own economic end. So the various people from various tribes came, found themselves together in the capital, and we are working. But when the white man left, there was nothing to hold them together. The Yoruba man does not see the Igbo man as his brother, now the Hausa man seeing the ethnic person as his brother. There was no civil society. The civil society like law will say is an intermediate group coming out from the state of nature. We are not yet at a political society, but this is a society of peace. We want to live in peace, even if there is no government, we live in peace to safeguard our property. So that was not there, because the people don't see themselves as people who have the same end of security for themselves, there is not. That's why everyone wants to be at the center, because if you are not there, you are forgotten. All the tribes cannot be at the center at the same time.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So it goes back to that we lack the civic of political disposition to be a state or a nation, we have not harnessed that. Even with the present agitation of groups, if you don't develop the right dispositions, socioeconomic, or moral dispositions, social dispositions, for people to live together as a people, it wouldn't work. A nation is a choice like a family, you choose the person you want to marry, you marry, you have kids, have families, families form communities in the nation. It is a choice. It's part of the principle of human action.

Dr. Francis Njoku: In fact, when [inaudible] was writing about operations of reason, he looked at human reason at four levels. And he wants to see where he would locate the civil society, the family. So he said there are four operations of reason. First is the operation of reason in the natural sciences, who check at the time were called natural science and now maybe physics, chemistry. If you are studying soil, you're not bringing anything new, you just want to know the contents of this. That's one operational reason. The second operational is what we bring into our thinking, like logic.

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You know, you want to know the correct form or the laws of human reasoning. Now, I'll leave the third, I'll come back to the third. The fourth one is a level of mechanical sciences where you bring through your works, you bring an implicit image in something. Like these three, you can use it instead and cover something and get an image.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Now the third one, which was this major point of his commentary on the network analytics of Aristotle. He said, this is what we bring in through our deliberations and choices. And in this third level, he comprehends politics, economic sociology, ethics, and here he comprehends family, civil society, the state, because these are products of decision. If you want to marry, you decide. The state is not an act of chance, it's a natural thing. Family is not an act of chance. And when you bring it about, remember when you are making choices to do human action, you decide to do it at your end, find a means to realize in it, and then get the right dispositions. If you're driving to Michigan, and you'll be driving like a mad person, you won't get there. So you need the required dispositions to actualize your end. So your end is the state. There are dispositions required of citizens to bring about the good, or reach the end of the state.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Part of the problem of African nations is this inability to train their citizens to have the right dispositions as it is even as leaders themselves, because there are the right dispositions of leaders. Plato said that the leader is like a ship captain, who's exerts himself driving the ship, the state to safety. If he doesn't know his way, as if he lacks the proper dispositions, he will ruin himself and ruin the ship. You see that? So he is not magic. So some Nigerians like to pray, Holy Ghost fire there, keep... You need appropriate disposition, there is a disposition for being a student, a good student, you want to have first class. Every day you are sleeping, you're not reading, that is not the right disposition.

Christelle Inema: Yes, you are right and you talk about a nation is a choice just like a family.

Dr. Francis Njoku: It's a choice.

Christelle Inema: So do you see something or any dispositions that different ethnic groups in Nigeria have that can potentially bring them together to make that choice?

Dr. Francis Njoku: They have to decide to come together, to work together, to get that themselves are the same people, that have the right disposition. Not to discriminate on accounting anything, to stand in for others, to try and to work for common good. You don't just get Abuja if there's no one there, you take the whole thing. Your job, you only give the people from your own ethnic group. They are criticizing the vice president of Nigeria who wants to run for the president. That since he's been there, all the people he's been helping are members of his church. That's not the only thing in the church in Nigeria. You understand me?

