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NEWSWARE

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**BNLF Nigeria Summit 2025:
Trans-Atlantic Body Commits
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Ties Between Nigeria &
the United Kingdom**

**NBA-SBL Travel,
Tourism and Hospitality
Committee Hosts Industry
Stakeholders to
Roundtable
& Retreat in Ibadan**

**19th NBA-SBL Annual
International Business
Law Conference
in Lagos Ponders
the Future of Law
in the Age of Artificial
Intelligence (AI)**

Chief Wole
OLANIPEKUN, CFR, SAN
**A Man of Wide Horizons
and Deep Intentions**

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LAW QUOTE

Anybody who thinks talk is cheap should get legal advice
- FRANKLIN P. JONES

From the Editor's DESK



As always, we feel profoundly honoured to come your way once again with yet another offering from the eventful world of law and the activities of legal practitioners in Nigeria.

Talking of activities, the past three months or so saw quite a flurry of some of the most upscale gatherings of legal professionals. Among the most notable was the 19th Annual International Business Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association's Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL) which explored the theme: **'The Future of Business Law in an Intelligence Age.'** It was an occasion for the best legal minds to interrogate the current and potential impact of AI on the practice of law in particular – but also, more broadly, on the delivery of justice, and the place of technology vis-a-viz evolving work paradigms, ethics, morality and the good ordering of society. From the deeply insightful keynote address by the Emir of Kano, Khalifa Muhammed Sanusi II, to the closing sessions of the confab, participants were enlightened, edified and entertained – as you can see from our reportage here.

A few weeks prior to the NBA-SBL Conference, another upscale event made its debut on Nigerian soil – after over two decades of stamping its footprint on foreign shores. The British Nigerian Law Forum – a group comprising lawyers of Nigerian descent practicing in both jurisdictions – gathered in Lagos for the body's maiden Nigeria Summit to discuss the theme **'Strengthening Legal & Business Ties Between the UK and Nigeria: Opportunities & Challenges.'** One of the participants, Afolarin Awosika, best summed up the essence of the Summit in his vote of thanks, when he described it as a historical gathering heralding the pursuit of bold ambitions on the part of the Nigerian and UK legal communities. The event, he added, was “a celebration, not just of where we have been, but of where we're going together.” See the highlights of this unique event in our report.

Basking in the success of its maiden Tourism Retreat and Roundtable in Abeokuta, Ogun State in late 2024, the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee of the NBA-SBL was fired up in

its determination to replicate, and even exceed, the achievement in 2025. And so it did, at the second edition of the programme – this time in the ancient city of Ibadan, the Oyo State capital. The Roundtable, which discussed the theme, **'Repositioning Nigeria's Tourism & Hospitality Industries: From Seasonal Hype to Sustainable Prosperity,'** brought together key stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, as well as from the academia. Our report on the Retreat and Roundtable is followed by our conversation with the Committee's Chairperson, Chinenye Oragwu, on the motivation behind the initiative, and its impact so far.

Talking of interviews, our conversation with the legal titan, Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN, makes the Cover of this edition. In a wide-ranging discourse, the luminary recounts the highlights of his remarkable journey in the law and its highs and lows. In his inimitable style, he also addresses issues of public interest – the state of the law and of the Nigerian enterprise. It is a highly engaging read – even if we do say so ourselves. But see for yourself, will you?

If you're concerned about how to book a suitable hotel room during your next Conference, worry no more: NACO Logistics Limited has got you covered. That's the firm that handles hotel bookings for most of the NBA's conferences – including the signature Annual General Conferences. At the helm of NACO is the lawyer and entrepreneur, Barrister Nnanwike Obah. For this edition, he spoke to NEWSWIRE about what led him into the business of hotel booking. It is a testament to vision, resilience and the determination to succeed against the odds.

All these, plus our usual menu of opinion pieces, and our humour section, **'Law is Funny, Too,'** are included in this package – and its yours for the enjoying.

Thanks again for your patronage, and God bless.

Gloria Ireka, Esq

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Still Alive in our Hearts



MOSES EWA

1969- -2021

To live in the hearts of those who love you, the saying goes, is never to die.

Though Moses Ewa left us four years ago, it is not his absence, but his PRESENCE, that we feel the most acutely.

His light continues to shine through our lives as individuals, and in our work as a media organization, as we strive to outdo not just our competition but ourselves also.

Through the passing of years, Mo's memory will continue to be our guiding star, as we strive to expand the quality and scope of our engagements with the people, communities and interests we're so privileged to serve.

Rest on, dear Mo!

Chief Wole

Olanipekun, CFR, SAN

A Man of

Wide Horizons

and Deep

Intentions

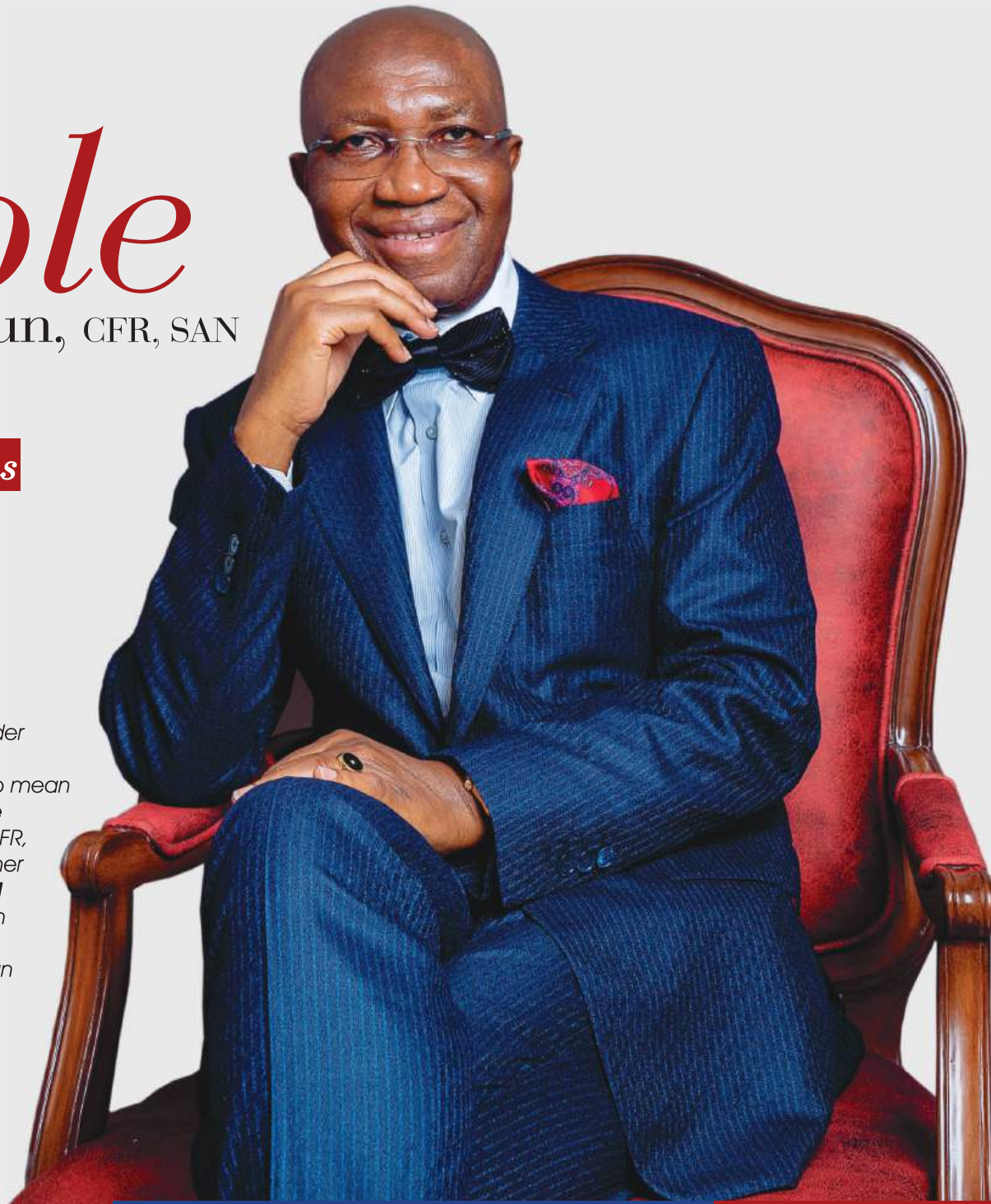
A legal luminary, elder statesman and philanthropist of no mean pedigree, **Chief Oluwole Oladapo Olanipekun, CFR, SAN**, is the Principal Partner of **Wole Olanipekun and Co.**, a leading law firm in Nigeria with its headquarters in Lagos, an office in Abuja and a significant presence in various States of Nigeria. A distinguished alumnus of the University of Lagos and the Nigerian Law School, he was called to the Nigerian Bar in 1976 and was elevated to the exalted rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) in 1991. In 1992 he was appointed as the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice in the old Ondo State (which encompassed the present-day Ekiti State), a role he discharged with sterling distinction for two years.

A consummate leader at the Bar, both in Nigeria and beyond, Chief Olanipekun served as President of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA)

from 2002 to 2004. He was appointed a Life Bencher in 2007 by the Body of Benchers, and became the Chairman of the august Body from 2022 to 2023. In 2003, he was appointed Vice-President of the Pan African Lawyers Union (PALU). Also, he is an active member of the International Bar Association (IBA).

Beyond his jurisprudential prowess, Chief Olanipekun also bestrides

the world of educational administration and philanthropy like the proverbial colossus. He served as the **Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Governing Council** at the **University of Ibadan** between **(2009–2013)**, **Ajayi Crowther University** between **(2014–2022)**, and currently occupies the same office at his alma mater, the **University of Lagos**. His respective tenure in each of the citadels has



been, and still remains, a metaphor of transformative leadership, marked by infrastructural redefinition, institutional upliftment, and administrative excellence. He is presently the **Chancellor of Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology (BOUESTI) Ikere, Ekiti State, and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo**. A firm believer in the power of education to drive development and social transformation, Chief Olanipekun has over the years made high-profile donations of infrastructural facilities to institutions of higher learning, such as the University of Ibadan, Oyo State; Bamidele Olumilua University of Science and Technology, Ikere, Ekiti State (his hometown); the Law College of Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State; and the aforementioned Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, to name just a few.

He has also extended this gesture to judicial and faith-based institutions. His work in social investment and the empowerment of vulnerable groups in society – which he channels through the programmes, projects and initiatives of the Wole Olanipekun Foundation (WOF) is no less notable and impactful.

A pan-Nigerian nationalist and passionate advocate for the rule of law and the good ordering of society, Chief Olanipekun is a recipient of two national honours: Officer of the Order of the Federal Republic (OFR) and Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR).

Chief Olanipekun and his wife, **Erelu (Princess) Omolara Olanipekun**, are the parents of four children (all of them lawyers; two of whom are also Senior Advocates of Nigeria), as well as grandparents.

In a recent wide-ranging interview with the editors of **Newswire Law Events Magazine**, the former NBA President and Life Bencher offered penetrating insights into the current state of the legal profession and the broader Nigerian polity. He reflected on the challenges and prospects confronting the nation at this pivotal moment in its political and developmental trajectory.

This edition contains the first part of the interview; the concluding part will be published in our subsequent edition.

Excerpts:

NEWSWIRE:
Congratulations Once Again, Learned Silk, on the donation of the ultra-modern Wole Olanipekun Senate Building to Bamidele Olumilua University of Education Science and Technology (BOUESTI), Ikere, Ekiti State, late last year. You've been described as a catalyst for the realization of dreams, what values or interests motivate your philanthropy?

OLANIPEKUN:

Thank you for your kind and thoughtful felicitations. Let me say, without any equivocation, that the Almighty God in His infinite wisdom and boundless benevolence, has created every individual for a purpose or for some purposes. He has given unto us a sacred mandate to “**go forth and replenish the Earth.**” To my mind, the word “**replenish**” does not and cannot translate to reckless procreation as witnessed around us and erroneously assumed. To my understanding, it translates to the upliftment, enrichment, nourishment, and improvement of the Earth. Every rational human being is, thus, enjoined to make his own meaningful and humble contributions to the betterment of humanity and our environment, and by so doing, to leave indelible footprints upon the sands of time. This summarizes my personal philosophy of life, and without

being immodest, I have been guided by it right from my youth, and more particularly, in my adult life.

Coming now to the gifting of a **Senate Building to BOUESTI**, permit me, to first unveil how BOUESTI came into being. It was formerly a **College of Education** established by the then Ondo State Government in 1976. Over the years, the people of Ikere persistently agitated to different administrations in **Ekiti State** to upgrade the institution to a full-fledged University. The then **Governor of Ekiti State, Dr. Kayode Fayemi, CON** acceded to that noble quest with a proviso that the people of Ikere should, at least in part, make some financial contribution to the take-off of the University. Accordingly, **His Imperial Majesty, Oba Adejimi Adu Alagbado, the Ogoga and Paramount Ruler of Ikere Kingdom** and my humble self launched an **Appeal Fund**, calling upon the illustrious **sons and daughters of Ikere** to make generous donations to this project, and both of us led the pack. My family also made its contribution. Upon the formal establishment of the University, Governor Kayode Fayemi placed a telephone call to me on **February 5, 2021**, pleading thus: “**Sir, I have a humble request, and please do not turn me down. In view of your vast experience in University administration over the years, particularly at the University of Ibadan and, Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo, I am pleading that you accept to serve as the Pioneer Chancellor of the newly established State University in Ikere. In making this plea, we are convinced that it is you who would bring a lot of benefits and advantages to the University, and not the other way round. I am also not unaware that the position of Chancellor is an honorary and ceremonial one, but the fact remains that we need to leverage your name and reputation to develop and**

advance the University.” Without hesitation, I accepted the clarion call and stated unequivocally that I would not receive any emolument, allowance or honorarium whatsoever from the University; but God willing, I would strive and do all within my means to support and assist the University in every facet of its growth and development. So, when the University Council and Management paid me a courtesy visit at my Lagos office on **March 4, 2021**, I pledged to donate a Senate Building to the University, for a start. I specifically zeroed on Senate Building in appreciation of the fact that it is the centrepiece, or, the heartbeat of **any University. It houses, not just the Vice-Chancellor, Registrar, Bursar** and other Senior Management Staff of the University, but also, the **Council Chambers**, and other **Administrative offices.**

Although the pledge was made on **March 4, 2021**, I could not redeem it until **November 28, 2024**, owing to another pressing and, or, compelling intervention of mine within the town. That is, the construction and donation of a

modern High Court Complex to the Ikere Judicial Division of the Ekiti State High Court, in replacement of the derelict and dilapidated old High Court building, built by the old Western Region which dated back to the early 1970s. Today, by God’s grace, the Senate Building at BOUESTI stands as a unique architectural masterpiece on the campus and, in many respects, defines its ambience.

NEWSWIRE:
How would you assess the current state of judicial autonomy in Nigeria today, and how can it be enhanced? What role do you envisage for the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) in the realization of judicial autonomy?

