

Inability of the Former President

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Recently, I had a very special opportunity to briefly interview our former President of the United States of Atlantis, Mr. Abomo. As the largest country on the planet, it is naturally the most powerful nation. When Mr. Abomo was elected the President, there was an extraordinary amount of expectation. His winning statement was bold and promising. The expectation of the people was unprecedented. During his tenure, he made a substantial progress on many fronts, especially in contrast to his immediate predecessor. However, when Mr. Abomo left his office at the end of his two terms, many people were disappointed. A lot of the issues remained.

Since my focus of this interview was about his inability to accomplish, I started rather bluntly. "Good morning, Mr. Abomo. While you clearly eclipsed many of your predecessors, I have to say that you didn't meet my and many others' expectation on many fronts. Do you agree with me? What do you want to say about it?" Mr. Abomo was not surprised. He must be used to this kind of question.

"Good morning, Ms. Wallen. Thank you for coming and your compliment ... and criticism. I do have to agree that a lot of issues still remain to be solved. I am still committed to address them and willing to tackle them as much as I can. Now, during my election campaign, I made a number of promises. Frankly, I was really hopeful that I could actually accomplish many of them, if not all. I was also naive. I was young. I was not as experienced. So, I have to accept your criticism. Clearly, I was unable to meet my own expectations as President."

I felt a little sorry for Mr. Abomo ... as a person. He seemed to be genuine and sincere. But I need to focus. "Thank you, Mr. Abomo, for your candid opinion. Actually, I'm sorry to start this interview that way. Now, I have a feeling that you are willing to share your story. Will you?"

Mr. Abomo smiled warmly and started. “Sure. That’s what I need to do and want to do. First, let me go straight to the point. I failed to accomplish what I promised not because of my inability. It was because of the inability of the people of this country. Please do not think that I’m blaming others to excuse myself. I do share the greatest role in this failure. But if we focus on *me*, that would be wrong.”

“Well, so you sound as if you were blaming others but you claim that you are not.” I interjected.

“Right. It does sound contradictory. But bear with me. I came to this realization gradually. When I was elected, I did think that I was more powerful than I actually was and that I was able to keep my promise. That was naive. Now, before moving on, let’s take a look at the current President. He thinks that he *has* the power to control our country as he pleases. Well, every President in the past must have had this quality. If you were not power-hungry, you wouldn’t run for the office. However, the current President is the extreme and quite different from any of the past Presidents. The past Presidents mixed their use of power with common sense people skills. But due to the lack of common sense and basic skills, this President doesn’t understand the necessity of other factors. So, in the end, he keeps abusing the power. I just used the word ‘abuse’ because that’s what he really does.”

Mr. Abomo hesitated a little. “Sorry, it’s not my main point to attack the current president, at least in this interview. But his style is the perfect example to make my point. Now, back to my Presidency. It’s extremely embarrassing to say this. But let me be honest. I was somewhat like the current President. But I was able to sense what was wrong. Whenever I tried to force on other people what I believed right. There was strong resistance. For example, you know that I believe in universal healthcare. So, that was one of the first on my agenda that I tried to address. I tried to implement the plan drafted by my advisory committee. But then, I was not at all prepared for the strong resistance from every corner of the country. Insurance and pharmaceutical companies were upset. Small businesses felt confused. Even potential beneficiaries didn’t understand the benefits. Everything.

“So, I had no other way but listen first. This saved my Presidency. At the same time, this is also why I was labeled incapable. Well, as for the importance of listening, this applies to any President ... or any person, for that matter. Any President who cannot listen will fail. Once I started to listen carefully, things started to work ... of course, not all the time. But whatever I was able to accomplish was due to listening. I became a listener and coordinator. This was a completely different role of the President as I initially envisioned. And this is why I attribute everything I was or wasn’t able to do to other people. Even the President is no more than a coordinator. If the President didn’t understand this simple point, he is doomed to fail. So, please review carefully what I said earlier. My failure was due to the failure of the people of this country.”

The President of the United States of Atlantis as a coordinator? For me, it was a rather surprising idea. If Mr. Abomo had mentioned this point before the election, would he have

been elected? I bet he would *not*. The people's perception of the President is so much made of our machoistic view of the President. This perception is often reflected and enforced by the media of all sorts. In a sense, when Mr. Abomo was elected, we thought we elected a hero who would save us from all the evils. We were disappointed because Mr. Abomo was nothing like that. But Mr. Abomo pointed out that his limitations were our limitations. While expecting him a lot, we didn't do our part. While he was in the office, we should have fixed the antiquated election system so that Presidential elections are not TV reality show. We should also have fixed the healthcare so that all the citizens can receive the care they deserve at a reasonable cost. In some other countries, virtually everyone assumes universal healthcare. So, they do not need to fight to implement one. It is not their president but the people who implemented it. We should have fixed our education system as well, so that children and students can maintain and practice their innate ability to learn. There are many more areas that we should have fixed while Mr. Abomo was in the office. Now that the current President is a control-freak and unfortunately, completely out of touch with reality, it is much harder even to retain Mr. Abomo's accomplishments, much less to fix anything.

"Oh, I have already used up my time. Thank you so much. Before leaving, can I ask one last question? After leaving the office, did you start anything new?" Mr. Abomo responded shyly. "Well, I started to practice the *trumpet* ... on my own. It's been about six months since I started. I mainly play Bossa Nova and Jazz. But the piece I'm currently practicing is *Meditation* from the opera *Thais*, arranged for the trumpet. I have to say that I'm a terrible singer. To compensate that deficiency, the trumpet is a pretty good assistive device. With the trumpet, I can 'sing' ... sort of. That is, singing *with the lips*. You know, the essence of trump-pets is lip service." Mr. Abomo winked.

"Aha! The choice of trumpet was quite timely, isn't it? Any way, thank you so much for your time today. I wish you the best for your future career." I concluded my interview. Mr. Abomo shook my hand warmly and left the room quietly. As I was leaving the residence, I heard him play *Meditation*.