

Release of 44 Stars into the World

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Yesterday, December 8, 2021, was significant in the lives of 44 Nigerian stars. It marked another formal beginning for them as they were admitted to various degrees in natural/applied sciences, arts, management and social sciences at the 3rd convocation of Chrisland University at Abeokuta, Nigeria.

There were many highlights from the three-days event. However, I have chosen to focus on a few Amazonian Nigerians who blazed and are blazing the trail.

Tuesday had been dedicated to the life of the late Mrs. Emily Aig-Imoukhuede. She once led the National Council of Women Societies from 1988-1993. Amongst many achievements was her foundation that attended to making better the lives of people who had been incarcerated. On the morning of the day of convocation, the Female Hostel was named after her as the Emily Aig-Imoukhuede Hall. She passed on, on June 8, 2021.

The main Amazon, High Chief Winifred A. Awosika, O.O.N, whose vision started it all 44 years ago, at the foundation of the Chrisland Group of Schools, was on hand to commission the College of Basic Medical Sciences Building, a new block of classrooms/labs/offices and of course the naming of the Emily Aig-Imoukhuede Hall.

Another Amazon at the event was the internationally acclaimed Brainy Visionary Beauty, Prof. Chinedum Peace Babalola, who serves as the Vice-Chancellor of Chrisland University. She met 57 students as the population of the University, barely four years ago and the population as at now is about 800 with the possibility of getting to 1,000 when admissions are over this year. She has championed full National University Council accreditations for 12 programmes between 2018 and 2021 and this week she presented Nursing, Physiotherapy and English as she warms up with the main Amazon to have the College of Laws ready. The imposing building for law, with all the full compliments should be ready this month according to the Architect who joined the Pro-Chancellor, Distinguished Prof. Ayo Olukoju, myself and my friend Prof. Olufemi Onabajo, at breakfast before convocation. The College of Law is next in line for accreditation. I marvel at the Vice-Chancellor's capacity in overseeing the University, including knowing such details as names of many of the students.

My daughter, Mrs. Adeyinka Badejo-Sanogo, Deputy Director at the UN World Food Programme (WFP) in South Sudan, who had challenged the under developing of Nigeria, principle of federal character, in 1988 from the Lagos State High Court through to the Supreme Court of Nigeria, was warmly noted by the Vice-Chancellor as having visited the University during the year. She had exchanged views about the role of WFP, especially on supporting conflict ridden countries towards restoring resilience on food production and the UN's efforts towards what I call utmost freedoms, in general.

The best graduating student was also a new Amazon. Martha I. Kave bagged a first class degree in Criminology and Security Studies. She led the students association while at Chrisland and was the best behaved student.

It was not only Amazons. The Alake of Egbaland, was on hand as the Royal Father of the day. My very humble, good friend from my University of Lagos days and my current boss as the Pro-Chancellor played with the word "Remembered" as he gave his well crafted convocation speech. He took member out of remember first to define each of the 44 stars he was charging as members of social groups, a team member, including the University. He then stressed the need to remember to be guided by certain life principles towards legacies to be remembered for.

The convocation speaker, Aigboje Aig-Imoukhuede, called attention to our national problem of failing to prepare students for the 21st century. Though he is doing a lot at the private and corporate levels, he rightly agrees that much needs to be done at the national systemic level. He reeled out statistics on our challenges as a nation. But for me, Nigerians like him need to do more by speaking truths to power in their actions. It should be possible for a good number of his friends who are cornering much to come together in a bigger way. They can push in furtherance of the example they gave on countering Covid-19 last year to shake up the system. The goal should be to make a restructured state work as opposed to providing palliatives that covers for the imbecility of the Nigerian state.

It's getting too long. But I must note my friend since 1986 when Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, our self styled Military President, dribbled all of us asking for a collation of the views of Nigerians on what we should do on the structural adjustment programme (SAP) that the IMF was foisting down our national throats. Olufemi Onabajo, was Controller of News and Current

Affairs at NTA 7 and I, as a Senior Lecturer of Political Science at the University of Lagos, was invited to be a consultant to NTA 7 on whether Nigeria should accept the SAP. We went all over Lagos State, including on boats over days in the riverine communities explaining SAP.

Nigerians overwhelmingly rejected SAP. But our Maradona did Abracadabra and foisted Second Tier Foreign Exchange Market (SFEM) on us at a time when Deng Tsiao Ping in China was leading his people away from the control of the institutions the West set up at the end of the second world war to sap the rest of the world dry of blood that was necessary for living. For me, the sins of IBB & Chief Olu Falae (he was the apostle of SAP for IBB), includes the setting of Nigeria on a downward economic spiral. The SFEM he foisted on us was more injurious than canceling June 12 or even the carving out of national patrimony, including oil blocks to male and female friends as corruption grew exponentially.

Prof. Onabajo, Mr. Olanrewaju, (the NTA 7 station General Manager), and I warmed up then as friends but my departure from Nigeria for almost 24 years as an official at the UN on different peace operations truncated our relations. Femi Onabajo went on to many things but especially, he acquired a Ph.D, became a Professor and was Vice-Chancellor at 2 Universities before a formal retirement. At 71, he continues professing at Chrisland University. He is a role model. He welcomed me back to academics as the first Professor to be appointed at Chrisland University and constantly lectures me on calmly and peacefully handling many of the shenanigans in our national lives.