

Birth and Naming of Grand Daughter

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On August 17, 2018, the day after our naming my grand-daughter, Adelayo Badejo at Houston, Texas, my Uncle, [Otunba Chris Olukayode Koya](#) led a few family members that gathered at short notice, including the baby's maternal grandfather and paternal grandmother and friends at our residence in Lagos to acknowledge and pronounce the 15 names that had been contributed by both sides of the family of the little Princess of Odoşenlu, Ogun State, Nigeria

A week after the birth of a Yoruba child, the new baby is given names by interested members of the family and, at times, very close friends. The presence of the child is only acknowledged on the eighth day on earth counting the day of birth as one of the days. So, a child must survive for a week before being recognized as part of the father's and mother's families. The naming ceremony is the first major event in the life of a new baby. Members of both families of the child which, technically is at least sixteen families, come into a gathering. There are four grandparents with each having respective mother and father sides. Friends are also invited. So, it used to be a big feast to welcome a Yoruba child if you can afford it. A lot has changed given the distances that are now covered and costs.

Since my latest granddaughter was delivered in America, it meant I should cross the Atlantic with my wife if I could afford it. For reasons, she has not asked me to disclose, my wife could not travel to Texas and join the maternal grandmother of our new baby. The maternal grandfather was also unavoidably absent yesterday August 16, 2018.

Crossing the Atlantic and looking for the lowest ticket price, since I did not steal or engage in Nigerian sharp practices to own a plane or be in a position not to care about the costs of the only direct flight, meant going through either Europe, other African Countries or Mid-East. I chose going through Amsterdam. In my working days for the UN out of Nairobi, I loved flying through Schiphol airport. The waiting time those days, I used in writing and reflecting on my assignment in comfortable lounges since the UN used to pay business class once a flight was more than 8 hours. I am not sure if this is still the case since the US is pushing a cut in everything at the UN.

I carried a lot of materials to read on corruption in Nigeria but instead became curious to watch Black Panther. So, I did. An interesting movie that reminded me of my youth when we thought we could change the way things were going and realize autochthonous development in Africa. We were naive to have thought that the West would fold their arms and allow us to defeat the people we called 'agbero-bourgeoisie' those days. In western parlance, petite-bourgeoisie may be a near but not exact interpretation of agbero-bourgeoisie. I used to teach differentiating both but not willing to do that here.

While stretching, in the plane, I decided to chat up a beautiful young pregnant Nigerian of Ibo extraction. I had assumed she was also going to Houston where American humanitarian 747 flights had relocated a good number of Ibo refugees as a result of our unfortunate civil war of 1967-70. I had thought she was going to give birth there to give her child the option of being a dual citizen of Nigeria and the US like my granddaughter. But she was going to California to have her third child. I was excited on hearing California that always brought nostalgic memories to me. I told her about my days at UCLA and how unlike today, I did the opposite by insisting in patriotic fervour that my children must be full blooded Nigerians and returned a pregnancy to be delivered in Lagos. She was shocked. She wondered about why I was so stupid. She pointed out to me that many of her age mates are living Nigeria in drones for the US and Canada and her not ready to build a country already destroyed beyond repairs. She asked about why I was so unfair not to have allowed dual citizenship for my children. I educated her to the effect that I thought we could make

the necessary change and create Wakanda of Black Panther out of Nigeria and wanted my children to be full stakeholders. And more importantly, dual citizenship was only recognized in the 1990s in Nigeria. It used to be illegal. And probably still is in the US also. I told her how happy I was to pay the price of higher school fees to educate the same daughter of mine in the US who subsequently chose to become an American citizen. I used to argue and pressure my friends and others to return home and build. I told her I no longer do.

To reduce the long story, I arrived Houston and we had a naming ceremony on August 16th with 15 different names from different family members who chose to give their own preferred names. Before, for the Yorubas, there was no struggle that the oldest person (male or female), from the side of the two parents of the new child provided the first and middle names of the child. These persons were expected to reflect the entire history or circumstances of the birth of the child to provide a name as a stamp to guide the child through life. A lot of importance was attached to each name and seen as going to shape the life of the child. The first name came from the line of the father of the child and the middle name from the line of the mother. Hence, my father provided the first name of all my children. On my first daughter, he actually provided both as Adeyinka and Olayinka. Till he died, I never asked about why Yinka twice. Yinka became an abbreviation to make it easier for other non-Yorubas to pronounce and remember. Today, things are changing. We are taking towards the West by choosing names on different basis: nice flowers, stones of all sorts, names from other civilisations etc are being used. The parents of the children being named today are challenging the 'interference' of families as 'ajobi' bonds are weakening in favour of 'me and my wife' as the first set of African writers conceptualized the change, we are going through in a globalized world.

Another major change today is the conversion of a Yoruba naming ceremony into another Pentecostal church service. It was not like that before. To name a child was a sophisticated Yoruba art even up to when my children were being named. The Pastor, (for those who are Christians), had very little role if any. The Pastor waited for the christening when we used to be given European or Biblical names (of course you probably guessed right as I jettisoned the choice of a British Colonial Governor-General's name for me as Christian name). There were older Yoruba males, schooled in the process of naming a Yoruba child who took charge and led, using basics in life like water, honey, oil, alligator pepper etc to induct and wish, or if you like, pray for a successful life for the child.

The 15 names our new baby was given were: Adelayo; Aderewa; Sophia; Ademidesire; Oluwadarasimi; Afolabi; Oluwalanumi; Opemipo; Oyewunmi; Oreoluwa; Oluwateniola; Ewaoluwa; Fiyinfoluwa; Oluwadurotimi and Morotioluwa.

There are many Yoruba books (and probably Google) that would help in explaining the meaning of each name.

We had an open house after the Christianised naming ceremony at which there were Nigerian and Western foods and drinks for all guests. Many guests included family members and friends in the Houston area except my second daughter who came with her daughter from the Tri-state area.

Before, I forget, a mini-party is holding at my residence in Lagos today which, as a result of time difference is the eighth day, to announce the names to more members of the families and friends, pray a lot more and eat/drink.