OLANIPEKUN:

The term **“judicial autonomy”** is a concept of adequate, and multidimensional

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amplitude. It cannot and must not be circumscribed or restricted to mere financial independence, as some people erroneously think. While financial autonomy constitutes an important facet thereof, it is, in truth, among others, a microscopic aspect of the larger and more robust ideal of judicial autonomy. Since the 18th Century, Baron De Montesquieu has been justly credited with articulating the doctrine of Separation of powers between the three arms of government, namely the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary, without undue interference or intrusion by any of the three as to how the other performs its functions or carries out its responsibilities. It, therefore, follows that the judiciary cannot be said to be autonomous if its Judges and Magistrates are neither well-trained nor deeply grounded in knowledge of the law, use legalism and professionalism is the and most ispe



■ The Olanipekun family

nsable foundation for the attainment of judicial autonomy. Put in different words, it is the first stage of autonomy or independence to a particular Judge or Magistrate. A Judge who lacks mastery of the law, both procedural and substantive, or who fails to undertake regular legal reading, continuing legal education, and or attending seminars, workshops, conferences, colloquia on contemporary issues, will struggle to meet the increasingly demanding expectations of judicial adjudication in this age. A timid personality cannot, by some judicial alchemy, metamorphose into an independent Judge. Similarly, a Judge who looks over his shoulder in fear or apprehension before delivering a ruling or judgment is already in fetters, mentally and institutionally shackled.

Judicial autonomy, therefore, demands that the security of tenure for Judges must be guaranteed not merely as a textual adornment on papers, but in practical and enforceable terms. It further dovetails to the security of the Judge's welfare as an individual, both in active service and in retirement. Adjunct to the foregoing is the imperative that the **Judiciary**, like its counterparts in the **Executive** and **Legislative** arms, must exercise control over its own purse. Allocations to the **Judiciary** should not be subjected to executive benevolence or bureaucratic bottlenecks but be placed on the first-line charge of the **Consolidated Revenue Fund**.

Without sounding immodest, during my tenure as the Chairman of the Body of Benchers, between 2022 and 2023, I championed the cause and led the campaign for improved welfare packages for Judicial officers, and in furtherance of this noble subject, I obtained the approval of the Body to inaugurate a Standing Committee known as Judicial

Advisory Council. Under the auspices of this Council, we engaged a leading Firm of Messrs. Ernst & Young to conduct a comparative analysis and peer review of the salaries, emoluments, and conditions of service of Judicial officers across selected jurisdictions globally. The cost of this engagement was personally borne by me, albeit with commendable support from Prince Lateef O. Fagbemi, SAN, a Life Bencher, now the Honourable Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice.

The final Report of Ernst & Young was submitted to the **Body of Benchers**, which in turn constituted a Review Committee to look into it before the Report was presented to the then President of the **Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR** (God rest his soul). It is only fitting to acknowledge that President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR, deserves commendation for embracing and implementing the reviewed package to improve the welfare of judicial officers. It is pertinent to place on record that this was how the journey started, and without being immodest, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, on September 29, 2022, had this to say: **"I am not unaware of the passion and commitment of Chief Olanipekun in championing the cause of the welfare of judicial officers in Nigeria, as well as the commitment of the Body to this goal. May I restate my commitment towards this ideal and to reiterate our administration's willingness to implement the 2018 Report of the Committee on the Review of Judicial Salaries and Conditions of Service. In similar vein, I have been intimated of the engagement of Consultants by the Body, through its Judiciary Advisory Committee, to amongst other things, come up with a peer review of the conditions of service of Judicial Officers in Nigeria with other countries and**

jurisdictions, within and outside Africa... this will assist us in no small measure, in our review of the welfare packages." Be that as it may, the independence/autonomy of the Judiciary is not, and cannot be, a one-off pursuit or a fleeting mission. Rather, it is a continuous one and must be vigorously pursued. It must be perpetually placed on the front burner of national discourse. It is a mission that must be jointly and conscientiously pursued and accomplished by all stakeholders; not just the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary; but also, individual Judges, the Bar, and indeed, the citizenry. For the Judiciary remains, and must remain, the bulwark of the people's liberties, the last bastion of hope, and the uncompromising sentinel of justice and rule of law.

Q: It is no secret that the legal landscape in the 21st Century is largely different from when you first began to practice law, with the advent of changing work paradigms, potentially disruptive new technologies, the prevalence of cross-border partnerships and transactions, the large number of lawyers being called to the Bar on yearly basis as against the industry limited demand, amongst other challenges. What advice would you give an early-stage lawyer just starting out today, on how to navigate this rapidly changing legal landscape and marketplace?

OLANIPEKUN:

When we were called to the Bar in 1976, I doubt if we were up to 400. At that time, only four Nigerian Universities, University of Lagos, Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University), Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), and University of Nigeria, Nsukka, offered Law degrees. When people like us completed the NYSC, jobs were plentiful; I personally had six or seven options, but I chose to dive into private practice of Law.

Back then, there was just one Nigerian Law School Campus in Lagos. Today, however, no fewer than ninety accredited Nigerian Universities offer Law degrees, and the Nigerian Law School has expanded to seven Campuses across the country. Nearly everyone called to the Bar in our era secured gainful employments shortly afterwards. I doubt if there was anyone of us called to the Bar in 1976 who did not secure a gainful and satisfactory employment immediately thereafter. Back then, as well, the numerical strength of lawyers in Nigeria was not up to 2,000. The Nigerian economy was very strong; one of the most stable economies in the world, at that. As of today, Nigeria has over 200,000 lawyers in active practice across the country, and, between December 2015 and July 2025; 56,029 Lawyers were called to the Nigerian Bar; 6,879 in 2015, 6,427 in 2016; 5,762 in 2017; 6,345 in 2018; 5,324 in 2019; 1,785 in 2022; 5,233 in 2021, 6,218 in 2022; 1097 in 2023; 5231 in 2024, and 5,728 in 2025. The Body of Benchers has fixed two more 'Calls' for 2025, that is, for September and November, respectively, translating to the fact that in 2025, more number of Lawyers would have been called to the Nigerian Bar.

In my address as Chairman of the Body of Benchers, delivered at the Call to Bar Ceremonies held on the 6th and 7th of December, 2022, I undertook a comparative analysis of the number of Lawyers called to the Bar in Nigeria and the United Kingdom between 2017 and 2021 (Since our Common Law derives its origin from there); I arrived at the following conclusion: As of 2017 in Nigeria, the total number of practising Barristers and Solicitors was 202,335; it increased to 208,680 in 2018, translating to a 3.14% increase. The number rose to 214,004 in 2019, demonstrating an increase of 5,324 and a

percentage increase of 2.49%; the figure rose to 215,789 in 2020, a numerical increase of 1,785 (due to the impact of COVID-19) a percentage increase of 0.83%. In 2021, the number rose to 221,022, an increase of 5,233, translating to 2.42% increase; in 2022, the number rose to 227,240, an increase of 6,218, translating to 2.74% increase. In 2023, the numerical strength rose to 228,337, an increase of 1,097, translating to 0.48% increase; in 2024, the number further rose to 233,568, an increase of 5,231, translating to a percentage increase of 2.24%; and in 2025, the numerical strength is 239,296, with an increase of 5,728, translating to a 2.39% increase. As for the United Kingdom, between 2017 till date, the number of solicitors on



■ Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN & Erelu (Princess) Omolara Olanipekun





the roll in England and Wales grew from approximately 185,000 to 211,971, with 172,429, holding practising certificates, as of June 2025. This growth reflects a steady annual increase of about 3%, though a temporary dip occurred in 2023 due to the reintroduction of Roll-Keeping Regulations. The practising Barristers population remained relatively stable, rising modestly to around 17,

800

. Overall, the UK legal profession now comprises approximately 230,000 active Solicitors and Barristers, reflecting a measured and sustainable expansion aligned with regulatory framework and market capacity. There is no gainsaying the fact that the United Kingdom economy is more buoyant than ours, to put it very mildly, and despite the fact that more employment opportunities abound for

lawyers in the United Kingdom than in Nigeria, Nigeria produces more than triple the number of lawyers annually than the United Kingdom produces on a yearly basis.

Thus, the argument on whether or not Nigeria is over-lawyered is neither here nor there, if the number of lawyers we have is compared with our projected population. However, the stark reality remains; demand for legal services has not kept pace with supply; employment opportunities in both private and public sectors are shrinking and dwindling. Put differently, the available lawyers overcrowd the few available employment spaces, both in the private and public sectors, leading to fierce competition; "the survival of the fittest," assuming the fittest will even survive.

Adding to the conundrum is professional encroachment, Accountants, Estate Managers and Valuers, amongst other professionals, nowadays, increasingly take roles traditionally reserved for lawyers. Not done yet, we are also witnessing the rise of technology and digitalization, particularly the emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which, if care is not taken, will, in the near future, shove lawyers out of legal practice, even regarding litigation and advocacy in its substantial form if we fail to adapt and evolve.

As far back as 2010, Richard Susskind, in his seminal work titled "The End of Lawyers?", had warned that the advent of digitalisation and commoditization of technology, outsourcing, Artificial Intelligence, and global investment would require lawyers to re-assess, recalibrate, re-strategize, re-align, and upgrade themselves in order to face and overcome the challenges of the 21st Century. Here in Nigeria, the profession faces more acute threats and existential danger, which are both exogenous and endogenous. Nevertheless, my

admonition to young lawyers is this: irrespective of the seeming overcrowding in the profession, there remains room for those who aim high, who work hard, who are industrious, assiduous, diligent, honest, dedicated, forbearing, resourceful, painstaking, and focused. Let me re-echo my appeal to young lawyers as encapsulated in my poignant address at the Call to Bar on 6th and 7th December 2022 thus:

"Do not engage in strife, blackmail, mudslinging, campaign of calumny, treachery or any attempt to run or pull anyone down. Flee from envy like a plague, for envy breeds hatred and unjustified contempt for others. Appreciate your colleagues and peers, as well as senior members of the profession who have received God's benevolence, and pray that your own time will come."

Q: You are widely regarded as one of the foremost lawyers in Nigeria, could you share the secrets behind your success, as well as the highs and lows of your career for the benefit of the younger generation?

OLANIPEKUN:

I do not know whether I am one of the foremost lawyers in Nigeria, but all I can say, to the glory of God, is that I am a very contented lawyer, always working and appreciating God from where I started and where I am now. I don't subscribe to the school of thought of those who contend that they are self-made, for no one can make himself but God does; "it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that

sheweth mercy".

You are inquiring about the 'secrets' behind what you describe as my success, and my simple response is that I have received God's grace and benevolence. Let me share this secret with you – Right from the get-go, I had always aimed high, and as soon as I was called to the Bar,, , I fixed my gaze on the luminaries, leaders,, patriarchs and potentates of the legal profession, those whose reputations preceded them long before I was called to the Bar, , more particularly, the likes of Chief F.R.A. Williams, SAN; Chief R.O.A. Akinjide, SAN; Chief G.O.K. Ajayi, SAN; Chief Obafemi Awolowo, SAN; Chief R. A. Fani-Kayode, SAN; Kehinde Sofola, SAN; Chief Olisa Chukwura, SAN; Dr. Mudiaga Odje, SAN; Dr. Augustine Nnamani, SAN; G.C.M. Onyiluke, SAN; Prof. A. B. Kasumu, SAN; Chief F. O. Akinrele, SAN; J. B. Majiyagbe, SAN; Chief (Mrs). Folake Solanke, SAN; Chief Afe Babalola, SAN; Chief T. O. S. Benson, SAN; Clement O. Akpamgbo, SAN; Prince Bola Ajibola, SAN, among others. These eminent figures served as my compass and point of aspiration, telling myself that God willing, I too shall walk their path. I have had the privilege of appearing alongside some of these legal juggernauts, whether appearing with them for the same side or, at other times on opposing divides; that is, representing different clients or interests, and I must confess that my goal at all times was not just to learn from them but to be where they were/are. When Ebus Sofunde, SAN and L. N. Mbanefo, SAN were both announced and sworn - in as Senior Advocates of Nigeria in 1988, I was transfixed before my television set when I noticed that they were not old men but relatively young counsel; and I said to myself with quiet resolve, if these young lawyers can become Senior Advocates of Nigeria, I too would be one, pretty soon. Without

indulging in self-adulation, I have always emulated senior counsel, but I have never been envious of them. Even when I felt that any of them had been unfair to me, I was never rude or nasty , neither have I made any effort to pull any of them down, for I know what it means to attempt to pull an elder down. In terms of commitment and concentration, apart from the two years, between 1992 and 1993 that I served as the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice of the old Ondo State, I have always been immersed in active legal practice without disattraction. I have always taken Law as a profession, a calling, a consecration, a ministry, a sacred trust, a goal, a mission and indeed, an opium. I try as much as possible to be an avid and voracious reader as well as a fast writer. Till now, I am a voluminous reader, not just of text of law, literature, but of diverse works, publications, journals, articles, including newspapers, etc. I have never believed that a lawyer should indulge in filing his processes out of time; rather, that a diligent lawyer, particularly for a plaintiff, complainant or appellant, should not only file his client's process within time, but within such a time, so as to gain or secure an advantage for his client in terms of expeditious disposition of the matter, bearing in mind the truism that the opposing counsel's time to file his own process starts from the time you serve your process on time. In and out of Court, I cannot remember when I quarrelled with any Judex or Counsel. I recall an instance when I appeared before Justice Komolafe at the Ondo State High Court, Akure (Justice Komolafe was my Solicitor-

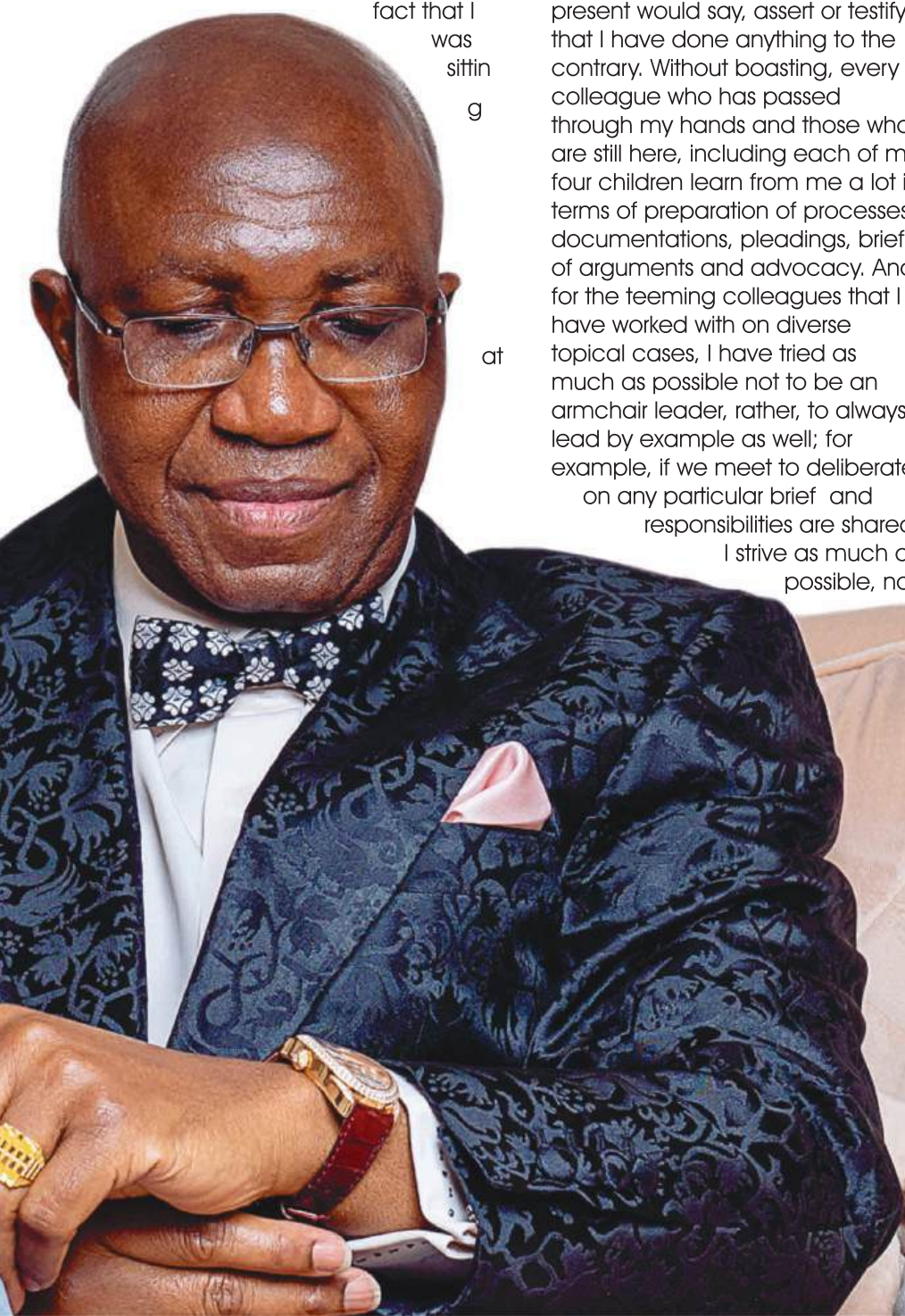
General and Permanent Secretary when I was the Attorney-General of the Old Ondo State), and I reacted to a counsel's proposition regarding the scheduling of the matter as 'clumsy', and the Counsel who was very junior at the Bar, stood up to object to the use of the word 'clumsy' which to me was not offensive. Notwithstanding my innocuous employment of the word, I rose up not only to apologize to him, but also to take the word back. Mike Ozekhome struck a chord of respect and adoration with me on a particular day both of us appeared before Egbo-Egbo, J. at the Federal High Court, Abuja. Despite the

