



Nigeria

Man who inspired Orange is the New Black elected senator in Nigeria

- Buruji Kashamu's case inspired Orange Is The New Black
- Opponents challenging his victory, saying ballots were rigged

Associated Press in Lagos

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A man cast his votes in Lagos, Nigeria. Election results posted late Wednesday identify a man indicted in the US for smuggling heroin as senator-elect in south-west Ogun state. Photograph: Sunday Alamba/AP

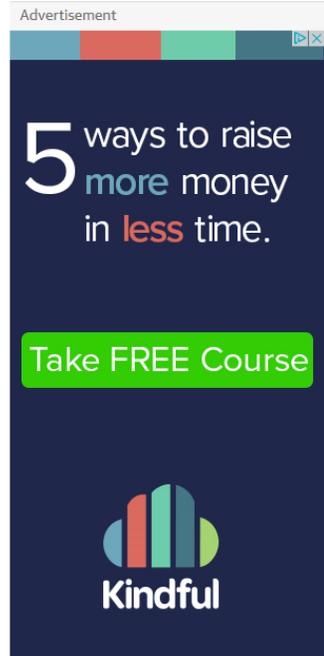
A man indicted in America for allegedly smuggling heroin, in a court case that was the basis for the TV hit *Orange Is The New Black*, has been elected a senator in Nigeria.

Buruji Kashamu was little known before he returned home in 2003 from Britain despite a US extradition order to become a major financier of President Goodluck Jonathan's party.

Election results posted late Wednesday identify Kashamu as a senator-elect in south-west Ogun state. Opponents are challenging his victory in court, saying ballots were rigged.

Kashamu, 56, hung up the phone twice when the AP called for comment about the drug case on Thursday. Kashamu has said he is "a clean businessman" and that the 1998 indictment by a grand jury in the Northern District of Illinois for conspiracy to import and distribute heroin in the United States is a case of mistaken identity. He has said Chicago prosecutors really want the dead brother he closely resembles.

A British court refused a US extradition request in 2003 over uncertainty about Kashamu's identity. Chicago Judge Richard Posner thought otherwise when he refused a motion to dismiss Kashamu's case last year.



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A dozen people were long ago tried and jailed in the case, including American Piper Kerman, whose memoir about her jail time became the Netflix hit [Orange Is The New Black](#). Kerman's book never identified Kashamu by name, but there is a west African drug kingpin whom she calls "Alhaji", meaning one who has completed the haj or pilgrimage to Mecca.

A Nigerian federal court last year ordered Kashamu's extradition, an order upheld by an appeals court. But Nigeria's government has not extradited him.

That failure caused Olusegun Obasanjo, a former president, to warn that "drug barons ... will buy candidates, parties and eventually buy power or be in power themselves".

Jonathan's perceived protection of Kashamu was a factor that led Obasanjo to defect from the ruling party before recent elections to the opposition that won most votes in Ogun, the home state of Kashamu and Obasanjo.

Kashamu is suing Obasanjo for libel for stating that Kashamu is a fugitive from US justice. He had won a court order halting publication of Obasanjo's autobiography but a judge this week rescinded it, saying Kashamu had misled the court. Obasanjo's lawyer argued that the truth cannot be libel.

President-elect Muhammadu Buhari, a former military dictator who had people jailed for littering in the 1980s, has promised to fight corruption. That has many politicians fearful in a country where corruption is endemic.



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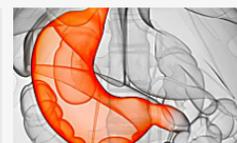
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