

Salutation to an Unsung Omoluabi

Babafemi A. Badejo, Ph.D.

Today, January 9, 2020 is the 70th birthday of a role model: Dr. Abiodun Osinubi. If he had joined in the stealing from national patrimony like many are doing in my country, he would have received a presidential congratulations. Jets would have flown into Murtala Mohammed airport in Lagos conveying co-thieves who pretend to be leaders in politics or industry but are actually thieves not being held to account.

Our values have become so warped that school drop outs who in some cases went ahead to forge certificates of completing school as well as those who stole big are the ones in charge of affairs of Nigeria at different levels. Of course, there are a few who did well in school but joined the stealing in other to fund the obscene costs of investing into securing seats at the table to govern Nigeria. Politics being the main source of material acquisition leaves no-one in doubt that an investor must receive returns by more theft, a process that, at times, involve maiming and killing of opponents.

The political vehicles pretending to be political parties, I have suggested as nothing but alliances of thieves. This explains why it is so easy for members to crisscross from one to the other without qualms on principles not to talk of ideas and/or policies that endear people to be in political parties properly so called.

Education is being continuously devalued as these political misleaders are suggesting that you don't need to pass ordinary school certificate to govern. And our Supreme Court has interpreted the Constitution to back this up. You only needed to have been at a secondary school.

I had written a tribute in honour of this role model and felt compelled to share my write-up with a larger audience. My tribute is as follows:

As a child through to my teenage years, I constantly heard the Yoruba expression, "omoluabi", from many quarters. Omoluabi was an aspiration that was not fully defined. But every child knew from parents, neighbours and school that Omoluabi that can be simplistically described as a person with great character was something of value for a great life. A child looked twice with respect, at older siblings or neighbours referred to as Omoluabi. You want to be like that person - a role model of sort.

I knew of Brother Biodun Osinubi in my first year at Ijebu-Ode Grammar School (JOGS) as a secondary school student. Mark you, I wrote knew of as opposed to knew him. His fame as one of two who had gone to Brentwood College in England in 1967 had endeared him to me even before knowing him. If I am not mistaken, two of them with the best result at JOGS, including Ogbudu, had gone in exchange for Jenkins who came from Brentwood College to JOGS and taught lower levels like mine.

Before I met him, Brother Biodun was already one of my role models. I thought I could also go to England on the same one year exchange programme. I had the best final year result but the exchange programme had stopped long before my set graduated. My performance as a result of my wanting to be like my role model, changed my life. Late Reverend Osisanya, the Principal, insisted that I must stay for the Higher School Certificate and he would seek scholarship for me instead of my becoming a Produce Inspector or Forest Guard, civil service jobs where my father had relations and where I could be getting bribes to reduce poverty in my family. My parents could not afford to pay for higher school. In the end, there was no scholarship but the rest is history to be told at another time.

I formally became part of Dr. Biodun Osinubi's family ten years later when I married his first cousin. Himself and late Chief Tunde Oyefodunrin, my much older sister-in-law's husband became my clear cases of Omoluabi. Dr. Biodun Osinubi combined so many traits that endeared him to me and all. With a soft

voice (unusual for a Yoruba), he radiates contentment, integrity as well as caring for all. As a dermatologist of significant repute, all the skin diseases in my immediate family he handled at no costs, including giving medicine he bought for his practice free to my family members.

His patience as he shared knowledge including on Nigeria was such that I looked forward to spending time, beyond medical consultations, to learn from him. It was clear to me that I shared so much with him in the avoidance of greedy aggrandizement that was creeping into Nigeria in the 1980s onward. Of course, I was the louder activist type and he is not. His encouragement sustained the beginning of my foray and career stay at the United Nations. He counselled myself and my wife as we had to live apart like South African miners who only visited home once in a while.

I salute Dr. Biodun Osinubi, a great unsung Omoluabi on his 70th birthday. One of a few remaining members of a dying group of patriots who put in so much and uphold integrity as so many around them cut corners in the crass race for material acquisition.