fact that I
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the Inner Bar and he, at the utter Bar, I extended to him, full respect and courtesies and at the end of the proceedings, he came out to hug me, shouting loudly that he had not come across a more humble silk than myself. I can say without any fear of contradiction that here at our office, and since we established the chambers, I have always endeavoured not just to teach lawyers how to learn the ropes, but I also lead all my juniors by example in terms of diligence, hard work, modesty, motivation, self-restraint, forbearance, professional ethics, ethos and pathos, etc. I wonder if any alumnus of our Law Firm, past or present would say, assert or testify that I have done anything to the contrary. Without boasting, every colleague who has passed through my hands and those who are still here, including each of my four children learn from me a lot in terms of preparation of processes, documentations, pleadings, brief of arguments and advocacy. And for the teeming colleagues that I have worked with on diverse topical cases, I have tried as much as possible not to be an armchair leader, rather, to always lead by example as well; for example, if we meet to deliberate on any particular brief and responsibilities are shared, I strive as much as possible, not

only to turn in my own task within time, but also do a lot of work on other areas so as to offer support and encourage reciprocity to enhance the final outcome. Still on the secret behind what you termed "my success", I must say that I have been lucky to have come across very thoughtful, painstaking, remarkable, fatherly, and courteous Judges in my career, particularly, at the teething stage, starting from my very first appearance at the High Court of Kwara State, Ilorin, before the Honourable Justice Gilbert Obayan in the matrimonial cause of Okin v. Okin, where the Judge gently guided me to go on with a divorce matter on the same day and also presented the final address, same day. That was my first appearance in Court and having shrugged off the fear and trepidation of appearing before a High Court Judge that very day, the Rubicon was seamlessly crossed. I also recall my earlier appearances at the Court of Appeal, Kaduna Judicial Division, in Olawuyi v. Adeyemi (1990) 4 NWLR (Part 147) 746, under the auspices of renowned Justices like Uthman Mohammed, Sani Salith Aikawa, Okay Achike J.J.C.A., and a host of other eminent Jurists who were always prepared to guide counsel without bullying them, I mean the likes of Adenekan Ademola, E. Akpata, Bolarinwa Babalakin, Diekola Ogundere J.J.C.A. Ditto for my first appearance at the Supreme Court, a full panel of Bello, Obaseki, Eso, Nnamani, Uwais, Aikawa, Kazeem and Oputa J.J.S.C., in J. K. Randle v. Kwara Breweries Ltd. (1986) 6 SC 1, where I was the leading Counsel to the Respondent and the late Prince Ijaodola was Counsel for the Appellant. For one careless reason or the other, our Brief of Argument was not filed, and my junior, the late Saka Isau, SAN was scared stiff of drawing my attention to it till the eve of the hearing when I invited him to my Hotel Room for the customary pre-hearing preparation. While appellant's



Counsel argued his Appeal by adopting his brief and the Court was about adjourning for judgment since Respondent had no brief of Argument, I courageously rose on my feet, as if propelled from above to audaciously inform the Court that I want to address it orally on an area of jurisdiction, citing a particular Rule of the apex Court that allowed me to so do. The Justices were rather surprised at my audacity, beaming with a gaze and a pin-drop silence enveloped the entire Courtroom, and every other counsel shifted attention to me, but I was not discouraged. Like a father, Bello, JSC, who presided, inquired what I wanted to address the Court on, and with that guided inquiry, I drew their attention to the fact that right from the High Court through to the Court of Appeal, and up to the Supreme Court, the certificate of incorporation of the Respondent, my Client was not tendered by the Appellant whereas, the paragraphs of the statement of claim, describing it as a limited liability company were denied by the defendant/ Respondent. From then on, attention shifted to the Appellant's Counsel who, in a manner of speaking, unwittingly assisted my position by responding that while the certificate of incorporation was not tendered as an exhibit, the Court could and should take judicial notice of the

fact that the Respondent was incorporated under the Companies Act, 1968. It was at this stage the Justices picked up their pens and ordered us to address them orally. I excitedly did, citing some decisions, and submitting that there was no juristic personality before the Court as the Respondent. Prince Ijaodola argued per contra, after which the Justices retired to Chambers and

of legal practice. To my mind, a thoroughbred Nigerian legal practitioner is more advanced and grounded in law than his English counterpart. I have fairly been involved in diverse aspects of legal practice, taking up matters from the High Court to the Court of Appeal and ending at the Supreme Court. Some of them are very topical while others are constitutional. We have won some and lost some as well, as no lawyer wins all his cases. As the late renowned Jurist, Kayode Eso, JSC aptly put it, a lawyer does not need to win all his cases to be successful.

Our Law Reports can attest to a handful of the cases handled by us. I have also been lucky to work with consortia of lawyers, as in the last couple of years, some litigants and multinationals would prefer a team of lawyers to attend to their cases. Senior colleagues,

particularly Chief F. R. A. Williams, SAN and G. O. K. Ajayi, SAN

had led me in some cases, while in the past fifteen years or thereabouts, I have been called upon to lead teams of very eminent and respected colleagues. I cannot remember any particular instance where I fell out with any of the several colleagues I have worked with, but I cannot know whether any or some of them fell out with me. In summary, I can boldly say that God has been gracious unto me in my legal career. Without



■ Chief Wole Olanipekun, OFR, SAN, (middle), and his children from L-R: Bode Olanipekun SAN, Mrs. Tope Adesina, Mrs. Bukola Araromi and Dr. Dapo Olanipekun SAN.

came out to deliver their Judgments, agreeing with me and dismissing the appeal on the ground that the only way the incorporation of a company can be proved is by tendering the certificate of incorporation. Since that moment as well, my feverish fear of appearing before the apex Court was dismantled and there has been no going back. The Nigerian legal system, unlike that of the British, permits a legal practitioner to have competences and ply his trade across all spheres



■ Explaining a point during the conversation with Newswire editors Gloria Ireka (middle) and Austin Inyang

boasting or waving any air of pride, I thank God for a fulfilled career. The highs have been in multiples, while the lows have been very low. To my knowledge and recollection, I have never been rude to any Judge; I have also not at anytime, done any petition against any Judex, not even when we were almost forced to do so against a particular High Court Judge in the old Kwara State. And by the word “we” I meant Roland Otaru, SAN and myself, as Roland spent over seven years with me as a junior colleague. While some Judges have not been reciprocally fair to me in terms of courtroom courtesies, I have always maintained my calm and dignity both as a junior counsel and a Silk. The legal profession has exposed me to a lot of positions within its ranks, starting from being Secretary of a Branch to a Chairman; member of NBA/NEC

since 1986; at a point in time, member of the General Council of the Bar; National President of the NBA; Acting Chairman of the Council of Legal Education; member of the NJC at a point in time; member of Body of Benchers since 1992 and later, Chairman of the Body; and for two years, the Attorney-General and Commissioner for Justice of old Ondo State, amongst others. You made me mention all this since you want the younger generation to benefit from my experience. Most humbly, I have always given my all to the profession, in and out of Court; in and out of my Chambers; and in each of the positions I have occupied so far. I have said earlier that the lows in my career have been very low, and as a policy, I do not reckon with the lows since they are dwarfed by the highs. However, it will be remiss of me if I do not comment on a particular low

period in my career, where in an attempt to attack my person, as well as assault my character and integrity, an innovation was made out of the molehill of an otherwise regrettable error by a counsel in chambers; a counsel who joined our chambers in January 2022, and sent out an email on 20th June, 2022 (less than six months after joining us), referencing causes and appeals that we concluded long before the lady lawyer joined us, particularly, the appeals we handled for Shell Petroleum Company of Nigeria Limited and Statoil Nigeria Limited at the Supreme Court; and another matter we handled, leading a team of other eminent colleagues of the inner and utter Bar for the MTN Nigeria Telecommunications Limited against the Attorney-General of the Federation at the Federal High Court, Lagos in Suit No: FHC/L/CS/1474/2018. The



particular MTN matter was settled out of court, following which it was withdrawn and struck out by the court on 30th January, 2020, that is, two years before she joined us. As for the Statoil matter, we came into the appeal at the Supreme Court, leading two of the foremost Law Firms in this country; Aluko & Oyeboode and Udo-Udoma & Bello Osagie, particularly, Babatunde Fagbohunlu, SAN, Adeniyi Adegbonmire, SAN and Uzoma Azikiwe, SAN. While the appeal was won on the merit and based on compelling facts of the case and previous decisions of the Supreme Court itself, judgment was given on 5th February, 2021, that is, one year before the lady lawyer joined us. The principle espoused in the case had a few months before then, been applied by the Supreme Court in *Crestar Integrated Natural Resources Limited v The Shell Petroleum Development Company & 2 Ors.* (amongst others), and has subsequently also been applied by the same Supreme Court, in *Britannia U Nigeria Limited v Seplat*. So, the Supreme Court has been consistent on the applicable law to the fact in that case, relating to the Federal High Court's lack of jurisdiction in matters of simple contract. Years before the Statoil appeal, our firm had also (leading other law firms) handled the case of *Sifax v. Migfo* at the Supreme Court, where the same issue of the jurisdiction of the Federal High Court in matters of simple contract

was decided. As for the Shell appeals, I was also called upon by Shell to lead another foremost Law Firm in Nigeria, Babalakin & Co., at first, applying for leave of the Supreme Court to allow Shell appeal against the decision of the Court of Appeal, Port-Harcourt Judicial Division, which dismissed the appeal against the decision of the Federal High Court that awarded about N5 billion against them as special damages and about twice the quantum of special damages, that is N10 Billion as general damages. In the first application to the Supreme Court, I led very eminent colleagues, including Dr. Wale Babalakin, SAN and Wale Akoni, SAN for Shell. But the Supreme Court refused the application for leave. The case is now reported in Part 1668 of the Nigerian Weekly Law Report and it was decided over three years before she joined us. Shell decided to bring in two leading counsel in the country – Prince Lateef Fagbemi, SAN (now Honourable AGF), and Chief Kanu Agabi, SAN (former Honourable AGF) to join our Chambers and Babalakin & Co. to present another application to the Supreme Court for leave to appeal. The application was also dismissed in November, 2020 – about two years before she joined us. The Ruling is now reported as *S.P.D.C.N. Ltd. v. Agbara* (2021) 7 NWLR (Pt. 1775) 356. Bemusingly, the email sent by the counsel to Saipem SPA on 20th June, 2022, related to a

matter that had been struck out as far back as February, 2022. The matter attracted public attention and its discontinuance also made the news, in a way that litigation lawyers who were abreast of current affairs in the dispute resolution space were well informed of every development, including the discontinuance. The proceedings were criminal proceedings which took place in open court and there was nothing classified about the events in the case and its termination. That was four months before her mail. So, as at the time of the email, the case was non-existent, concluded and in fact, dead. For goodness' sake, is it even logical that a counsel of any standing, howsoever, would influence a topical case at the final court or any court at all, so as to lose the case? Then, further, is it also logical that I could have authorized celebrating a case I lost, as basis to attract a new brief? These rhetorical questions should agitate the mind of any rational lawyer. In fact, without sounding immodest, I have, on several occasions courteously declined briefs of immense pecuniary value, sacrificing financial gains at the altar of higher convictions, both personal and national.

Throughout the vicious attacks on my person as well as the wicked and malicious propaganda leveled against me by people I have led in several cases and who were considered as very close to

me, no one cared to make a call or whisper to me to inquire what happened or what the position of our office was. None of them took the least care or pain to check the backgrounds of those cases and cross-check how they were resolved, particularly, in these days and times when technological innovations have made information easily assessable. The underserving attack was so vicious, malicious, reckless, denigrating, mean, thoughtless, and inhumane. The entire drama started like a child's play at about 10:30am on 24th June, 2022 when my two Secretaries, Remi and Kehinde drew my attention to the very lengthy letter sent to me by my friend, respected, colleague and church-mate, Henry O. Ajumogobia, SAN, to which he attached the counsel's mail to Saipem SPA. When I read both, I sank into my chair in distress, as I was perturbed by both. It was a real emergency. We immediately summoned a meeting of some Counsel who were in the office as the Managing Partner travelled to Abeokuta to handle a matter and quite a number of lawyers were outside the office attending to professional assignments. An initial response clarifying the situation was immediately done to the law firm of Ajumogobia & Okeke and a subsequent one within 48 hours by our firm's Managing Partner, who alongside myself, had also made personal contacts with the leadership of the firm of Ajumogobia & Okeke.