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Dr. Francis Njoku: So if every Nigerian stands in for the other, people are not bother. If you are there, and I know I'm represented. So I don't have to be there, my brother does not have to be there, everyone is there for everyone else. So we need to cultivate that attitude of one. In fact, Nigeria, I shall tell people, Nigeria is a state that calls ourself a nation. Nigeria calls ourself a nation. The people of over 250 tribes, they are calling it a nation. That's in Nigeria: a nation is a people of the same, maybe blood, ethnic ancestry or something. So how do you make a people of over 200 tribes a nation? It means that you have to cultivate, you have to make everyone realize that they belong. You know something you do have because Nigeria's actually a state. Now if you recognize that Nigeria is a state, what do you do?

Dr. Francis Njoku: Aristotle said, dissimilar form a state, similar do not form a state. A state is made up of different kinds of people, is a place of diversity, they come together. So that's why they need their dispositions. In fact, one of the social virtues is friendship. You need the dispositions of friendship, justice, equity, to soften the rough edges so that people can unite together, so that the dissimilar form a state, unlike Plato. Plato had a homogenous state, and he says, no, the state—if it's so homogenous, you end up becoming a military continent. That's what you have in Nigeria now, some group wants to run the whole place. So from presidents to everything, they own everything. They cannot be a state; a state is a place of diversity. I have the Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa, is mixed. You know what, you corner more to culturalism and the rest of them. That is the basis for a state, because actually as I said, our diversity can bring us together and we have a great blend.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So African countries, I don't know any African country that is one state ethnic group now. I don't even know which, even Israel is mixed somehow, because I'm sure there are some Ethiopians who have Israeli blood or something like that. So it's difficult to have, most states now, even the so-called one ratio state, difficult to have one single. So even if it is one person, the whole label, even Igbo groups within themselves are not a homogenous group. They have all kinds of migrated groups and all kinds of means of origin. Even though you will say that they belong to one race, we still have to manage diversity, even in the same family. Some like to do medicine, others have disposition for engineering.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So there must be diversity, even as a person, sometime you want to go and walk, instead of flying. It is part of it, just that the degree of management and the degree of extension of diversity. So if we harness these things together, we can come—it doesn't mean that there wouldn't be friction. That one person who made a distinction between the politics and the political. Politics are about management of the state, but the political in terms of human beings have sociopolitical tensions between groups who continue to be there or workers who continue to protest. Some groups social, some human right groups who continue to protest about certain things, those are tensions that go with civil society. They must be there, even when we have solved our political problems, they are human sociological problems.

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Christelle Inema: So this brings me to a question that ties into one of the democracy that you presented, where you can bring a third person like the witness. So in this case, with Nigeria having over 200 ethnic groups and diversity. And maybe this is a trick question, I'm not sure, it's for you to decide. But do you think there would be a better approach to a way to govern, like bringing someone else in because they're not going to have any stake in any of the ethnic groups that are available? And if we decide in this world that we are making that that's the way to go, who do you think would be there? What kind of qualities would that person need to have to be able to bring Nigeria together?

Dr. Francis Njoku: This is a model, those are models of... theoretical models. But before you do that, you have to do the groundwork. Whether it's a Yoruba man there or a Hausa, you have to do the groundwork, that people are where their profit virtues. And they consciously make that choice, make a pact, and respect it. So it doesn't matter again, whether the person there is from north or south because he knows the goods on which the society is built, and he pursues that common good that he is also a part of his group. It is a theoretical standpoint.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So if I see myself as a leader now, then I need to commit myself, I see that this thing I'm doing, I've also a stake in it. It's a different disposition, I'll do what? But if I also see it, the same leader there that now these things, all these guys, not come from my own ethnic group. So my role is to be impartial and make sure that everything gets. So is a theoretical position, it's a rationalization. The same person can see himself as a member of covenant... good, he'll work with a lot of zeal. The same person also can see himself as a safe guarder of the covenant. He's not there to manipulate. So it's a theoretical... and whichever disposition that a man is, from these positions, whichever disposition is good enough to manage the affairs of the group.

Christelle Inema: Yes, and as one of my last questions, I'm just interested, it's going to be a fun question now. What book would you recommend that relates to Africa, African proverbs and issues, the best, your favorite book?

