**"Why are Igbo boys and girls denied their own stories?" | Plenary Speech by Chude Jideonwo at Ola ndi Igbo in Enugu**

I made the quick dash to this event from The RED Summit, our 4-day celebration of the 10th anniversary of our media group.

Just yesterday, at our celebration gala, former governor of Rivers State, Rotimi Amaechi told an interesting story, about our subsidiary, StateCraft which was appointed by him to handle communication for President Muhammadu Buhari’s campaign this year, and the journey to convincing the president to wear a suit for the first time - for the photo-shoot that re-introduced him to the Nigerian electorate in December of 2014.

One shoot, one image, the governor said, went viral across the nation and outside, effectively changing, in one swoop, the narrative for a former Nigerian Head of State, and one who had run for office three times prior.

He was talking about our role in that crucial historic movement, but what struck me yet again was the media, and its limitless capacity to change the world. How one photograph can do what decades of a distinguished career and a reputation for integrity could not do.

You know, despite 15 years in the media, it continues to amaze me, its power to transform, to change, to recreate. Its immense ability to tell stories (and to go beyond telling stories) that transform systems and societies, to enable and build movements, to truly change the world.

This observation becomes urgent because I have asked today to speak about changing mindsets leveraging the media.

And so the question occurs to me immediately: Do we understand that the lack of powerful media telling powerful stories about Nigerians who have stood with integrity, ignored ignoble wealth, built earth shaking brands and institutions, is the major part of why we have entire generations who do not understand that greatness truly lies within us?

We have an entire generation who have endlessly heard stories of thieving governors, spineless presidents, and conscience-less businessmen. But this is also the country of Innoson, of Obiageli Ezekwesili, of Chinua Achebe, and not just for his writing.

That's why I decided I must come today, because I have a sense of our history and our present, and I am inspired by it. And I know that it is possible in this country to do great things even despite the tragedy of hopeless governance, mindless business opportunities, even feckless activism.

And that is why it is an tragedy that we have so many Nigerian media companies that want to tell African stories to the world, and very few focused on telling proper African stories to Africans.

That's not the urgency that we need. The world is not ignoring us because of a lack of powerful media talking about our moutains and hills to the world. The world is ignoring us because of a lack of power stories from within our continent shaping the minds of its youth – so that our future is greater than our present.

That’s why one act of bold leadership by Fashola during the time of Ebola did more to burnish the image of our country than five young women dancing in a commercial to ‘sell’ Nigeria playing 10 times a day on CNN.

We need to tell stories and spread action of the incredible work that happens on our soil. On telling people the magic that Sullivan Chime performers here in Enugu - transforming road networks, urban renewal, education, even when according to most accounts he was not fully healthy. We need to tell the story of incredible innovation by Peter Obi in Anambra state, evidenced in massive leaps in school enrolments, WAEC successes, education indexes.

We need to focus on telling people why Obiageli Ezekwesili is special. In a country with so much failure, so few role models, to have a person so consistent in words and on deed, in and out of government, no blemish to be found on her record.

We need to tell those stories to ourselves, and to our children, and to our brothers and to our sisters.

This is what Americans, Britions, Rwandans, South Africansunderstand. That's why they have powerful media talking to their own citizens. That's why they tell the stories everyday - the Civil War, D-Day, the Genocide, Christopher Colombus's arrival, Mandela’s birthday Martin Luther's death. We hear it every year, every time, movies, TV specials, news editorials, documentaries.

But what do we have here? Someone at the video censors board banned the showing of Half of a Hellow Sun! My God! People so desperate to shut down all stories and all conversation about a civil war that took the lives of almost a million Nigerian citizens?

Some leaders daring to say this is in the past and we should forget it. Forget it? Forget it?! Forget the stories of courage and innovation, of survival and the rebuilding of societies torn down by war, and the rebuilding and reconstruction of businesses by people who only received 20 pounds each when they returned to their homes?

Why are Igbo boys and girls denied such powerful stories? Why have they not heard of the impressive powerful people who changed the world right here on this soil so they can draw inspiration because those people walked these same roads, drank this same water, spoke this same Igbo? Why?

How dare we?

We need to tell the stories. We need strong powerful media in Nigeria telling Nigerian stories to Nigeria's young and old and inspiring them to take charge of their destinies, of their communities, of their country.

And especially when you are an endangered species like the Igbo seem to be in Nigeria these days, with threats to throw us into the see, show us pepper for voting wrong and all kinds of insanity, it becomes crucial to affirm our identity. And identities are not affirmed by transactional constitutional conferences and dodgy population census. They are affirmed to the self, and then to others by re telling and then telling again, our important stories.

Of course, not just the Igbo, but Nigerians as a whole.

At our company, Red Media Africa, that's the job we have chosen. Because, in this century. The media can no longer be a bystander. We are working hard to build massive pan-Nigerian, pan-African media platforms.

Because Nigeria will not be changed by boreholes, by piecemeal incremental change, by stops and starts. Nigeria will not be changed by ministerial screenings and endless probles.  Nigeria will be changed by its people. By unleashing their potential, by affirming the common decency and roaring aspiration of young and old minds. Nigeria will be changed only by a movement of inspired people working hard everyday to reach a common, inspired vision.

To do that, you need to connect with their hearts, with their souls. You need to help them believe, have faith, stand strong, not waiver, keep going, keep trying, convinced in their very beings that it is possible for Nigeria to change, for their destinies to be fulfilled, for greatness to

come to their country.

We need to deploy the media to inspire millions of young people across Ebonyi, Delta, Enugu, Imo, Anambra, Abia, and everywhere Igbo boys and girls exist - in the language they understand. Wherever Nigerian boys and girls exist, in the language they understand.

Because there are over 32 million Igbos waiting to be inspired. Over 180 million Nigerians begging to be empowered. We need to build powerful local and global platforms that speak to these audiences, which answer their questions.

Stop underestimating the power of a story. The power of an inspired person; the power of the inspired, empowered Igbo youth.The power of the inspired, empowered Nigerian youth.

We have so much work to do.

*\*This speech was delivered by Jideonwo, Managing Partner of Red Media Africa, the media company to reach and inspire the largest number of African youth at any time,**on 17 October 2015*