Gradually, a few persons who didn't like my person for reasons best known to them or who saw an opportunity for publicity and personal aggrandizement constituted themselves into interest groups to commence an onslaught. The attacks came in quick coordinated successions. In fact, an attempt was made by a few of them to procure a frontpage slot in ThisDay Newspaper to champion the call for my resignation as the chairman of the Body of Benchers. The

publisher, Mr. Ndukka Obaigbena had to intervene to stop the process, on the ground that I remained a Nigerian brand that commands respect and should not be maligned. Shortly thereafter, the NBA, an Association that I have given my capacities for over thirty years, called for my head. This was also without any of the officers of the Association, including the two Presidents who were successively in office at the gloomy period, giving me or our office any hearing at all, whether fair or unfair. No communication whatsoever and howsoever was exchanged between the NBA and myself, and neither did they conduct any investigation or enquiry, asking me to present any case or say a word before the NBA instituted charges before the LPDC against the lady counsel and myself, relying on information, according to them, gathered from the social media. Yet, before and at that point in time, I was the leading counsel to the NBA, having successfully represented it, against a most challenging legislation to the practice of law in Nigeria – the amendment to the Money Laundering Act, at both the Federal High Court, Abuja and the Court of Appeal, Abuja. The matters are Suit No: FHC/ABJ/CS/173/2013- Registered Trustees of Nigerian Bar Association v. Attorney-General of the Federation & Anor; Appeal No: CA/A/202/2015 – Central Bank of Nigeria v. Registered Trustees of the Nigerian Bar Association (now reported as [Central Bank of Nigeria v. Registered Trustees of the Nigerian Bar Association (2021) 5 NWLR (Pt. 1769) 268]. The appeal is currently pending at the Supreme Court in SC732/2017 – Central Bank of Nigeria v. Registered Trustee of the Nigerian Bar Association. In fairness to Olumide Akpata's immediate three predecessors-in-office, Okey Wali, SAN, Augustine Alegeh, SAN and Paul Usoro, SAN, they appreciated my role as Counsel to NBA at a very critical time, both in writing and verbally, and at each of the Annual General

Meetings they presided over, they presented glowing reports about me to the lawyers, informing them that I handled the matters pro bono, and even used my personal funds to pay for the filing of the processes as well as settlement of all logistic expenses, including transportation, accommodation, feeding, etc., for myself, my juniors and aides. In that case, I had led, amongst other senior counsel, Funke Adekoya, SAN, Mike Ozekhome, SAN and Jide Ogundipe. In other words, the NBA was also unwittingly attacking its own counsel – a very odd and unusual scenario. While I cannot lay claim to having led Mr. Olumide Akpata who was the NBA President when the imbroglio started, I lay a humble claim to have led Y. C. Maikyau, SAN, in some topical cases, both at the Supreme Court and at the Federal High Court, including: SC.1434/2019 – Makinde v. Adekola, reported in part 1834 of the Nigerian Weekly Law Report, which has now been reported as Makinde v. Adekola (2022) 9 NWLR (Pt. 1834) 13 and FHC/ABJ/CS/1313/2021 - Attorney-General of Abia State & 35 Ors. V. President, Federal Republic of Nigeria & Ors. He is aware of my leadership and work style as to the nature of efforts we deploy to advance the causes of the clients we have worked together for. It is rather ironic that the same Y.C. Maikyau, SAN, had less than a year before the whole rampage, made the following glowing remarks about me: "Thank you for your purposeful leadership and mentorship which you bring to many whom you may not have met or known. We are witnesses to the investments you have made and still make to the profession and like a popular Nigerian Preacher will say, 'Only fools doubt proofs.' We refuse to be foolish!!". One can, therefore, hardly reconcile these words and actions with his subsequent conduct.

Sadly, the NBA suspended its much-taunted motto (Promoting the Rule of Law) in its crucifixion of

one of its former Presidents, as well as its leading counsel for obvious reasons. As at the time I handled the celebrated case of *Oyeyemi v. Comm. for Local Govt.* (1992) 2 NWLR (Pt. 226) 661, which is one of the leading and often cited decisions on fair hearing, little did I know that I would at a later time face a worse situation than what my then client, Oyeyemi faced.

A group, known as the Justice Reform Project (JRP), suddenly waded in, taking it as a gospel to be spread everywhere, condemning me unheard, presuming and adjudging me guilty, and calling for my resignation or stepping aside as the Chairman of the Body of Benchers. Apart from Egun Sofunde, SAN, a man I hold in very high esteem, I am not only senior to other members of the group, but I have led most of them in diverse matters, and at that point in time, I was still leading one or two of them in some matters. However, it was just about five or six out of the twenty members of the group who were championing and attacking my person for personal reasons, and in the process of trying to bring others on board, they were so much in a hurry to reel out all members of the group in their unsigned advertisements and publications, to the extent of including Wemimo Ogunde, SAN, the father of the lady in the midst of the storm – a gentle man who had earlier written to Mr. H. O. Ajumogobia, SAN, stating inter alia, that her daughter had confided in him that neither myself nor our office knew anything or was even remotely connected with the mail. Still on the Statoil appeal, two highly respected colleagues of the Silk, Babatunde Fagbohunlu, SAN and Adeniyi Adegbonmire, SAN, as well as their colleagues from the leading firm of Aluko & Oyeboode worked assiduously with us in preparing the court papers that were presented at the Supreme Court and also appeared with me to argue the appeal. Yet, the masterminds of the publications

by the JRP included their names on the list of those allegedly calling on me to step aside on the propaganda that the appeal was won through influence. In retrospect, I am sure they would appreciate the fact that they could have been more temperate and reflective. Jubril Okutepe, SAN, had the courage of his conviction to dissociate himself from the vicious publications of the group, querying why his name was listed on the publication, despite having previously left the membership of the group. Various other members, whose names were also listed on the publication as part of the authors, reached out to me to dissociate themselves from it.

Even when the LPDC came up with its decision that I and other Partners in the firm were not liable and could not have been liable in the matter, and that NBA should not have reported me or ask for my prosecution, the NBA was still unrelenting, until the Body of Benchers put a stop to the entire rampage. I understand a member of the group was circulating the Direction of the LPDC on social media outlets after the Committee reached its decision against the lady, a daughter of one of their members. With all respect to members of the group, I can stake my integrity, reputation, character, carriage and fidelity to the ethics of our noble profession with anyone of them. It would appear that while I was a victim of the young lady's vexed email, she equally was a victim of those who, unknown to me, herself and her father, had longed for ways and means to come after me. Unfortunately, she became the ultimate victim. Borrowing from an anonymous quote, I was not the problem, but the mirror which they wanted to crack. Sadly, the lady who was also neither their problem nor the mirror, eventually became the victim.

One may wish to ask whether I hold any grudge or nurse any ill-feeling against any of my many

persecutors and traducers. The clear answer is NO. Vengeance belongs to no man but to God. However, God used the occasion to open my external and internal eyes to appreciate people who called themselves my friends, whereas, they are/were fiends. They had "daggers in their smiles", apologies to William Shakespeare in *Macbeth*. They inflicted on me the 'unkindest cuts of all', apologies to Shakespeare again in *Julius Caesar*. They were launching arrows at night and evoking pestilence at noon. During the period as well, the words of Psalm 2:1–2 kept on ringing in my ears: ***"why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed"***.

While the law firm and I maintained our calm, I must confess that it was a learning curve for self-restraint, because we had taken a decision not to join the fray; but there were moments we considered that there was a compelling need to respond to the harassments. I was also conscious of my high position as the Chairman of the Body of Benchers, knowing full well that some people deliberately wanted to draw me to the arena. However, our consolation and assurance were that the truth would always prevail. I must confess that quite a number of professional associates and mentees felt that I deserved some respect and better treatment from our colleagues and the NBA, particularly, as I have always admonished them to adhere strictly to professional ethics and values. Frankly speaking, where permissible, I have always endeavoured to achieve rehabilitation for erring juniors and colleagues, rather than going all out for their elimination. Even in aggravated circumstances where counsel shows sobriety and there is no irreparable damage, which gives latitude for discretion, my predisposition is usually that of

graciousness and affording counsel that is genuinely contrite and penitent, a second chance. One example will suffice. Years back, I handled a land matter for a community in Kogi State, which was sued by another community as defendant. We won at the High Court; and on a further appeal to the Court of Appeal, we won as well. The other community appealed to the Supreme Court, and I quickly settled my client's Brief as Respondent's Counsel. After extension of time, members of the community became agitated when there was no hearing notice served on us/them by the Supreme Court for the hearing of the appeal. They complained to me, but I assured them that the Supreme Court would always and usually serve Hearing Notices on Counsel. It was later we noticed that a Hearing Notice meant to be served on me was diverted by another counsel who went to the Supreme Court to adopt the brief I prepared and signed, without my knowledge or consent, and without any nexus whatsoever, with my client. I was naturally enraged but decided not to make a decision on the spur of the moment and in the heat of passion. Coincidentally, the erring lawyer was a son of a former President of the NBA, one of my highly respected predecessors-in-office; thus, I decided to put a call through to the father, and after the

exchange of pleasantries, I narrated the story to him. He was equally enraged, but asked me what we should do; and my instant response was that "Sir, the young man needed rehabilitation and counselling." The father was so surprised at my magnanimity, and he instantly started praying for me, saying, amongst others, that I would be greater than him. He later asked the young man to come to my office and immediately he sighted me, he prostrated and started pleading. I was convinced of the genuineness of his remorse and after counselling him and extracting assurances that such conduct would not be repeated, I assured him that it was all over, more particularly so, that the appeal was dismissed. I also persuaded the members of my client's community to reason with me and they were placated by the fact that the Supreme Court dismissed the appeal ultimately.

At the NBA level, when I was President, I noticed through flying letters all over, that there was a serious dispute between two predecessors of mine over a very serious ethical subject. To be honest, from the exchange of letters, I could hazard a guess as to which of the parties was at fault. However, rather than jumping to report any one of them to the LPDC without first hearing from

them or condemning either based on letters that had come to my attention, I invited both of them and sought to hear their respective sides of the story. My first resort was mediation and fortunately, I got the matter amicably resolved, whilst passionately assuaging the genuine feelings of the offended colleague. These two narrations have been given against the background of your question, so as to accentuate the point on what the young generation can emulate from me; and to also address the disturbingly growing culture of hatred and malice in the profession nowadays – a situation which tend to support a school of thought that the legal profession is losing its humanity, as some of our colleagues take joy in pulling people down. This is sadistic, apart from being unholy and ungodly. I must not be seen or heard to be advocating condonation for irresponsible or sacrilegious conducts. However, reaction and sanction must be case specific, commensurate and in all circumstances, not derogate from the principles of fairness, equity and natural justice, qua fair hearing, which we lawyers advocate. Having said all these, I have every reason to thank God, for not only vindicating me, but for also justifying me and our law firm. While some were busy, expecting my/our downfall, God was busy



■ L-R - Dr. Garba Tetengi, mni, SAN, Dr. Amaechi Chukwudube Okwuosa, Mr. Tajudeen Oladoja, SAN, Mr. Akin Osinbajo, SAN, Chief Wole Olanipekun, CFR, SAN, Hon. Justice Kazeem Alogba, Mr. Adebayo O. Adelodun, SAN, Prof. Yusuf O. Ali, SAN, Prof. Zacchaeus Adongor and Chief Joe-Kyari Gadzama, OFR, SAN.



▪ *Stressing a point during the Newswire interview*

showing and bestowing blessings and honour on me/us. It was in the heat of the attack that the late President Muhammadu Buhari conferred on me, the third highest national honour of Commander of the Order of the Federal Republic (CFR) without any application or solicitation from me. It was at the same period that the Federal University, Oye, Ekiti State, not only conferred on me an honorary doctorate degree, but also appointed me as a Visiting Professor of Legal Practice, the first to be so appointed in the University, if not the entire country. Above all, I ended up on a very successful note as the Chairman of the Body of Benchers and my records are there for everyone to see. I have said earlier that the secret things belong to God, but He reveals to us at the appropriate time the ones that will be of benefit to us and our generation. I picked one pertinent statement from Mr. Olumide Akpata, the then President of the NBA, who, after his motion, calling for my stepping aside as Chairman of the Body of Benchers, failed and was not supported by any Benchers, described a good number of the members as hypocrites and ostriches, as, according to him, before the meeting, they were egging him on with the words: "Wole should not be there". I recall as well the hint given to me by H. O Ajumogobia, SAN, after the reconciliatory meeting initiated between us by the Primate of our

Church that I should be wary of some of the counsel I lead in cases. Since I left office as the NBA President in 2004, I have made it a habit not to criticize any successor of mine publicly, hence, I restrained myself from joining issues with the two Presidents of the NBA who were involved in the imbroglio. With particular reference to Mr. Olumide Akpata, it was my humble self who defended him at the meeting of the Body of Benchers held on 13th December, 2021, and 21st June, 2022. The minutes bear eloquent testimony to this. The Association became so mean to the extent of sponsoring a junior counsel to institute an action against me at the FCT High Court Abuja, not just asking for my resignation as the Chairman of Body of Benchers, but also that all cases that I have handled should be set aside, including the ones I lost, as well as the ones I won for the NBA itself. It was the judgment members of the NBA were presenting to Banks to allow them open accounts without the SCUML requirement. The case instituted at the FCT High Court was not only frivolous and scandalous, but solely aimed at embarrassing me, and at every time it came up, the young lady lawyer, who was also being represented by her young lawyer husband would fail, refuse and neglect to go on with the case. Rather they were busy addressing sponsored media crews after every court session. They

deliberately did not even serve the other co-defendants. Both husband and wife wanted to become popular at the expense of my name and reputation. Shortly after the entire dust settled, a client briefed me to lead some very eminent colleagues including Dr. Onyeazu Ikpeazu, SAN and Valentine Obi, SAN in respect of a matter at the Court of Appeal, Lagos, and at one of the pre-hearing brainstorming sessions in our office, I noticed that one of the junior colleagues was very unstable or uncomfortable. Eventually, he said "Sir, you are such a great advocate" or words to that effect, to which I simply said "thank you". It was after the end of the session that a counsel in chambers drew my attention to the fact that the same counsel who was commending me for being a great advocate, was the lawyer- husband of the lady lawyer who was instigated to institute an action against me at the FCT High Court, Abuja. The following day and subsequent appearances at the Court of Appeal, that young lawyer was one of those I led. The point being made is that it is not only treacherous but sacrilegious for counsel and junior counsel at that, to unjustly attack or be used to attack or pull down their senior colleagues. It is an unwritten law in our office that no counsel should attack any other colleague, whether junior or senior. It is also part of our custom and discipline that no counsel in chambers should comment on proceedings in court or judgment of any court, which he is not particularly abreast of. I have also come to the realization that success in life, including in the legal profession, attracts friends as well as foes, enemies and traducers, for different causes and reasons. Hence, success might transform the successful one to an endangered specie.

To be Continued...

QUICK FACTS ABOUT



1). WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE ABOUT YOURSELF?

- To be more patient with people, and stop expecting others to resolve issues with the same speed and clarity as I would have.

2). YOUR GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT TILL DATE?

- Bequeathing sound and qualitative education to each of my children.

3). QUALITIES YOU MOST VALUE IN OTHERS ESPECIALLY FRIENDS?

- Trust and loyalty

4). WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PERFUME?

- Tom Ford

5). HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE FASHION?

- Fashion, like beauty, is subjective. It is a matter of personal inclination and conviction. Just as the saying goes, "Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder"

6). WHAT THINGS ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT?

- Family welfare

7). YOUR MOST CHERISHED POSSESSION?

- My Name (Proverbs 22: 1)

8). PEOPLE CLOSEST TO YOUR HEART

- My family members

9). FIVE FASHION ITEMS YOU CAN NOT DO WITHOUT?

- Shoes
- Wristwatches
- Suits and quality fabrics for native casuals and full attires.
- Perfumes
- Ties

10). YOUR FAVORITE AUTHOR AND QUOTE?

- William Shakespeare – the British Bard of Avon.

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow,
and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from
day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded
time;

And all our yesterdays have
lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out,
out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a
poor player

That struts and frets his hour
upon the stage

And then is heard no more: it
is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound
and fury,

Signifying nothing."

See: *Macbeth, Act V, Scene V*

&

"Who steals my purse steals
trash; 'tis something, nothing;
'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has
been slave to thousands;
But he that filches from me my
good name
Robs me of that which not
enriches him,
And makes me poor indeed."

See: *Othello, Act III, Scene III.*

11). FAVORITE HOLIDAY SPOT?

- Miami

12). FAVORITE CITY?