Dr. Francis Njoku: Well, I don't know what you mean by that.

Christelle Inema: I don't know, any fiction, non-fiction, just for people who are listening to the podcast too.

Dr. Francis Njoku: Well, there are kinds of books or novels that talk about African proverbs, it depends on what you want and what you want to do. When I use some African novels, for example, what I've been doing lately is to rationalize, to derive philosophy from literature, from what African writers are saying. When you read James Ngugi, *Weep Not, Child*, or Achebe's, *Things Fall Apart*, and the rest of them. They say literature is not philosophy, but it can give you materials for philosophizing and so it depends on your interest. And some of African realities are documented in these novels in... it depends what you are looking for.

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Dr. Francis Njoku: When I came back from Israel, I'd say that I was going to do something for my, I have to articulate the philosophy and do it from, with using the materials I have. I listened to folklores, to proverbs... we have stories, in some of mine, I tell stories. Then I think our job is to draw or make explicit the philosophy implicit in this non-philosophical. So it depends what is your interest. See, if you're interested in literature, I have a body of literature, and there are also some who, like I said, will be blaming the white man, no problem. I know that we can blame, and there was a lot of manipulation of African reality. But I think it's a long time, we started to find the solution from within. If we do what we are supposed to do from within, then we'll be strong enough to face the external learning. There is no free meal in international market, no. You understand me?

Dr. Francis Njoku: And there's something Euphrates said, he said that we should be careful. Some people... the first devastation of Africa was when the colonial people came and imposed their rule on us, but he said there's a second one, he warned people. The people will be talking about African unity, you think they're interested in your unity. No, they're not interested in your unity, they lend you money, they're not interested in that. Sometimes they lend you money, bring their own expatriates to undermine the whole project. We experience that in Nigeria with the Romans, with Ghana, and the rest of them.

Dr. Francis Njoku: There's a folk story. The lion visited the sheep and asked the sheep if any of the children could come and babysit for the lion family, imagine that. So the sheep thought long and hard, he said, "Okay, no problem. That should get back to the lion." Then when the lion left, the sheep called the children and said, "How many of you, how many times will someone do something to you before you retaliate?" They began to answer, this one said, "If you do something, the first one, I will ignore you. The third, the fifth, maybe the tenth one, I'll retaliate." The sheep watched the children answer. The particular child, we'll call it the lamb with luck, or the lamb with practical reasonableness. He said, "Mom, before you do something for me, even if before you think to harm me, I'll retaliate." He said, "You are the right guy to go and babysit for the lion."

Dr. Francis Njoku: Our leaders are there. How can you be complaining? We know out there is a state of nature. So leaders have responsibility to represent their families, their country, you need that to be able to... we know there's danger out there, but we have to navigate it. The president, Nigerian Minister of Transport, they signed an agreement with China, and the thing was that Nigeria could see sovereign to Chinese, they say, "But what about it?" He didn't read, or they didn't read their thing written in Chinese, and they're representing their country, their own people.

Dr. Francis Njoku: So it means that even the children, they came and raped our mother. Still the children have disappointed the mother, the land. So if you're expressing dissatisfaction, both with the present children of Africa, we have disappointed. Because some have gotten education to reason at the level of the so-called external people. Still, because of the little benefits you get, then you sell the whole continent. When you are there in the position to do something for your people, you

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sabotage it. Now it is high time we stopped concentrating on—for the meantime, for sake of argument—concentrating on the threat from without and then concentrate on the threat from within.

Reema Saleh: Thank you for listening to this episode of Root of Conflict, featuring Francis Njoku. This episode was produced and edited by Reema Saleh and Ricardo Sande. Thank you to our interviewer, Christelle Inema. Special thanks to UC3P and The Pearson Institute for their continued support of this series. For more information on The Pearson Institute's research and events, visit thepearsoninstitute.org and follow them on Twitter.