

## **Memorable Catch-up with a Good Friend**

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A reasonable portion of today April 29, 2019, was spent with Olubukonla Onabolu reminiscing about different parts of my early life. Of course, with her Şina this and Şina that it is clear that it is a relationship of well over 52 years but we had not seen each other for about 48 years till today. Whenever I hear anyone call me Şina, I know immediately that such a person was from Araromi Street (New Road), Iloro Street and Igboburo through to Ita Ntebo and Odo-Egbo, all in Ijebu-Ode. Outside of those areas, I am Babafemi to all else or simply put, 'Femi.

My paternal grandmother as the oldest person in my family at that time, must have named me Babafemi. She died at 103. She obviously must have been elated that her late husband who had died eleven years before I was borne was spiritually kind and his intercession made it possible for me to finally arrive. Babafemi, in that case, my name mean father loves me.

My mother and all the neighbours were equally excited at my birth since I succeeded in arriving after six years of marriage. Too long for a Yoruba marriage those days. So, Adeşina implied that I had arrived to open the path for many more children to come. Indeed 4 followed me with one dying from a poverty related accident.

Of course, my father had his way. By the time I was being registered in Primary School at Saint Saviours School, an Anglican Missionary School which I later changed for Baptist Day School, Ereko, rather than proceed to Latogun, a very far distance those days, my father submitted Babafemi and a British colonial Governor's name and his middle name as my surname. I got rid of the British name myself since I could not be given a meaning for it and restored Adeşina that Olubukunola Onabolu (Buki) and others know as my name.

Well, you could say what's in a name? Names are important for Yorubas. They tell history and circumstances of birth. But those were then as I hear so many funnily coined Yoruba names especially from many Pentecostal zealots of today. Some of them even try to convince me that Baba in my name refers to God and different from what my paternal grandmother and father told me.

Buki was from richer family had started life in Lagos. Her father was in imports and exports business. I remember her mother as a stunning tall beauty. They remained in Lagos till the end and only visited in Ijebu-Ode.

Most Ijebu parents think global but they act local. For them, the schools in Ijebu were the best in Nigeria. Buki, like her Seniors, were brought to Ijebu to live with their old grandmother (Iya Olobi), a strong woman who walked distances to go to Church and cooked for herself till almost the end at about 104 or so.

My father took a liking for Egbon Rotimi Onabolu, Buki's Senior Brother. He used to rent bicycle from my dad and Buki and her sister bought cooked rice, beans as well as protein from my mum. Though smart, I was extremely playful. So, my father sought mentoring for me from Egbon Rotimi.

That was how, myself from a very poor family became associated with a by far richer family. They had one of the few TV sets in Ijebu-Ode of those days. So, I had access to an innovation that Chief Obafemi Awolowo (Awo) had introduced: TV Broadcasting - which was one of his many firsts in Africa. Those were leaders. He had insisted, long before Mandela, that he would rather stay in jail than seek freedom for himself at the expense of his people within a united and democratic Nigeria. He had been put in jail and denied defence of his choice as the Federal Government made a law on who can be a legal practitioner in

Nigeria etc. The powers that be wanted Awo to "kowtow in the poho" of the Federal Unity Government as Awo preferred to be leader of opposition - a position he used to pressure the Federal Government towards pro-people policies. Awo insisted that leadership is a privilege to provide a vision for service and not for self-aggrandizement. He would be shocked about so many thieves going around today claiming to be leaders in Nigeria and worse still wearing his style of cap as a sign of being his disciple or designing their own style of caps. Some of the self-aggrandizing thieves even, at times, pretend they had served or are serving Nigeria more than Awo did.

Awo's innovation of having a TV became basis for sharing knowledge and entertainment. Comedian Moses Adejumo, alias Baba Sala was on TV. So were playwrights like Hubert Ogunde and Oyin Adejobi etc. There was much to enjoy and learn. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy the English say.

But work we did as Buki and I were contemporaries in different schools, we compared what was taught on School Certificate syllabus by different teachers as Egbon Rotimi oversaw our work and Iya Olobi constantly putting us in order whenever it was more of play than work.

Buki and I reminisced about so much on our upbringing at lunch. But the write-up is getting too long and would pick up on other themes on another day, In Sha Allah.

Of course, the lunch was sumptuous with seafood ila alasepo for me and seafood edika-ikong for her. If you don't know and your mouth is not watering, don't worry until you visit Lagos and I offer the treat even though my ideal ila alasepo is at Abeokuta and edika-ikong with real peri-winkles would be in Calabar where I spent part of my National Youth Service.