- Los Angeles / Dubai

13). BEST MOMENT WITH YOUR SPOUSE?

- When on holiday or vacation.

14). WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

- My Grandchildren

15). WHAT TRAIT DO YOU MOST DEPLORE IN YOURSELF AND IN OTHERS?

- In myself: Impatience with lethargic people, that is, those who exhibit intellectual laziness.
- In others: Betrayal.

16). YOUR REAL LIFE HEROES?

- Jesus Christ
- My Dad
- My Mum

17). YOUR GREATEST FEAR?

- Fear of the unknown

18). FAVORITE DESIGNER SHOES?

- Zilli
- Versace
- Barlotti
- Brioni
- Louis Vuitton
- Gucci

19). FAVORITE DESIGNER WRISTWATCH?

- Vacheron Constantin

20). FAVORITE CAR?

- Jaguar

21). WHAT IS YOUR TURN-ON?

- Unravelling and resolving knotty and complex problems.

22). WHAT IS YOUR TURN-OFF?

- Making or disseminating false accusations against my person.



All past and present chairmen of NBA SBL: (L-R) Olumide Akpata, Dr. Adeoye Adefulu, Mrs. Ozofu Ogiemudia, Mr. George Etomi and Mr. Gbenga Oyeboode, MFR

NBA-SBL PONDERES THE FUTURE OF BUSINESS LAW IN AN INTELLIGENCE AGE AT 19TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN LAGOS

The prestigious Harbour Point Event Centre in Lagos was the venue for the 19th Annual International Business Law Conference of the Nigerian Bar Association's Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL). The event was graced by the cream of Nigeria's business law community, who were joined by legal professionals from various walks of life.

The Conference, whose theme was **'The Future of Business Law in an Intelligence Age,'** was formally declared open by the Governor of Lagos State, Mr. Babajide Sanwo-Olu (ably represented at the occasion by the Secretary to the State Government, Mrs. Bimbola Salu-Hundeyin). The opening ceremonies also featured welcoming remarks by the President of the NBA, Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN and the Chairman of

the NBA-SBL, Mrs. Ozofu 'Latunde Ogiemudia, as well as a number of goodwill messages – all of which set the stage for the Keynote Address by His Royal Highness, Sarkin Kano, Khalifa Mohammed Sanusi II, (delivered on his behalf by his Chief Counselor, Alhaji Bashir Mahe Bashir Wali.)

The theme of this year's NBA-SBL Conference, Khalifa Sanusi began by saying, spoke not just to recent advances in technology, but more essentially to the evolution of society, adding that it represents an inquiry into human

capacity in an era defined by deep shifts. "We are not approaching an era of transformation," he said. "We are in it ... AI, machine learning, big data, and blockchain are no longer buzzwords; they have become integral parts of our personal and professional environments."



L-R: Afam Osigwe, SAN, Alhaji Bashir Mahe Wali, Mrs. Abimbola Salu-Hundeyin, Mrs. Ozofu Ogiemudia



Some participants at the event



L-R: Bisi Mekanjuola, Dr. Mobolaji Ojibara, Mazi Afam Osiagwe, SAN Ozofo Ogiemudia, Abdulrazaq Gold, SAN, Ayoyinka Olajide-Awosedo and Abubakar Mahmud, SAN

Lawyers, he said, must also be proactive in re-skilling to meet the demands of a changing landscape. "Understanding technology is no longer optional," he asserted. "It is essential". A twenty-first-century Nigerian lawyer, he said, must graduate from university and law school knowing both corporate law and the significance of technology in legal practice. Equally critical, Sanusi emphasized, was the need to align local laws with global standards.

Khalifa Sanusi warned, however, that the enormous power afforded humanity by advances in tech are not without equally enormous challenges – notably in the following three areas: regulatory compliance and adaptation; consumer protection in the digital

space; and intellectual property in the age of AI.

Sanusi concluded his speech by addressing the issue of ethics, equity, and justice in the age of intelligence. While technology has the power to transform the world for the better, he warned, it also has the power to foster inequality in society – for which reason lawyers must never be so caught up in automation that they lose sight of their ethical obligations.

The Sarkin Kano's keynote speech was followed by a spoken-word performance by the writer, spoken-word instructor and confidence coach, Ella Forte Alile, whose elegantly crafted words extolled the virtues of AI and its impact on not just the practice of law, but also on emerging work,

relationship and lifestyle paradigms.

Another highlight of the opening ceremonies was a presentation by the Guest Speaker, Adefunke Adeyemi, who is the current Secretary-General of the African Civil Aviation Commission (ACAC), a specialised agency of the African Union (AU) for civil aviation matters on the African Continent. Adeyemi, who spoke to the topic, **'Revolutionising the Nigerian Aviation Industry - The Intersection of Law, Business & Intelligence,'** cited the exponential growth of aviation in Africa in recent years as well as its challenges being faced by the industry.

A stirring saxophone performance by Temilayo Abodunrin brought the short but colourful opening ceremonies of the 19th NBA-SBL International Business Law Conference to a close.



Cross section of Bar Leaders and committee members at the opening ceremony

The first full day of the Conference got down to business with a remarkable line-up of activities, including four plenary sessions. The first session which explored the theme, **'Technology and Innovation: Reshaping Business Law'**, was moderated by Ijeoma Uju, a Partner at the law firm of Templars. She was joined by a quintet of distinguished panelists, namely, Mrs. Yemisi Diya-Salawu, Oswald Guobadia, Nkem Nweke, Stephanie Brown and Uzoma Dozie.

England and the NBA to train lawyers on integrating AI into their practice, as well as the benefits to be gained in the integration of the academia, business and technology in driving the next stage in the evolution of business law in Nigeria;

- *The need for specialized courts for AI-related legal matters;*
- *The need to guard against AI hallucinations, especially in determining judicial outcomes,*

The second plenary session of the day was focused on international trade – an area that in recent years has brought into sharp focus the critical role of lawyers in cross-border transactions. The session, titled, **'Reimagining Nigeria's Export Economy through Innovation'**, was moderated by Mrs. Joke Aliu, a Partner at the firm of Aluko & Oyeboode. Her panel consisted of Mr. Ufuoma Adasen, Ms. Victoria Fabunmi, Dr. Chinyere Almona, Mr. Dapo Oduwole, and a representative of Mrs. Folasade Medebem, the Commissioner for



L-R: Nkem Nweke, Uzoma Dozie, Ijeoma Uju, Mrs. Yemisi Diya-Salawu, Oswald Guobadia and Stephanie Brown

In the course of their discourse, the panelists emphasized the following points:

- The need for legal professionals to help influence official policy on the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in legal practice – as policy and innovation should, whenever possible, go hand-in-hand. To this end, the panelists emphasized the need for an AI regulatory sandbox which allows regulators to observe and learn about new technologies firsthand, assess potential risks, and then adapt regulations to keep pace with innovation;
- The responsibility of professional bodies such as the Law Society of

and ultimately to use AI as a tool to enhance access to justice.

Referencing the seminal book, *AI 2041: Ten Visions for our Future* (a best-selling book by the pair of Kai-Fu Lee and Chen Qiufan), Guobadia, one of the panelists, made the point that, at the end of the day, AI can only achieve its highest impact – both in the legal space and in human endeavour in general – if it serves as a complement to HI (human intelligence, which incorporates originality, creativity and innovation) and SI (spiritual intelligence, which incorporates attributes such as conscience, values, empathy, and so forth).

Commerce, Cooperatives, Trade and Investment in Lagos State.

In the course of their discussion, the panelists offered the following insights on a variety of subjects and issues, among them:

- *The need to raise the quality and standards of our export products – which include agricultural produce as well as creative output and fintech, etc. – and to understand what obtains in other climes (especially the export target) in this regard;*
- *The need to prioritize infrastructure – including logistics and power – and to drive industrialization so as to scale up*



Committee members pose with panelists

the export value chain, and improve access to finance for startups and MSMEs, and to develop innovative financing models – especially for infrastructural and other projects;

- *The need to harmonize and monetize Nigeria's creative industry as a component of the country's items in international trade;*
- *The need to restructure the role of the Nigerian diaspora and their contribution to the Nigerian economy as a whole, and its export profile in particular. These contributions, the panelists said, need not be only in the form of remittances, but also in expertise and exposure.*

Themed '**Transforming Healthcare in Nigeria: The Role of Innovation and Law**,' the third session was moderated by Mr. Godson Ogheneochuko, a Partner at the law firm of Udo-Udoma & Belo-Osagie. He was joined by a distinguished cast of panelists, namely Senator (Dr.) Ibrahim Yahaya Oloriegbe, Dimeji Sofowora, Mrs Adetomi Olaobaju, Dr. Tinuola Akinbolagbe, and Estelle Dogbo. Both Dr. Akingbolagbe and Ms. Dogbo joined the discussion virtually.

The panelists touched on a wide range of issues, trends and challenges in modern healthcare delivery, as far as innovation and regulatory frameworks are concerned, among them:

- *The need to deepen internet penetration especially in underserved locations;*
- *The need to evolve clear legal frameworks and reliable infrastructural baselines – especially the issue of liability (in cases of clinical misdiagnosis, for example), and the need for regulatory sandboxes around healthcare delivery;*
- *The need to streamline healthcare processes and minimize – if not eliminate – laborious processes at government agencies such as the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC), the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON), etc.;*
- *The need to treat patients not as mere data subjects, but as flesh-and-blood entities, and to embed health-related AI into educational and labour force reform.*

The fourth and final panel session of the day met to interrogate issues around money laundering and terrorism funding. Moderated by Kehinde Daodu, a Partner at the law firm of Babalakin & Co., the session, titled '**Navigating AML/CFT Compliance in Legal Practice**' brought together Mr. Felix Obiamalu, Ms. Nankunda Katangaza, Mr. Babajide Ogundipe Oludayo Ayeni, and Tony Katz. Both Ms. Katangaza and Mr. Katz participated virtually in the discourse.

In the course of a lively exchange, the panelists touched on the following issues, among others:

- *The need for each NBA branch across the nation to have its own AML/CFT compliance officers;*
- *The need for a better balance among legal practitioners and firms between the imperative of disclosure (of suspicious financial activity) and lawyer-client confidentiality, client privilege, etc.;*
- *The need to automate regulations – within the context of the Rules of Professional Conduct (RPCs) and other relevant guidelines.*



Cross section of attendees



L-R: Joke Aliu, Victoria Fabunmi, Dapo Oduwole, Dr. Chinyere Almona and Mr. Ufuoma Adasen



Committee members pose with panelists

SBL NBA 19th ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LAW CONFERENCE 2025

The final Conference day (Friday, July 4, 2025) featured a total of eight sessions – six breakouts and two plenaries, as well as a Mentorship Session and a Fireside Chat. The breakouts addressed issues in critical sectors of the national and global economies as manufacturing; power; oil and gas; the creative economy; aviation; and

corporate restructuring and insolvency. The first plenary addressed the theme '**Education Rewired: Adapting Legal Learning for the Future**', while the second was an opportunity for the NBA-SBL to look back at its evolution over the years, as well as to the future – a future which will be shaped by changing paradigms, a fast-evolving

global legal marketplace characterized by changing client expectations, as well as potentially-disruptive technologies. Moderated by the Vice-Chairman of the SBL, Mr. Baba Alokolaro, it featured conversations with the current and one-time Chairmen of the Section – namely Mrs. Ozofu 'Latunde Ogiemudia and Mr. Gbenga Oyeboode, MFR, respectively.



L-R: Solape Peters, CPC Chairperson, Aderenle Sonariwo, Omoyeni Akerele, Ozofu 'Latunde Ogiemudia, Lilian Olubi with the committee member



Rafiq Anammah (far left) moderating the breakout session on aviation

As has become the tradition at recent SBL Conferences, the **Tare Yeri Award** – and the recently-instituted Oludamola Awobokun Recognition Award – were handed out for outstanding services to the Section. The Tare Yeri Award, which honours individuals who have demonstrated dedication and made selfless contributions to the growth of the SBL, was instituted in

memory of Ms. Tare Yeri, a dedicated member who played a pivotal role in the SBL's successes, especially in the organization of its annual conferences before her untimely passing at 42. The **Oludamola Awobokun Recognition Award** (first awarded at the 2024 NBA-SBL Conference) is named in honour of Mrs. Damola Awobokun, who until her

passing in 2023 at just 34 was a senior associate at the law firm of Odujinrin & Adefulu.

The closing remarks by the NBA-SBL's vice-chairman, Mr. Baba Alokolaro – followed by a Closing Party later that evening, concluded proceedings at the 19th International Business Law Conference of the NBA-SBL.



Cross session of participants at the conference



L-R: Chinwe Chiwete, Dr. Anthony Idigbe, SAN, Albert Folorunsho and Oluwatobi Olayiwola

BRITISH NIGERIA LAW FORUM: Body Commits to Strengthening Legal & Business Ties Between the Two Communities at Inaugural Nigeria Summit in Lagos.



L-R: Oba Nsugbe KC SAN (seated), Boma Alabi OON, SAN, Abimbola Salu-Hundeyin and Kash Balogun



L-R: Uchenna Ogunedo Akingbade, Genevieve Nwodo Wakeley-Jones, Perenami Momodu Oladunjoye

The two-day programme of activities marking the first-ever Summit of the British Nigeria Law Forum (BNLF) held in Nigeria, began with an exclusive Welcome Cocktail Party in the evening of Thursday, June 26, 2025 at the official residence of the Deputy British High Commissioner to Nigeria, Mr. Jon Baxter. It was graced by the cream of the legal community from both the UK and Nigeria, as well as representatives from the business, professional and diplomatic communities in Nigeria.

An evening short on speeches was nevertheless long on celebration and dialogue, as guests dined, wine and networked in anticipation of the Summit proper - which took place the next day, Friday, June 27, 2025 at the Oriental Hotel on Victoria Island, Lagos.

The theme of the Nigeria Summit was **'Strengthening Legal & Business Ties Between the UK and Nigeria: Opportunities & Challenges.'**

Welcoming participants to the event, the Chairman of the BNLF, Mr. Kasope (Kash) Balogun described the occasion as an opportunity for legal practitioners and entrepreneurs on both sides of the Atlantic to deepen their relationship based on shared identity and heritage, as well as shared interests. In the almost 25 years since its inception, Balogun said, the BNLF had built bridges of shared opportunity.

The BNLF is made up of practicing lawyers and students in the UK and Nigeria, and provides business, networking and educational opportunities for its members. Established in 2001, the BNLF has an enviable track record of staging professional and social events designed to develop and support the careers of its members.

The BNLF comprises a number of legal networks, such as: The Business Law Network (BLN); The Criminal Law Network; The Family Law Network; The Immigration Law



L-R: Ololade Saromi, Charlie Louise Akintilo Dr. Emmanuel Akume Temilola Muiyiwa-Ajayi and Ope Olusaga



L-R: Afolarin Awosika, Flourish Makanjuola, Kemi Wey-Afesojoye, Egun Azeez and Izuchukwu Temilade Nwagbara

Network; The Junior Lawyers' Division ; and The Women's Network

Balogun concluded his welcoming remarks by calling on participants at the Summit to maximize the networking opportunities it offers – while renewing their commitment to uphold justice and influence official policy, as well as to advance democratic governance and ensure the good ordering of society in their respective jurisdictions.

