

UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS, NIGERIA



TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR ADEBOWALE IBIDAPO ADEFUYE, DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS AND NIGERIA'S AMBASSADOR TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Protocols!

It is with heavy heart that I stand before you this evening to reminisce on the life and times of one of the greatest Nigerians of our generation. Indeed, the entire Staff and Students of the University of Lagos are greatly saddened by his demise. Professor Adebowale Ibidapo Adefuye (Ade for short) was a friend, a colleague, a mentor, an outstanding teacher, researcher and research leader and meant a lot to most of us he interfaced with at the University of Lagos.

His last official visit to the University was on 16th of December, 2012, when he delivered the "2012 Distinguished Guest Lecture" of our School of Post Graduate Studies, which was part of the events lined up to mark our Golden Jubilee Anniversary. In his thought provoking lecture titled "Unilag at 50: From Excellence to Distinction, A Roadmap", he admonished us not to be merely contented with just being 'Nigeria's University of First Choice' but to go a step further by striving for laurels globally and competing to be among the very best in the world. Needless to say, our current push has been towards realizing this dream.

Though painful as his death may be, I can also tell you that the man for whom we are presently gathered, was by all standards, a great man, an achiever, a detribalized Nigerian, and a great Scholar. He lived a simple life and was energetic and very passionate with his job. Professor Adefuye joined the service of the University of Lagos as a Lecturer in 1972, having obtained his PhD in History from the University of Ibadan. Of course, being the brilliant scholar that he was, it was not surprising that he rose very fast to become a Professor in 1985. In that same year, and quite remarkably at the age of 38, he was made Head of the Department of History, a position he held for two years, until 1987. His colleagues in the Department attest to the fact that as Head of Department, he was a source of inspiration, who gave high professional and intellectual leadership. It is on record that he successfully supervised three Ph.D theses and over twenty Master's Degree Dissertations. In fact, several of his students also confirm that he was a dutiful mentor and a dedicated teacher who keenly followed the progress of his students through the years.

As a Scholar, Professor Adefuye was well published. Aside his Ph.D. Thesis, which dealt with the "History of the Palwo of Uganda (1400-1911)", within the limited time he stayed in academics, he had several articles published in learned Journals; about ten Chapters in Books as well as three books credited to his name, notably "History of the Peoples of Lagos State", which he jointly edited with Professors B. A. Agiri and Akinjide Osuntokun and "Culture and Foreign Policy: The Nigerian Experience 1960 -1991".

Before 1987, when Professor Adefuye joined Nigeria's Foreign Service as High Commissioner to Jamaica with concurrent accreditation to Belize and Haiti, he had also distinguished himself as a Scholar by winning several prizes and awards. Some of these include: the United State Office of Education grant to serve as 'Foreign Curriculum Consultant' at Florida Junior College, Jacksonville, U.S.A. (September 1981 – June 1982); Visiting Fellow, Department of History, University of Warwick, England (June – September 1984); Ford Foundation grant for a Research on the Historical Background to Chad Crisis (June – July 1984); and, the United States International Agency grant to participate in Project '85, a Celebration of 200 Years of American Constitution, Columbia University, New York (June – July 1985).

The academics in him manifested, even during his period in the foreign service. The last book he wrote in 1993, according to him, resulted from an advice from Prof. J.F. Ade-Ajayi, when he was appointed Nigeria's High Commissioner to Jamaica, that he should pay attention to the African heritage of Jamaica during the period of his service. Being of the stuff he was made of, he not only heeded that advice by writing a book, but also went far beyond that. We are told that he was instrumental to the introduction of African History in the Curriculum of all Primary and Secondary Schools in Jamaica during his period as High Commissioner. He personally participated in the teaching of African History in many Jamaican Schools, and equally assisted in bringing in relevant texts from Nigeria with the help of the Nigerian Government. Is it not ironic that Prof. Adefuye's own country (Nigeria), is presently depriving its own children the study of Nigeria and African History both at the Primary and Junior Secondary School levels?

When Professor Adefuye left in 1987 for his assignment in Jamaica, he had no intention of permanently leaving the University of Lagos as he went on a leave of absence. He returned to the University in 1993 before he was again appointed as Nigeria's Deputy High Commissioner at the Nigerian Mission in London in the same year. He finally retired from the University effectively on 30th September 1996.

On a personal note, I recall our efforts at assisting Ogun State to develop the novel Gateway Industrial and Petro-Gas Institute (GIPI), a baby of the government of Governor Gbenga Daniel. He chaired the Board and I was a member. This was one of his last assignments in Nigeria before he was appointed the Nigerian Ambassador to the United States of America.

The entire University of Lagos is proud of him and we today celebrate him as an icon of excellence. We are particularly elated that like many other scholars, who at various times have represented us in the service of the fatherland, he never disappointed us, rather, he distinguished himself and we will eternally remain grateful to him.

Nevertheless, we will forever miss this rare Nigerian, consummate intellectual, detribalized Nigerian, urbane and sophisticated Diplomat.

We pray that God will comfort his wife, children and other members of his family.

May God grant his soul eternal rest!

Professor Rahamon Bello, *FAEng*
Vice-Chancellor,
University of Lagos.
17th September, 2015.