

Snippets from Memorial Symposium for Prof. Adebayo Adedeji

Babafemi A. Badejo, Ph.D.

July 7, 2018 marked the grande finale of the celebration of the life of Prof. Adebayo Adedeji, this time with a memorial symposium on "Africa's development agenda: Lessons from the Adebayo Adedeji years and policy options for the 21st century". The symposium took place at the opulent Radisson Blu, Ikeja, Lagos. Radisson Blu is a brand I like. I had stayed in many around the world including the other two in Nigeria on V.I and Abeokuta. But this really posh one does not come cheap. It has panache. Interestingly, memorial symposium took place in the Awolowo room.

I forgot to ask about how many people registered for the event. I guess it would be close to 100. The high ones on the list included the President of Namibia, H.E. Hage Geingob and his wife; Yakubu Gowon, Ph.D (after all he was wearing an intellectual toga); Dr. Amos Sawyer, former President of Liberia and his wife; Dr. Vera Songwe, the first female Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); Prof. Peter Anyang Nyong'o, Governor, Kisumu County, Kenya (Lupita's dad), Prof. Ibrahim Agboola Gambari (who took me into the UN after I spent about 3 months working with him on the failed quest to make General Obasanjo the Secretary-General of the UN); Dr. Eddy Kallon, the UN Resident Coordinator for Nigeria; General Ishola Williams (Rtd) the indefatigable anti-corruption and anti-bad governance crusader; Prof. Şiyan Tomori, a former collaborator of late Adedeji; Prof. Femi Fajana, former Expert at the AU; Prof. Adele Jinadu; Prof. Ade Kukoyi; Group Captain Gabriel Eşo (Rtd); several Ambassadors like: Dapo Fafowora; Olusegun Akinsanya; Wole Coker; Korede Willoughby; Yemi Dipeolu, Economic Adviser to President Buhari who represented Vice-President Yemi Osinbajo and gave a detailed speech on Adebayo Adedeji; Tunde Ajisomo, the Special Representative of the ECOWAS President to Liberia; Ayo Olukanni, the D-G of NACCIMA; Amb. Ejeviome Eloho Otobo and his wife and my Special Assistant Abraham Daniel Ameh who was kind enough to take the photographs but over focused on me as well as a host of others.

Dr. Songwe gave a challenging welcome address that positioned Adebayo Adedeji in the struggle to reintegrate Africa as a correction of the 1884-85 Berlin Conference that partitioned Africa and shared the efforts of the ECA to continue to deepen the Adedeji legacy.

The meeting heard interesting testimonies from the President of Namibia; Dr. Yakubu Gowon; Dr. Amos Sawyer; Prof. Agboola Gambari and Eloho Otobo. Prof. Anyang Nyong'o gave the Keynote Address as Prof. Adekeye Adebajo of the University of Johannesburg provided a detailed intellectual biography titled: "Adebayo Adedeji: An African Cassandra".

We had 3 sessions with the first being on "Reflections on Africa's economic development agenda: hopes, failures, opportunities and prospects. This had interventions from Profs. Olu Ajakaiye; Temitope Oshikoya; Tamunopriye Agiobenebo and Afeikhen Jerome. This session was moderated by Prof. Emmanuel Nnadozie, the Executive Secretary of the Africa Capacity Building Foundation, Harare.

The second session paid attention to the academic role of Prof. Adedeji. It was titled as: "Adebayo Adedeji in the trajectory of public administration and development in Africa". The panelists were: Dr. Tunji Olaopa; Prof. Jide Balogun and Prof. Alex Gboyega. This session was moderated by my former lecturer, Prof. Adele Jinadu, former Director-General, Administrative Staff College of Nigeria, Badagry. He continues with his rib cracking jokes that I knew him for after I became a lecturer at the University of Lagos.

The last session in which I participated was on an area in which Prof. Adedeji was weakest and only started attending to in about the last two decades of his life: governance. It was titled: "Governance and the

challenges of economic transformation in Africa (the governance context to economic development in Africa). I participated in this session that included Prof. Eddy Maloka, the Head of the Africa Peer Review Mechanism and Prof. Adigun Agbaje from the Nigerian premier University. This session was moderated by Prof. Abdoulaye Bathily, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, a Senegalese former Minister who told us that the popularity of Adebayo Adedeji was such that his niece when she was young thought that the title Prof. must be accompanied by Adebayo Adedeji. Substantively, he informed us that we need to see Adebayo Adedeji as a liberation fighter on the African Continent only that he fought using knowledge to change the orthodoxies that colonialism sold us.

ECA informed us that it would publish the proceedings of the symposium. That relieves me of additional details.

Suffice it to note that I shared the anecdote of how I almost got drafted into a coup that never reached the stage of attempt against a military regime. This will be in my biography if I ever got round to finishing one.

I also informed about how young Adedeji as trainee District Officer was offered a 200-pound bribe to manipulate the electoral register at Ilaro in 1954. The amount was enough to buy a Volks-Wagen then. He not only rejected, he arrested the Alhaji and was behind bars from Friday till Monday. This was when he could not afford two bottles of coke for the Alhaji and his cousin who was visiting at the time and had them share one bottle. The Resident in Ibadan was shocked and sent for him. Told him that in his 25 years of colonial service in Nigeria, he never met a Nigerian who rejected a bribe. Adedeji proudly informed of the training he got from the Ijebu-Ode Grammar School Principal Nicholas, which was similar to the one I received from Rev. N.E.A. Osisanya at the same school. He was rewarded with a scholarship to study Economics at the London School of Economics in the following year. As they say: The rest is history.

Lest I forget, Doyin Adedeji Esq, led his siblings to sit through the symposium honouring the only person they once knew as Dad. They were accompanied by Ijebu-Ode Chiefs like: Bisi Rodipe, Sonny Kuku and my friend Alhaji Fassy Esq.

Dr. Said Adejumo, Director at the ECA who directed the symposium had told me during the planning stages that the event must end by 16:00. I did not argue but laughed to myself. We ended about 18:00.