Balogun's remarks were followed by a number of goodwill messages. The first of these was by the Chairman of the occasion, Dr. Agbakoba, SAN – who was the first NBA President to address the BNLF in one of their Summits in the UK. Although the Nigeria Summit was coming 18 long years too late, said the founder of the Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO), it was no less



L-R: Beverley Agbakoba-Onyejianya, Mofe Tayo-Oyetibo, SAN, Toyin Asda and Teniola Onabanjo

timely for that.

The Keynote Address on the occasion was delivered by Chief Anthony I. Idigbe, SAN, the Senior Partner at the law firm of *PUNUKA Attorneys & Solicitors*. He highlighted a number of different approaches to globalization and the laudable role being played by organisations such as the International Bar Association (IBA) in helping lawyers and law firms thrive in different jurisdictions.

The keynote was followed by a Fireside Chat – convened to explore the topic, **'The Power of Legal Networks: A Dialogue Between the BNLF and the NBA,'** and moderated by Mr. George Etomi, Principal Partner at the commercial law firm of *George Etomi & Partners (GEPLAW)*. Etomi was joined by a distinguished cast of panelists such as Dr. Oba Nsugbe, SAN, KC, the founding Chairman of the BNLF; Boma Alabi, OON, SAN, Senior Partner at *Primera Africa Legal (PAL)*; the aforementioned Kash Balogun,; and Ozofu Ogiemudia, Managing Partner at *Udo-Udoma & Belo-Osagie*.

Etomi set the ball rolling by querying what Nigerian lawyers stood to gain from the quest on both sides of the Atlantic for stronger and closer legal and business links.

Dr. Nsugbe, in his contribution, traced the evolution of the BNLF, describing it as the product of a shared passion and sense of purpose. On the prospect of strengthening networks, he called for an international directory of lawyers in both jurisdictions.

Also speaking, Alabi provided a number of the possibilities offered by cross-border collaborations, but she was insistent on the need for a uniformity of standards and equal adherence to global best practices.

On his part, the aforementioned Balogun, noted that



Gloria Ireka



Dr. Anthony Idigbe, SAN

while the association was, for now, better known in the UK than in Nigeria, the body was working to reverse that situation – via Summits like this one, and other engagements.

Ogiemudia suggested that one of the takeaways from this maiden Nigeria Summit must be the setting up of a Working Group that would serve to hold key stakeholders accountable to the BNLF's stated goals, and to the resolutions that would emerge from the Summit.

On the vexed issue of academic qualifications acquired in Nigerian institutions being rejected by the British legal establishment (and vice versa, to some extent), the Fireside Chat participants were unanimous in calling for mutually-beneficial engagements between the two jurisdictions in order to reverse the practice and ensure recognition of each other's certifications – if not full integration of their legal paradigms.

Etomi's Fireside Chat was followed by another panel discourse, on the topic, **'Accessing International Markets and Building Your Legal Brand.'** Moderated by Uchenna Ogunedo Akingbade, Founding Partner at *Sunesis DLP* (who has since been elected as the first-ever female Chairman of the Lagos branch of the NBA) the panel comprised such young and astute legal minds as Genevieve Nwodo Wakeley-Jones; Perenami Momodu; Oladele Oladunjoye, and Jeremy Morell. Morell participated virtually at the Summit.

The summary of their respective insights on the topic under review was as follows:

- *In order to surmount the challenges of thriving in a system seemingly designed against people who look like you (in the case of jurisdictions like the UK), you need persistence, resilience and good old Nigerian grit. As a Nigerian working in a foreign country, you also need to cultivate a healthy balance between your capacity for cultural adaptation and sensitivity to cultural sensibilities, and your own authenticity (i.e. how you project your own culture), as well as your ability to build genuine and beneficial relationships – with your peers and associates, as well as your mentors and advocates;*
- *Communicate your value in a bold, effective but respectful manner;*
- *Have a strong digital presence;*
- *Expose yourself to thought-leadership on cross-border topics via attendance at conferences and other knowledge-sharing sessions, etc.;*

The next panel discourse, which explored the topic **'Leveraging Artificial Intelligence & Cryptocurrency in Legal Practice: Opportunities & Real-World Applications,'** was moderated by Temilola Muiyiwa-Ajayi, a Partner at *Nate & Nay LP*, and featured the following panelists: Ololade Saromi; Emmanuel Akuma, PhD; Ope Olugasa; and Charlie-Louise Akinilo.

Saromi, who spoke first, began by defining AI and listed its various dimensions – and in particular those that are of greatest relevance to legal work – its areas of greatest impact, as well as areas where it is deficient, such as in rigorous and accurate legal research.

Olugasa spoke at length on a range of tech AI subjects, such as predictive analytics and subject matter trained software, etc. He also spoke on the ethical use of AI and the need for law firms to develop an overall tech (not just AI) strategy in their operations.

The final panel discussion of the day, which interrogated the theme, **'Developing Practical Strategies for UK-Nigeria Collaboration in Litigation, Arbitration & ADR,'** was moderated by Oluwatoyin Asada, Managing Partner at *Sunesis DLP*. Beverly

Agbakoba, Teniola Onabanjo; and Mofesomo Tayo-Oyetibo, SAN. Each of the panelists weighed in on issues such as peer-to-peer as well as country-to-country collaboration between the Nigerian and UK jurisdictions, and their inherent possibilities.

The formal aspect of the BNLF Nigeria Summit 2025 ended with a bang, as a quartet of young, early-stage lawyers came on stage to debate the question, **'Should Young Nigerian Lawyers Focus on Becoming Global Legal Professionals Rather Than Local Experts?'** In an exchange moderated by Kemi Afesojaye, Managing it Partner at *Wey Practice (Legal Practitioners & Arbitrators)*, the pair of Afolarin Awosika, Associate at BNLF, and Flourish Makanjuola, Associate at *Wey Practice* – who spoke on the YES side of the divide – were pitted against the pair of Izuchukwu Nwagbara, co-Chair of the Junior Lawyers' Division of the BNLF, and Ebun Azeez, Chancery barrister at *Selbourne Chambers*, who spoke on the NO side. Their well-articulated points were enthusiastically received by an appreciative audience, who were given the chance to vote as to who had won the debate. The NO side claimed a slight edge.



Dr. Olisa Agbakoba, SAN



Ozofu 'Latunde Ogiemudia



Lawal Pedro, SAN, AG, Edgos



Gorge Etomi

Gala night

After the intellectual heavy lifting of the better part of the day, participants were ready to let their metaphorical hair down, as the cavernous interiors of the Ballroom at the Oriental Hotel took on an ornate ambience in preparation for the Gala Dinner.

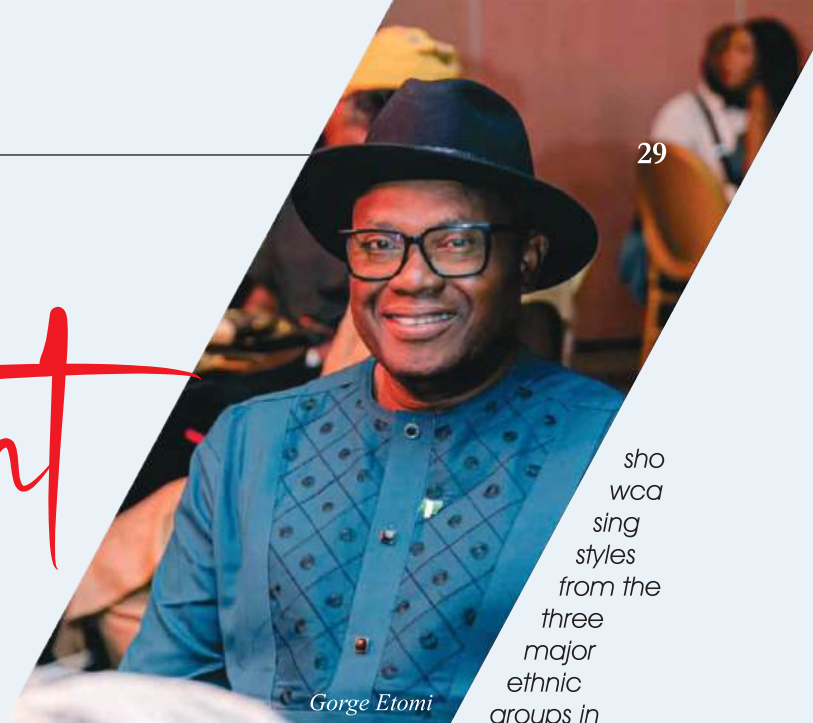
The BNLF vice-chair, Genevieve Wakeley-Jones, set the tone of the evening with her welcome speech, in which she called the Summit a celebration as well as a moment of reflection.

Her remarks were followed by a short video showcase of recent BNLF events in Nigeria since 2024.

Also speaking, Kash Balogun, Chair of the body, summed up the events of the Summit – two days, he said, of exchanging ideas, challenging assumptions

and re-imagining a future of shared responsibilities and benefits

Genevieve Nwodo Wakeley-Jones and Kash Balogun



Gorge Etomi

showcasing styles from the three major ethnic groups in Nigeria, as well as traditional British dancing – a combination whose seamlessness and sheer dexterity drew sustained applause from the dinner guests.

This was followed by a short lecture by Mr. Babatunde Irukera, immediate past CEO of the Federal Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (FCCPC), who stood in for the country's former Vice-President, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, SAN. Irukera spoke at length on the ways in which the law – and especially regulatory frameworks – serve to enrich trade relationships between jurisdictions such as the UK and Nigeria. At the end of his presentation, Irukera was presented with a plaque of recognition by the pioneer BNLF Chairman, Dr. Oba Nsugbe, SAN.

based on shared values. A night of many highlights began with the presentation of a special award of appreciation to Mrs. Juliet Benson, one of the BNLF's most notable supporters, which was presented to her representative by the BNLF Chairman.

Yet another highlight of the evening was a soulful rendition of a number of popular songs by Khemmie Sings, as the evening gradually drew to a close against the backdrop of more music and dancing, sumptuous wining and dining, as well as networking and photo ops.

Another highlight was an energetic dance medley

Gloria Ireka, Justina Lewa and Uche Akingbade





STRENGTHENING LEGAL & BUSINESS TIES BETWEEN THE UK & NIGERIA: Navigating Opportunities and Challenges

(A Post-Summit Conversation Between the BNLF Leadership & Newswire Law Events Magazine)

The historic British Nigeria Law Forum (BNLF) Nigeria Summit 2025 was held in Lagos this June, against the backdrop of the nearly 25 years of fostering bilateral engagement. The Summit brought together over 250 legal professionals, policymakers, innovators, and business leaders from Nigeria and the UK to deepen legal and commercial cooperation across borders. In this exclusive interview, the BNLF leadership shares key insights from the Summit, the Forum's evolving agenda, and the road ahead for UK-Nigeria legal relations.

Excerpts:

NEWSWIRE: Congratulations on the success of the inaugural BNLF Nigeria Summit. What does this moment represent for the Forum and the wider legal communities in both countries?

CHAIRMAN, BNLF: This was a landmark moment in our journey. Hosting the Summit in Lagos wasn't just symbolic — it was strategic. For nearly 25 years, BNLF has served as a conduit for collaboration between Nigeria and the UK. But this was the first time we brought our entire ecosystem — legal practitioners, investors, regulators, and academics — together on Nigerian soil in such a structured, ambitious format. It signalled our intent to be more present, more proactive, and more future-facing. The turnout and energy confirmed what we've always believed, namely, that there's an enormous appetite for deeper engagement, and the BNLF is ready to lead that charge.

Q: What were the most pivotal themes that emerged from the Summit?

VICE CHAIR, BNLF: There were many standout moments. The sessions on Artificial

Intelligence and Legal Innovation, Cross-border Dispute Resolution, and Accessing International Markets were particularly impactful. We heard loud and clear that law must not trail behind technology—it must evolve alongside it. Lawyers today need to be as digitally fluent as they are legally sound. At the same time, we explored how procedural bottlenecks—especially in dispute resolution — can undermine confidence in cross-border investments.

Above all, the Summit reiterated a vital point: Nigeria's legal system is not isolated. It is deeply interconnected with global trends — and we must prepare accordingly.

Q: Looking forward, how does BNLF intend to sustain this momentum?

CHAIR, BNLF: Moving forward, we will establish a joint working group comprising the BNLF, NBA SBL, and NBA SLP. This

group will focus on sharing knowledge and training junior lawyers in specialized areas such as legal tech, arbitration reform, and ESG. Additionally, we will expand the JLD to emphasize mentorship and facilitate practical work experience exchanges with law firms in both the UK and Nigeria. We are also in the process of becoming a charity in the UK. This will ensure that our operations are transparent and help us raise funds, as running the organization and hosting events like the Nigerian Summit can be quite costly.

Q: The diplomatic cocktail reception at the British Deputy High Commissioner's residence was a highlight. Why was this significant?

VICE CHAIR, BNLF:

It was about creating space for trust and diplomacy outside of formal panels. Legal ecosystems don't operate in isolation—they're intertwined with commerce, politics, and culture. That reception allowed regulators, law firm leaders, diplomats, and investors to have candid conversations. We see it as the beginning of many strategic partnerships.

Q: What role does BNLF envision for itself in influencing policy reform across both jurisdictions?

CHAIR, BNLF:

BNLF has always been more than a networking forum. We are increasingly becoming a thought partner to regulators, especially in areas like fintech, arbitration, and compliance. With our diverse network of dual-qualified lawyers and subject-matter experts, we're well-positioned to provide policy insights that are both locally grounded and globally informed. Our recent submissions to consultation papers in both countries demonstrate that commitment.

Q: The diaspora featured heavily at the Summit. How important is their role in shaping the legal-commercial landscape?

VICE CHAIR, BNLF:

It is crucial. Diaspora professionals

have a foot in both worlds—they understand the nuance, the systems, and the cultural codes. They're natural bridges. At the Summit, we saw diaspora-led legal tech startups, dual-qualified arbitrators, and academics influencing curriculum reform. If we want to build a globalised legal profession rooted in African excellence, the diaspora must be central—not peripheral—to that vision.

Q: Are there specific initiatives planned to engage younger lawyers and law students?

CHAIR, BNLF:

Absolutely. One of our core Summit goals was youth inclusion. We were proud to welcome dozens of junior lawyers and law students. We're looking to develop a structured mentorship programme, a BNLF Scholars' Network, and piloting career immersion schemes in both Nigeria and the UK. Empowering the next generation is not an afterthought—it's the future of our profession.

Q: What's your message to investors and diaspora professionals who are considering legal or commercial ventures in Nigeria or the UK?

VICE CHAIR, BNLF:

This is the moment to engage. Legal clarity underpins economic confidence. Whether you're investing in tech, infrastructure, or professional services, understanding the legal landscape is non-negotiable. BNLF provides a soft landing—networks, local intelligence, and cross-border insight. Our message is simple: don't wait for the system to be perfect. Join us in shaping it.

Q: What's your call to action for legal professionals or firms who want to be part of this mission?

Chair, BNLF:

Get involved. Join our community. We offer multiple entry points—individual and corporate membership, events, think tanks, and working groups. The challenges

we face—whether it's AI regulation, qualification barriers, or arbitration reform—require collective solutions. Collaboration isn't optional; it's strategic. And BNLF is the platform to make that collaboration meaningful.

Q: What was the impact of the AI and cryptocurrency discussions at the Summit?

VICE CHAIR, BNLF:

It was a game-changer. The discussions highlighted how fast legal services are changing and how we risk being left behind if we don't catch up. Nigerian legal tech startups, like LawPavilion, are doing excellent work. But more needs to be done to integrate AI ethics, blockchain understanding, and digital literacy into everyday legal practice—especially for young lawyers. The conversation is no longer about if AI will change law. It's about how ready we are.

