

## **Ibadan A Pleasant Change from The Bustle of Lagos**

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For a change, my wife and I spent 26-29 July, 2018 at Ibadan, that sprawling largest city, (I believe not just in West Africa as I was taught in geography as a kid), but arguably in Africa. It had the largest population in my younger days. But today, is not populated like Lagos that once had the advantage of being the political capital that remains the economic capital. Ibadan is estimated to be only 3.5m. It was the political capital of Yorubas and was the base of conversion of proceeds from sales of cocoa by a hard-working people into a free primary education for all which to date remains a boost to Yoruba contribution to human knowledge. Obafemi Awolowo, working with others from Ibadan just for about 4 years showed the British a phenomenal can-do spirit. Apart from investing in the birth and growth of my generation, they built the first skyscraper in Africa, first stadium in Africa and first television station in Africa - Western Nigeria Television (WNTV). Little wonder Britain preferred people without can-do spirit to govern Nigeria. Nigeria has remained the loser for that colonial manipulation of census among other political machinations including the rejection of independence by 1956 by other leaders which Britain supported.

What should have taken me one and a half hours to drive as I once did with my maroon coloured brand new Volkswagen number LA 1502 W in 1977-78 took me five hours. Eternal (as a result of corruption) resurfacing of the Lagos-Ibadan expressway that was conceived under Gowon and completed by Obasanjo in 1977/78 and huge traffic build-up in Ibadan itself was responsible. Infrastructure deficit as a result of stealing is killing us gradually. Not sure how much of my lifespan reduced by sitting for an unplanned five hours behind the wheel. The deplorable state of road infrastructure is costing many lives as a result of road accidents. The resurfacing of Lagos-Ibadan expressway started under President Obasanjo who left office in May 2007 and resurfacing is still going on as construction is awarded and reawarded to different people and no-one punished for money diverted into pockets without resurfaced road of just about 120km.

I don't remember sleeping at Ibadan in the last 30 years or more. I used to go there to mark High School Certificate examination answer sheets on Government for the West African Examination Council.

To be back spending 3 nights was quite a pleasant experience as I no longer have a connection with a city where I got my first paid job and used part of my employment proceeds to invest in United African Company (UAC), an enterprise that proves that corruption is not only a public affair as people assume in Nigeria. Though still alive, UAC falters on with the hope that corruption will one-day allow a company that is older than Nigeria itself to realise great added value to the development of Nigeria.

Ibadan looked very beautiful. It combines the red rusty tin roofs on little bungalows housing many poor families with many skyscrapers on wide 4 lane boulevards that are beautiful sights as one sees far as a result of the undulating, many hills and valleys, that Ibadan is built on. Thanks to Prof. Adigun Agbaje who volunteered his driver for 3 days to take over my steering wheel so that I can get around easily. You are wondering about why I am not on GPS. Right. Not only am I old school in this respect, the poor service on the internet makes reliance on the lady with American accent frustrating to listen to as she announces strange road names.

Why was I at Ibadan? 3 reasons. I had invited my Facebook friends to the July 27, 2018 inauguration and inaugural lecture of the Ibadan Mediation Initiative (IMI) that I was invited to deliver. Practically, none of my Facebook friends showed up except my friend of over 3 decades, Prof. [Adigun Agbaje](#), who would have been there in spite of my Facebook invitation. However, I delivered the lecture titled: "Disputes, Conflicts and Wars: View From the Field".

The IMI is a Public-Private-Partnership that was incorporated under the Corporate Affairs Commission law. It brings together the University of Ibadan's Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies with the Chartered Institute of Mediators & Conciliators as well as the Society for Peace Studies and Practice - a Civil Society entity.

I felt highly honoured when Chief Adeniran Adetoye invited me to give the lecture. Without being immodest, I would hasten to say that he made a correct decision which he sold to the rest even though his decision, I later learnt was resisted.

I had been out of Nigeria for 25 years of work with UN Peace Operations. But those who knew me or are current know that I combine theory, policy and practice on peace operations. Little wonder the National Defence College in Abuja had invited me to deliver a speech at a June 28, 2018 Roundtable on Nigeria and Peace Support Operations. With a doctorate in Political Science and from teaching at the University of Lagos, I had been a pupil of General Olusegun Obasanjo in the late 80s and early 90s on bilateral mediation through to multilateral efforts at the UN/AU. In addition, I am currently putting my legal practitioner qualification to use on alternative dispute resolutions at the micro level after acquiring certification as a Mediator as well as Arbitrator last year.

The lecture I gave was a weaving of an examination of the existence of disputes and conflicts since the beginning of human civilization through to now and beyond, as well as the inadequacy of the theory of democracy as the answer to conflict avoidance. I also took the audience that was largely made up of staff and faculty at U.I., through to sharing knowledge on mediation of disputes within countries as well as providing illustrative examples from my life in bilateral and multilateral mediation over a period of about 3 decades. It ended up being a well-received lecture. My PowerPoint is available to be shared with anyone who is interested.

The second reason for being at Ibadan was to join the nuptial union of the daughter of my friend [Gbenga Akinbode](#) and her mate - Mr. Adeniba. Quite a colourful traditional marriage. And in the evening before the western wedding on the following day we had a beautiful father's night that we spent with the bride's dad listening to Jazz as rendered by a 3-man band that was fantastic. Also attending was Nigerian icon of blues & Jazz Jimi Solanke who was pressured by the audience and his son to render some tunes. Of course, his "Oluwẹri" popular tune of old got all of us to move from just listening unto the dance/singing floor. The liquors we had downed helped a lot as we all became gifted ecstatic singers!!

The beautiful wedding was at a Rehoboth Cathedral so beautiful you could not have believed that people put so much into building churches for the starving poor on earth with the hope they would get succour at the hereafter. The reception hall itself was magnificent. You just have to wonder if you are in Nigeria that is said to be coming out of recession but may slip back into it.

My third reason was a visit to my mentor during my academic life - Prof. Oyeleye Oyediran. He had written a lot on Politics in Nigeria and was strong on the need for a third tier of government that is relatively independent of the first and the second. This was achieved in the 1999 Constitution although as I see it, that independence just allowed another level of thievery as opposed to the spread of development that Oyediran had expected.

I had learnt that he was no longer leaving his bedroom and not even to his living room as a result of being very feeble arising from old age. I was determined to take him out and Prof. Adigun Agbaje had agreed to lend a helping hand and was on hand. If I am dubbed Oyediran's first child, he would be second. With my wife and Prof's niece, we succeeded in getting him into the car and we drove to the University of Ibadan where he spent a good portion of his teaching life. As we drove round the huge wooded compound, we had

stops at the staff club and Faculty of Social Sciences without getting down. University of Ibadan was the first western centre of knowledge in Nigeria, having opened its doors in 1948. It ranked very high in the good old days. Its zoological enclosure received visitors from all over the country.

Overall, returning to Ibadan for 3 nights was a pleasant change from the bustle of Lagos.