

THE ABORTION OF TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE MECHANISMS IN NIGERIA: THE OPUTA PANEL IN PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the extent of human rights abuses in Nigeria that led to the setting up of the Human Rights Violations Investigations Commission, otherwise known as the 'Oputa Panel' and the legal dynamics that stalled its operations. I show that the success of the legal challenge to the Commission was due to the absence of prior legal framework for the Panel and contends that the development is a useful lesson to other States contemplating the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions. I further submit that for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to avoid such legal tangles and serve as an instrument for redressing human rights abuses, a prior legal framework is imperative.