Q: Any final reflections on what made this Summit unique?

CHAIR, BNLF:

It was the authenticity and urgency in the conversations. People weren't just there to talk. They came ready to collaborate, to challenge the status quo, and to build something lasting. It was also the diversity of voices—from students and junior lawyers to senior judges and international business leaders. That intergenerational exchange is powerful. And it gives us great confidence as we look to the future.

CLOSING NOTE

As the BNLF Nigeria Summit 2025 closes, a new chapter in UK-Nigeria legal collaboration begins.

The legal profession stands at the crossroads of globalization, technology, and reform. Through platforms like BNLF, lawyers are not just responding to these changes—they are shaping them.

And as the Forum looks to its next 25 years, one thing is clear: the future of law is cross-border, collaborative, and deeply connected.

THE TRUE COST OF INEFFICIENCY & INCOMPETENCE IN THE PROFESSIONAL WORLD

Beverley Agbakoba-Onyejiana

From Cairo to Zanzibar, the modern African professional landscape is moving with the times however there remains an unfortunate perception and slant that has to be conquered. The fact that corruption remains rampant and the high tolerance for incompetence.

African professionals are no longer competing with themselves within their local environments but with global counterparts. Thanks to the digital revolution. As a result inefficiency and incompetence can no longer be tolerated; they can be career and business killers. Africa is a beautiful and powerful continent where talent, funding, and opportunity abound, but the stark reality is that without building on infrastructure, structure, skills, and execution, the wild growth and opportunities will be cut short.

In this edition, we will examine 9 major ways individuals and organisations pay the price for inefficiency and incompetence with real examples from the corporate and entrepreneurial scene across Nigeria and Africa.

1. Loss of Credibility and Reputation

One of the quickest casualties of incompetence is to one's professional reputation. There is a saying that it takes years to build up a reputation but only overnight to bring it down. Colleagues, clients, and stakeholders quickly lose trust when mistakes begin to pile up or when crucial deadlines are missed. Once credibility is lost, it can be incredibly hard and sometimes impossible to rebuild.

2. Missed Opportunities

In a competitive environment, delays and poor execution often mean opportunities are lost to more agile and competent competitors. Whether it's a promotion, a client contract, or a seat at the decision making table, inefficiency ensures you are always a step behind.

While traditional Nigerian banks hesitated to adopt digital strategies, fintechs like Flutterwave and Paystack capitalised on the gap becoming global case studies.

3. Financial Costs Implications

Inefficiency leads to a build up of wasted time, resources, and capital. Whether through budget overruns or duplicated effort, or poor supervisory oversight, the financial toll can be heavy. From time wasted on correcting errors to projects running over budget, the financial toll can be devastating. Organisations often spend more fixing problems than if they had invested in doing it right the first time.

Projects like Ajaokuta Steel in Nigeria and Kenya's stalled dam projects are white elephant symbols of how incompetence leads to billions lost with little to show for it.

4. Low Team Morale

When teams are forced to constantly correct errors or cover for under performers, motivation drops and resentment builds. Working with or under someone who is incompetent or inefficient is draining. Team members can become disengaged, frustrated, or resentful, especially if they have to pick up the slack. This leads to decreased productivity and higher turnover rates.

The truth is People don't quit jobs they quit inefficient leadership and poorly run organisations.

5. Client Dissatisfaction and Loss

Clients are loyal to quality as long as the pricing is competitive. Repeated lapses in delivery can eventually push them away to competitors.

Picture a situation where an organisation loses a multinational client after multiple missed deadlines and document errors which eventually frustrated the client and made the client walk away, citing "loss of confidence." A single misstep can close the door to repeat business.

6. Stunted Career Growth

Professionals who fail to demonstrate consistent competence and efficiency rarely get promoted. Worse, they may find themselves sidelined, demoted, or even dismissed. In a world that rewards results, under performers will find their growth

stunt ed. Even the most ambitious professionals are sidelined if they can't deliver reliably. Never give any organisation ammunition against you. Make excellence a habit.

7. Increased Micromanagement

Leaders tend to micromanage those they cannot trust to get things done. If you consistently underdeliver, you are likely to face closer scrutiny, tighter controls, and less autonomy resulting in a stressful and uninspiring work environment. Inefficiency breeds an environment of mistrust.

8. Poorly coordinated regulatory roll outs

In regulated industries, sloppiness and poor communication and lack of engagement can lead to lawsuits, fines, or even shutdowns. Unfortunately in Nigeria, not once but many times have the regulators made sudden changes that have taken not just industries but the economy as a whole by surprise with consequences. The role of the regulatory bodies is to create an enabling environment, assisting the ease of doing business as well as sanitising the market.

The surprise 2023 Naira redesign roll out in Nigeria was plagued by poor planning and lack of coordination, leading to cash scarcity and legal battles across states.

9. Innovation Paralysis

Incompetent leaders resist change. Without the ability to adopt new tools or ideas, they stifle innovation. NITEL, once Nigeria's telecom pioneer, failed to modernise. As other telcos such as MTN invested in agile systems, NITEL was left behind, eventually collapsing altogether. Refusal to evolve is the fastest path to extinction.

Great ideas remain ideas without the will and discipline to implement. We need to stop rewarding great ideas and instead reward great systems.

What professionals and businesses must focus on:

Invest in continuous learning

Build systems that scale

Surround yourself with competence whether that is in the form of people, processes or culture.

Execute with excellence, every time



A versatile legal professional whose dynamism and commitment to excellence ensures that clients' expectations are not just met but exceeded, Mrs. Chinenye Oragwu, FCTI, FIMC, FTPL, Notary Public, is the Chairperson of the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee of the Section of Business Law (SBL) of the Nigerian Bar Association.

An alumna of the University of Nigeria, she was admitted to the Nigerian Bar in 2007, and began her legal practice at Aelx Legal Practitioners & Arbitrators before joining Consolex Legal Practitioners (now CLP Legal) in 2010, where she rose to the position of Principal Associate. Oragwu's areas of expertise are technology law, project and corporate finance, corporate restructuring and tax.

A strategic negotiator, she was instrumental in structuring the transaction for the construction of a leading 5-star international hotel brand in Nigeria. She has also been involved in advising on, negotiating and structuring several finance transactions.

Oragwu presents regularly at the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies' (NIALS) annual course in Drafting Commercial and Banking Documentation. She is also a resource person at the Commercial Development Law Series (CDLS). She has attended a number of seminars and trainings, both locally and internationally.

A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Taxation of Nigeria, she is a member of the Board of Trustees of the Professional Women's Network for Empowerment and Leadership, and presented a paper on 'Developing Transformative Leadership for and with Young Women' at the Association of Women in Development (AWID) 10th International Conference held in Bangkok, Thailand.

Recently, Oragwu spoke with the editors of NEWSWIRE Law Events Magazine on her journey as a legal practitioner, and in particular her eventful tenure as Chairperson of the NBA-SBL Travel & Tourism Committee.

Excerpts:

NEWSWIRE: Please give us a brief information about your background and educational career.

ORAGWU: My name is Chinenye Oragwu. I am the first of six children, born in Lagos and raised in Abuja, following my family's relocation in 1986. Marriage later brought me back to Lagos, where I currently reside.

I began my education at Regina Pacis Girls Secondary School, Abuja, and proceeded to complete my A Levels at the College of Science, Art and Technology, Nasarawa (now Nasarawa State University). I earned my LL.B from the University of Nigeria in 2006, graduating as the Best Graduating Female Student, and was called to the Nigerian Bar in 2007. Driven by a passion for continuous learning, I obtained an LL.M from the University of East London, UK, and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Suffolk, also in the UK. I have also completed several executive education programmes, including an Executive Course in Entrepreneurial Management at the Enterprise Development Centre of the Pan-Atlantic University, and an Executive Programme in Digital Transformation at the Massachusetts Institute

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Q: What motivated you to study law — was it ambition or pressure?

A: I would say I was divinely led to study law. It's quite an interesting journey, and one I reflect on often with gratitude. Due to my strong academic performance in secondary school, I was naturally shepherd into the sciences — with a clear path laid out toward studying medicine. I remember vividly how my father bought me the famous Nelkon physics textbook right after I wrote my Junior WAEC. Everything pointed toward a future in medicine. However, there was a quiet but persistent pull in a different direction. As a science student, I chose literature over geography as an elective — a rare choice at the time. I ended up being the only student in my class taught literature by the literature teacher. It was unconventional, but I loved every bit of it. My passion for literature was so strong that I eventually emerged as the best literature student in my set.

Despite this, I continued to pursue medicine and wrote JAMB twice, both attempts unsuccessful. Deep down, I was never fully at peace with the idea of studying medicine. I began to pray sincerely for clarity and direction. During one of those moments of prayer, I felt the Holy Spirit clearly reveal to me that law was my path.

That moment was transformative. Everything began to make sense — my love for literature, my natural ability to articulate thoughts, my enjoyment of reading, and even my early desire to help others. It was as though all the pieces came together.

So, to answer the question: my decision to study law was not driven by pressure or ambition, but by a divine revelation that aligned perfectly with my interests, personality, and God-given abilities. It was the right path — and I have never looked back.

Q: What have been your biggest challenges and opportunities as a lawyer till date?

A: Like many professionals, I have clear personal and career goals, and one of my biggest challenges has been staying consistently on track with those goals while balancing multiple responsibilities. As a wife, mother, daughter, sister, and leader in various spheres, I am often pulled in many directions. Managing these overlapping roles while remaining focused on my legal career has been an ongoing challenge. However, I have learned to be intentional about setting boundaries, prioritizing wisely, and declining commitments that do not align with my long-term objectives. I also make time to recharge and reflect, which allows me to re-strategize and stay focused. While it hasn't always been easy, this discipline has helped me make significant progress toward my goals — though I recognize that there is still much more to achieve.

In terms of opportunities, I would say the evolving legal landscape has created some of the most exciting prospects for growth. The emergence of new and dynamic practice

areas, particularly technology law, has opened doors for me, and I have been fortunate to develop a specialty in that space. Additionally, my professional network has been a tremendous asset — offering access to diverse perspectives, new briefs, collaborative opportunities, and a strong support system that has enriched both my practice and personal development.

Q: What would you say were the highlights of your tenure as the Chairperson of the NBA-SBL Travel & Tourism Committee?

A: The key highlights of my tenure as Chairperson of the NBA-SBL Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee revolve around the strategic and well-received events we organized to spotlight the role of law in tourism development. First was the maiden Tourism Retreat and Roundtable held in Abeokuta from 25th to 27th October 2024. This inaugural event brought together legal professionals, government representatives, and tourism stakeholders for robust discussions on the theme 'Revitalizing Nigeria's Travel, Tourism and Hospitality industry: Innovation and Strategies for Sustainable Growth.'

Another key highlight was the second edition of the Tourism Retreat, held in Ibadan from 9th to 11th May 2025. The event focused on the theme – Repositioning Nigeria's Tourism and Hospitality: From Seasonal Hype to Sustainable Prosperity. Another standout moment was our tour of Badagry from 26th to 27th July 2025, which underscored the importance of preserving historic sites. We also organized a guided tour of the JK Randle Museum of Yoruba Culture and History in February, 2025, highlighting the intersection of culture, heritage, and legal advocacy.

In addition to these physical engagements, the Committee hosted several webinars, providing a platform for ongoing education and dialogue on legal issues affecting the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors. These initiatives were not only well attended but also impactful.

Q: What would you say were the chief accomplishments of your Committee, and what support would you like to see from stakeholders - in the public sector, the private sector, and even from the state governments?

A: As Chairperson of the Travel, Tourism, and Hospitality Committee of the NBA-SBL, I am proud of the work we have done in repositioning the conversation around travel, tourism and hospitality within the legal and policy space. Our Committee has taken intentional steps to bridge the gap between the legal profession and the travel, tourism and hospitality industry, to advocate for a stronger legal framework to support its growth, whilst also showcasing our local tourist sites.

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operators, cultural custodians, and private sector players to discuss innovation and strategies for engendering sustainable growth in Nigeria's Travel, Tourism and Hospitality industry. It set the tone for our future engagements and was widely applauded for its depth and inclusiveness.

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This cultural immersion tour was both educational and symbolic. It showcased the richness of Nigeria's heritage while drawing attention to the need preserve our historical sites, and the opportunities for heritage tourism development.

Members and Stakeholders Engagement: The Committee undertook a number of activities that foster closer relationship between members of the Committee and also built their capacities. In addition, the Committee engaged various stakeholders and the government of various states and collaborated with them in pursuing the Committee's objectives.

All of these activities were well attended and positively received, signaling a clear interest in continued engagement between the legal community and tourism stakeholders.

In terms of support going forward, we see strong opportunities for collaboration across the board:

From the Public Sector: We would like to see greater institutional support for legal reforms that can enhance tourism infrastructure, streamline business registration processes for tourism operators, and enforce standards. Ministries of tourism, justice, culture, and commerce can play a pivotal role in aligning policies that impact the sector.

From the Private Sector: We encourage active participation from hotel chains, tour companies, investors, and travel platforms. Their partnership is critical not just in funding and participating in our initiatives, but in co-creating legal solutions that reflect the operational realities of the industry.

From State Governments: We believe that states have a unique opportunity to drive tourism as a tool for economic diversification and cultural preservation. We seek more collaboration on state-level legal reform, designation and protection of heritage sites, and joint programming that blends legal education with tourism promotion.

Q: As you prepare to exit your current role, what advice do you have for the incoming leadership of the Committee, and for young lawyers?

A: As I prepare to hand over the baton, my

foremost advice to the incoming leadership of the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee is to remain steadfast, consistent, and intentional in delivering on the Committee's objectives. The travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors hold immense potential for economic transformation and cultural preservation in Nigeria, and the Committee plays a vital role in shaping the legal and policy frameworks that support this growth.

I encourage the new leadership that, building on our past activities such as the Tourism Retreat which has come to stay, to design and implement impactful programmes that inform, educate, and inspire initiatives that disseminate knowledge, build capacity among legal professionals and industry players, and showcase Nigeria's rich tourism assets. Sustained engagement with Committee members, government bodies, and private stakeholders is crucial for creating the kind of visibility and momentum that drives real change. They should also keep engaging with past Chairpersons of the Committee for their support. I leveraged on this and I am grateful to the past Chairpersons for their support to my tenure. Lastly, the incoming leadership should bear in mind that consistency, collaboration, and creativity will be key.

To young lawyers, my message is this: be diligent, be passionate, and be intentional about your growth. Focus not just on technical competence but also on self-development and soft skills — communication, critical thinking, emotional intelligence — these are just as essential for success. Set clear goals and work steadily towards them. Surround yourself with accountability partners, seek out mentors, and remain open to learning. The financial rewards will follow in due course, but the real wealth lies in becoming excellent at what you do. Excellence attracts opportunity, and with the right mindset and preparation, the world will truly be your oyster.

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NEWSWIRE: Thank you, Mrs. Oragwu.



