

Biography of a man of Integrity called Prof. Oyeleye Oyediran

By Babafemi A Badejo Ph.D.

Breezed into Nigeria to, with my wife, attend the funeral of my worthy mentor and role model. The blood family gave me the honour to read a biography on him to the Baptist Church, Bodija, Ibadan congregation. Below is my intervention.

Our late Pa Oyediran was born at Ogbomosho on January 13, 1934. His parents were late Pa Emmanuel Solademi and late Madam Comfort Oyediran. His father was an itinerant trader who met Comfort, in Gold Coast as it was then known and married her in Ghana. His birth was preceded by four sisters. In effect, he was the first relief that his father sought in having a son. In addition, another son and a sister followed his birth.

It is important that his father did not discriminate among his children on the basis of gender. His senior sisters went to school. There was a father who valued Western education.

In 1945, at age 11, he left Ogbomosho to live with Mr. Otunla, a close family friend. His father had become ill and with dwindling resources. So, Mr. Akande, his first cousin was financially responsible for his education. He was admitted to Baptist Boys High School (BBHS), Abeokuta, in 1949. However, Mr. Akande left for London in 1950 when he was in the second year at Baptist Boys High School. During that eventful 1950, his junior brother, Paul Oyegbile, joined him in Abeokuta. A family meeting in December 1950 among the youngest of his older sisters, Mrs. Olaoshebikan, his Dad and himself decided he should leave school to work and contribute to family efforts to educate his junior brother up to First School Leaving Certificate. Though he was not enthused about why poverty would deprive a performing student continuation in school, he readily agreed to sacrifice for his younger brother. However, as luck would have it, Mr. Otunla convinced his poor Dad who was suffering from weak health to borrow and/or sell anything he could to ensure little Oyeleye did not drop out of school. He continued with his secondary school education. He graduated in 1954 with the school certificate. It was at BBHS that his life-long relationship with Dr. Onaolapo Soley began. *Odun a jin si'ra o.*

Immediately after his school certificate, he first chose to be a Forestry Officer. He was not pleased with the experience of being in Khaki uniforms and watching over forests. He consulted with his friend Onaolapo Soley. He agreed to become a pivotal teacher in training at Baptist College, Iwo for two years. He worked in a number of places, including Government Printer, Ministry of Labour and School of Forestry and had a stint in teaching at BBHS in those earlier days before being successfully enrolled at the prestigious London School of Economics from 1961-1964.

A relevant question is how a poor boy from Ogbomosho could end up in a prestigious English University? With the little he had after support to his family, he went to London where Mr. Akande made a room available to him at his residence at 8 Acfold Road, Fulham. He worked as a full time Postman and saved hard to put himself through school.

After receiving his first degree in Political Science, he spent a year at the University of Essex, Colchester on post-Graduate studies. With a Fulbright Scholarship that the cream of Nigerian academia enjoyed in immediate post-Independence period, he pursued his doctorate in Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh, USA, from 1968-1971.

Like his father who met his mother in his land of sojourn, he also met and could not resist, Ms. Grace Aduke Omole-Godis, the love of his life in England, while he was there. They got married on October 8, 1966. It was a case of till death do us part. Their union produced two very successful children: Mrs. Omoloye Awojobi and Oyelola Oyediran. Yinka Awojobi (a son of Pa Oyediran who is more than a son-in-law) and his wife, Omoloye Awojobi have added four grandsons to the successful life of late Professor Oyediran.

The programme for today's funeral service in pages 14-15 contains details on our late father's academic career that started at the University of Ife now called Obafemi Awolowo University before moving to the University of Ibadan and ending at the University of Lagos where he spent a little over two decades as full Professor of Political Science. Interspersed in all those 3 Nigerian Universities were several international stints in many Universities, especially in the United States of America.

His was a life of service to mankind using, in the main, his knowledge to seek a better life for those around him and society at large. He was devoted to bringing up many in the academia as mentor and benefactor. That number includes myself, known as his first academic son, Prof Adigun Agbaje, the second and Prof Cyril Obi, the third son, both of who are unavoidably absent after putting so much into this funeral.

The programme contains a selection among his many publications that have influenced the study of political science in Nigeria and the world on Nigeria. He found time to undertake national assignments as his contribution to society. In particular, were his role in the quest for democratic constitutions for Nigeria.

His life was known for contentment and integrity. He was focused on his goals without jumping from here to there joining the rat race for goodies at whatever price.

Here lies a role model on honesty and integrity.

He would be missed by many.