ADVICE TO NIGERIAN VOTERS

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In a BBC article entitled 'Viewpoint: Ivory Coast's lesson to Nigeria', Nigerian-born novelist and journalist Kingsley Kobo reflects on the situation in Ivory Coast and takes a look at what Nigerians can learn from it for their own Presidential Elections. Kobo is well-placed to comment as he has spent the last 16 years living in Ivory Coast with his Ivorian wife and children, until they were forced to flee to Ghana during the recent violence. Here is some of his advice to his fellow Nigerians:

> *'Similar to the Ivory Coast, the campaigns in Nigeria during the last days culminated in some violence and tension. But these conflicts don't matter - what matters is the change your one single vote will bring to your life and to that of your family.*
>
> *During the Ivory Coast elections, few thought about their own future while voting.*
>
> *They wanted their candidate to win by any means necessary, even if the price meant sacrificing their own lives and setting the land ablaze.'*

He goes on to say:

> *'No matter which region you hail from, you remain a Nigerian, and your primary duty is to see the country win. If your candidate loses, never mind, whoever wins is a Nigerian and it is therefore a victory for everyone.'*

He refers to the decades of violence in northern Nigeria between Christians and Muslims and says maybe they have something to learn from Ivorian Christians and Muslims who have often co-existed peacefully and urges Nigerians on both sides to leave vengeance to God.

Voting in elections is important, but even more important is how they are conducted and then how people react to the election results. He tells aspiring candidates: "if you lose it's nothing, but please don't let 150 million Nigerians lose."

Wise words. You can read the full article here.