

## **Snippets from the Magodo Associates Symposium**

### **Babafemi A. Badejo, Ph.D**

On May 3, 2018 the symposium I had joined others in planning within the Executive of Magodo Associates took place. Magodo Associates, a civil society group currently made up of former and serving intellectuals from the University of Lagos and other experts within in Lagos, has been in existence for 10 years, see [www.magodoassociates.org](http://www.magodoassociates.org)

In my view, the symposium which raised the question, "Nigeria: Which Way Forward?", was the most important achievement of Magodo Associates to date. We had major speakers, including Major-General Ishola Williams (Rtd) well known in Africa and beyond for being unlike most Nigerian officers; Ada Agina-Ude, a strong feminist from our shores; Senator Shehu Sani, the loved Senator from Kaduna State Central who exposed the opaqueness of the corrupt earnings of Nigerian Senators; Dr. Amos Akingba, who had been in the trenches against oppression and still on his feet at 80+, willing to be counted for a better Nigeria; Femi Lawson, who represented Pastor Tunde Bakare who had convened a popular reaction that stopped the Government of Jonathan Goodluck in his heels when he wanted to increase the burden of the people and make them subsidize the thieves who earned free money from state coffers under the pretext of petroleum subsidy and my humble self, who after almost a quarter of a century returned to Nigeria with the freedom to speak up that I didn't have under the UN. The UN is a union of governments that will not tolerate the people they pay publicly criticising any of them.

The symposium was chaired by Prof. Akin Oyebo who recently retired from the University of Lagos as Professor of Jurisprudence and International Law. He is one of the few remaining icons of the struggle for a better Nigeria and had taught me as I returned to Unilag to read law after a PhD in Political Science.

The format of the symposium was more important. It brought High School students to mingle with older attendees to listen and speak up for a better Nigeria as the powers of tomorrow. In fact, a transition process like that of the British realm by focusing more on Prince Williams as opposed to the expected immediate occupier of the throne, Prince Charles.

I had focused my speech on a comprehensive conception of corruption in Nigeria and what can be done about it. I hope to share my PowerPoint presentation in another post.

Overall, it was a great event that, hopefully, will get people to think about alternatives to the current deception inherent in the so-called democratic voting.

The symposium on the theme: "Nigeria: Which Way Forward?" took a huge toll on my physical and mental abilities in terms of organizing and preparing my presentation. Of course, I had the able support of other members of the Magodo Associates Executive, especially the Chairman and even some members like Dr. Moses Ajaja and Egun Sofunde SAN. My intervention, "Towards Abhorrence for Corruption in a New Nigeria," was a tensely focused effort over weeks, in spite of supports from my Assistant, Abraham Ameh; my first daughter and her husband; and especially my son, Debola Badejo, who spared reasonable time to provide a nice design, including illustrative pictures as he also pursued his mergers and acquisitions/private equity career.

So, I decided to follow my wife to take a short break in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. I had received several invitations to visit since my daughter arrived in the city as WFP Country Director almost two years ago. My wife had visited our daughter before. In the course of my serving the UN out of Guinea-Bissau, I visited Abidjan and Yamoussoukro many times. The visits were business only though I found time to see the Basilica once.

So, we arrived in the morning of May 4, 2018 as I went straight to catch up on my sleep deprivation of many nights. In the evening, we attended the wake keep for the mother of a colleague of my daughter's from 20:00 to 21:00. Christian wake keep is largely the same except all attendees had to file past the coffin, make a sign of the cross and proceed to shake hands with the extended family members of the deceased. Yoruba wake keep used to be different when I was a kid. The extended family members of the dead sat by the body of the deceased in turns throughout the night. For part of the night, aside from food and drinks, the final pre-burial meeting was held at which the inner corps of the extended family which is similar to what Somalis and Arabs call the "dia paying group" contributed fixed sums for meeting different aspects of the burial. The immediate siblings paid for the coffin as other family members paid for the shroud and in-laws who married from the family provided many kegs of palmwine as dictated by unwritten rules that everybody knew. These days, the children of the dead, assisted by wealthier members of the family meet the costs as a result probably of the inflationary costs of Yoruba (or is it an Ijebu phenomenon) burials. With the shirking of such bonding responsibilities, the impact of the close-knit family relations are equally waning.

Today, we spent the afternoon and early evening at Assinie a little over one and a half hour drive from Abidjan for lunch and minimal time at the beach. There were lots and lots of fruits along the route. Drinking coconut water was refreshing.

I hope I can have a bit more of a rest before dashing back to the hustle and bustle of Lagos life that I miss, with my wife remaining a little longer.