2025 NBA-SBL TOURISM RETREAT: LEGAL COMMUNITY GATHERS IN IBADAN TO DISCUSS TRANSFORMATION OF NIGERIA'S TOURISM PROFILE FROM SEASONAL HYPE TO SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY



L-R: Dr. Wasiu Adewale Olatunbosun, Hon. Commissioner, Oyo State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Chief Emeka Ozoani, SAN, Nnenna Fakoya-Smith, Ayodele Akintunde, SAN, Chinenye Oragwu and Pamilerin Akabunwa

The three days from Friday, May 9, 2025 to Sunday, May 11, 2025 saw the 2025 Tourism Retreat and Roundtable, which was organized by the Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee (TT&H) of the Nigeria Bar Association's Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL) held in Ibadan, Oyo State.

Led by the Committee's chairperson, Chinenye Oragwu, the event was convened under the theme 'Repositioning Nigeria's Tourism and Hospitality Industries: From Seasonal Hype to Sustainable Prosperity.'



▪ Visit to the Olubadan's Palace

Now in its second year after its successful debut in 2024, the 2025 Retreat and Roundtable commenced with a scenic train ride from Lagos to the Oyo State capital on the morning of Friday, May 9. Upon arriving the train station in the ancient city, participants were warmly welcomed by a vibrant cultural troupe, and then later paid a courtesy visit on the Olubadan of Ibadan, His Royal Majesty Oba Akinloye Olalere Owolabi Olakulehin at his palace. The monarch was ably represented by several distinguished figures including High Chief Senator Safadin Ali Abiodun, and the Aremo of Ibadanland, Mr. Mayowa Owolabi, amongst others, who graciously received the participants and commended the NBA-SBL TT&H Committee for their innovative initiative. The Committee also presented gifts to the royal chiefs.

Thereafter, participants were taken on a guided tour of the historic palace of the Olubadan, during which they received an insightful explanation on the traditional system of succession to the throne of the Olubadan. The would-be successor, they were told, ascends alternately through two lines: the Balogun line and the Olubadan line, with succession open to the male head of a family, known as the Mogaji.

During the tour, delegates visited the throne room, the inner cabinet meeting chamber, the grand banquet hall, and viewed the portraits of past Olubadans of Ibadan.

The visit concluded with a delightful lunch hosted at the banquet hall of the palace, which was generously provided by the Olubadan. It rounded off a memorable and enlightening experience.

Later in the evening, His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Oyo State, Engr. Seyi Makinde, was represented by his Deputy-Governor, Barrister Adebayo Lawal as he hosted the visitors to a dinner at the Governor's Lodge. Also in attendance at the dinner were distinguished members of the Oyo State Executive Council, among them the Honourable Commissioner for Culture and Tourism, Dr. Wasiu Olatunbosun, the Chief Judge of Oyo State, Hon. Justice Iyabo Subulade Yerima (who was represented by Hon. Justice AL Akintola), and the Head of the state's Civil Service, Mrs. Olubunmi Oni.

At the occasion, the Chairperson of the Travel, Tourism & Hospitality Committee of the NBA-SBL, Mrs. Chinenye Oragwu, after speaking about the objectives of the Committee, went on to inform the



Chinenye Oragwu, Chairperson, NBA-SBL TT&H Committee, Barr. Adebayo Lawal, Deputy Governor of Oyo State and other distinguished members of the state executive council at the state dinner held to welcome attendees of the Tourism retreat.

hosts about the Committee's inaugural Tourism Retreat and Roundtable in Abeokuta in October 2024, stating that the Ibadan outing was meant to build on the success of the 2024 event. She stated that certain action points raised in a Memorandum further to the 2024 Retreat were already being acted upon.

In his remarks of welcome, the Oyo State Deputy Governor, Barrister Adebayo Lawal highlighted the rich array of tourist attractions across the Pacesetter State (as Oyo State is also called), emphasizing that these attractions extend well beyond the capital city of Ibadan. He also spoke glowingly of Gov. Makinde's ongoing commitment to position Oyo State as Nigeria's premier tourist destination - as he outlined various strategic initiatives the Governor has initiated in this regard.

As the guests joined their hosts in sampling the delicacies on offer against the backdrop of soulful music, there were more goodwill messages, after which the vote of thanks was given on behalf of the TT&H Committee by Dr. Damilola Osinuga.

Saturday, May 10, 2025 featured a Roundtable which drew a distinguished array of stakeholders from both the public and private sectors. The event commenced with opening remarks by its Chairman, Richard Ayodele Akintunde, SAN. The Chairperson of the NBA's Section on Business Law, Mrs Ozofu 'Latunde Ogiemudia (who was ably represented by Mrs Tomilayo Oduyebo) sent a goodwill message.

Speaking about the purpose of the Roundtable in her welcome address, the Chairperson of the Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee, Mrs. Chinenye Oragwu, stated that the simple but ambitious goal of the initiative was to facilitate discussions centered around moving Nigeria beyond seasonal surges in travel interest to developing a robust framework for year-round, inclusive and sustainable growth by aligning legal frameworks, policy alignment, private sector innovation and community-based initiatives.

Also speaking, The Chairperson of the 2025 Tourism Retreat & Roundtable Planning Committee, Mrs. Pamilerin Akabunwa emphasized the importance of transitioning Nigeria's tourism and hospitality sectors from seasonal peaks to sustainable, year-round economic contributors. She highlighted the Retreat's objectives to include policy development for sustainable tourism, attracting strategic infrastructure investments, and promoting innovation across the value chain. Akabunwa expressed gratitude to stakeholders and sponsors for their support and encouraged participants to engage

meaningfully and leverage the Retreat as a platform to shape a prosperous future for Nigeria's tourism industry.

The Keynote Address at the occasion was delivered by the Honourable Commissioner for Culture and Tourism in Oyo State, Dr. Wasiu Olatunbosun, who stated that the tourism sector was trapped in what he called 'a seasonal mindset', which prioritized short-term event-based hype over the development of sustainable, year-round tourism ecosystems that would deliver lasting economic value. The Commissioner highlighted, in particular, the efforts of the Oyo State Government towards improving the tourism sector such as through better road networks, increased security, and the renovation of tourist attractions. This development, the Commissioner said, has led the state to witness a monumental increase in the number of tourists, and a surge in tourism and hospitality. He applauded the organizers of the event and commended the legal community for its role in supporting tourism in Nigeria.

The Commissioner's keynote was followed by an engaging Panel Session. Moderated by Mrs. Enitan Rewane, immediate past chairperson of the TT&H Committee, the panel featured industry experts such as Ms Nnenna Fakoya-Smith (Founder of *Nene-Uwa Hub Ltd*); Mr. Olatunde Busari, SAN (Chairman of *VFD Group Plc.*); Obi Asika (Director-General of the National Council for Arts and Culture) and Ajibola Shina Ogunkeyede (Founder of *Uffitty*).

In her intervention, Ms. Nnenna Fakoya-Smith underscored the critical role of social media and technology in promoting tourism and tourist



L-R: Nathalia Odidika-Esezobor, Gloria Ireka, Chinenye Oragwu and Ogochukwu Nwachukwu



Royal Entertainment Boat Cruise



Bower's Tower

attractions across the country. She emphasized that digital platforms should be effectively leveraged to enhance the visibility, engagement, and global reach of Nigeria's unique destinations.

In his remarks Mr. Olatunde Busari, SAN, provided a legal perspective on the legislative framework governing tourism. He criticised the shortcomings of the previous Tourism Act and commended the new Nigerian Tourism Development Act of 2022 for its progressive provisions and potential to modernize the sector.

Speaking on the cultural dimensions of tourism, Mr. Obi Asika highlighted the vital role of arts and crafts in enriching the tourism experience. He also stressed the importance of narrating and commercializing the stories behind Nigeria's historical and cultural sites. These narratives, he said, hold deep cultural significance and global appeal. He further called on the private sector to recognize the vast opportunities in the tourism space, particularly in creating and developing more attractions and presenting them to an international audience.

On his part, Mr. Ajibola Shina Ogunkeyede focused on the infrastructural challenges facing the tourism industry, and advocated for improved infrastructure to enable year-round *tourism activities*. He noted that the absence of adequate facilities remains a significant constraint. He also drew the attention of the assembled guests to the need for stronger collaboration between state and federal governments, citing it as a key factor that distinguishes Nigeria from other countries with relatively better tourism sectors.

The Roundtable Session came to a close with the presentation of awards

of appreciation to the panelists and other key contributors who helped make the event a success.

The evening of Saturday, May 10, featured a themed party, in which the local fabrics, *aso-oke* and *faji repete* took centre-stage. Participants were beautifully attired in different shades of *aso-oke* and thoroughly entertained. Activities at the party included a raffle draw, games, fashion parade, presentation of awards to the team leads of the Planning Committee, and lots of dancing.

During their 3 days in Ibadan, the participants visited a number of tourist sites in the course of the Retreat, underscoring one of the aims of the Retreat, which was to spotlight local tourist sites. After leaving the Olubadan's palace, the delegates visited the Heritage Museum. Established in 2002 and located in the Aleshinloye area of Ibadan, the Museum is a significant cultural institution dedicated to showcasing Nigeria's diverse ethnic heritage. Conceptualized in 1973 and brought to fruition under the supervision of the National Commission for Museums and Monuments, the Museum displays a wide range of artefacts dating back to the 1900s. Key exhibits include the Yoruba Shigidi figurine, Mumuye head mask, Ekoi head dress, Benin rooster bronze, and Edo metal bells. In addition, the Museum features galleries on masquerade traditions and pottery.

On Saturday, 10th May 2025, delegates were hosted aboard the Royal Entertainment Cruise for a relaxing boat ride. They were joined by the Honourable Commissioner for Culture and Tourism. Highlights of the facility included an open-air lounge with scenic views of the lake, a pool table, a fully stocked bar, and a

paintball arena— all of which the delegates thoroughly enjoyed.

On Sunday, 11th May, 2025, visited Bowers Towers at Oke Are Hill. Bower's Tower, also known locally as 'Layipo,' is a historic monument and the highest point in Ibadan, Nigeria. It was constructed in 1936. The tower was built to honour Captain Robert Lister Bower, the first British Resident and Travelling Commissioner in Yorubaland from 1893 to 1897.

Delegates next made their way to Prince Tunde Odunlade's Art Gallery, a prominent cultural centre located in the New Bodija suburbs of the city. They were accompanied on this exercise by the Commissioner for Culture & Tourism. Established in December 2020 by Prince Tunde Odunlade (a distinguished Nigerian artist, musician, and actor) the museum serves as a hub for celebrating and promoting Yoruba and Nigerian art and culture.

After the tour, delegates made their way to the train station to commence the return journey to Lagos, as they bid a fond farewell to the beautiful and ancient city of Ibadan



L-R: Endurance Uhumaubvi, Chief Emeka Ozoani, SAN and Johnson Amaechi

A distinguished lawyer and entrepreneur, Nnanwike A. Obah Esq is the CEO of NACO Group of Companies. Born on March 10, 1991, to the late Mr. John Obah and Mrs. Ngozi Gloria Obah, he had his primary education at the Umurusi Community Primary School, and his secondary education at the Premier Secondary School in Ukehe, Igbo-Etiti LGA ENugu State from where he proceeded to the University of Abuja. He graduated in 2013 with a Bachelor's degree in Law. He was called to the Nigerian Bar in 2015 after graduating from the Nigerian Law School.

Mr Obah began his working life as a Prosecutor at the Nassarawa State Ministry of Justice Lafia, Nasarawa State during his national youth service. He had a stint at the law firm of Okwuchukwu Ugolo SAN & Co between 2016 and 2017. He then became Partner at Supreme God Chambers, an Abuja-based law firm between 2017 and 2018, after which he set up his own law firm, *Nnanwike Obah & Co., where he served as Principal Partner.

But perhaps he is better known, especially in the legal community, for his entrepreneurial ventures - and in particular NACO Logistics Limited, a hotel-booking services. Obah is also the MD/CEO of NACO Travels & Tours Ltd, and MD/CEO of NACO Real Estate Consultants Ltd.

A dedicated stakeholder at the Bar, Obah is a member of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the International Bar Association (IBA). He is also a Fellow at the Institute of Corporate Administration of Nigeria, as well as a Fellow at the Institute of Corporate and Public Administration of Nigeria.

A stickler for high standards, Barrister Obah is known for his innovative ideas and pursuit of excellence in his endeavors.

He recently told the editors of NEWSWIRE Law Events Magazine, Gloria Ireka and Austin Inyang about his life- journey and business career, and how he has been able to successfully bestride the worlds of law and business.

Excerpts:

NEWSWIRE: Can you please introduce yourself?

OBAH: I am Nnanwike Anthony Clinton Obah. I am a lawyer/entrepreneur.

Q: What business are you in?

BESTRIDING THE WORLDS OF LAW & ENTREPRENEURSHIP



A: My businesses span across real estate and hospitality. I own multiple companies in those areas, which time may not permit me to list. But the most popular among them is NACO Logistics Limited, which gave birth to other companies I own today. So, yes, I'm the MD of the popular brand, NACO Logistics Limited - not by my power but by the power of the Almighty God who gave me the idea.

Q: We all know the challenges of starting a new business in Nigeria, especially with regards to raising capital and getting patronage. How were you able to scale through in your business to the extent that NACO Logistics is a household name among lawyers in Nigeria today?

A: Well, I agree with you that it's difficult to start a new business in Nigeria without capital. However, I didn't wait till I got all the capital required before I started my company. At the time I registered the company in July 2018, the only money I had with me was 40,000 (forty thousand naira) but guess what I used the money for? I used the money to register the company you know as NACO Logistics Limited. But before I registered the company, I really did not have clear objective of the company but I knew someday, idea would come. Now, let me tell you how NACO Logistics became

popular among lawyers. It started during the 2018 NBA Conference in Abuja. I was just a young lawyer working in a law firm then. My salary then was N30,000 per month. When the news of NBA Conference in Abuja came to my notice, I thought to myself that I knew some hotel owners. So I wanted to see how I could help some of my friends that were coming for the Conference to secure accommodation without having to come to Abuja for it. So since I already knew some hotels owners and General Managers, it was very easy for me. For instance, my very good senior friend is married to Obi Cubana's younger sister, so through his wife, I was able to get accommodation for some lawyers at Cubana Hotel and some other few hotels at a discounted rate for a few of my friends then. Then after the Conference, I felt I could actually make some money while still helping people out because after the Conference my friends were happy about the quality of the hotels I recommended and the discount they got through me. The hotel owners, in turn, were also happy for the patronage that came through me. It was at that point that I conceived the idea of bringing hotel owners and users together seamlessly.

The next thing was to strategise on how to actualise the vision. I started putting down the strategies in writing. I thought of owning an online platform that could make it easy for hotels and users to meet in one platform. And that was what gave birth to www.nacobooking.com which is an offspring of NACO Logistics Ltd. At the time I conceived the idea, I never knew about any existing hotel booking platform anywhere because I never had a reason to sleep in a hotel until I started the business.

Now, talking about how I scaled through financial challenges at the foundation stage of the company, as I said, when I conceived the idea, I had no substantial fund to execute the plans, I resorted to approaching some of my rich friends and asking them to invest in the company. Surprisingly, none of them believed in the potential of the company. At some point, I offered one of them 50% of the company shares for the paltry sum of N2,000,000 (two million naira) because I wanted us to co-own it. But he still declined my offer.

However, I never gave up. So it was at that point that I knew I was on my own and it dawned on me just how difficult it was to raise funds for business. It was also at that point that I detached myself from many distractions and focused on raising the capital and growing the company. I also quit litigation because my 30k salary then was not enough to foot my bills and



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I needed to build the company. I was fully convinced of my goals for the company. So I did every legitimate thing with my little savings from legal practice to raise the required funds for the business. Today I am proud of myself because I have been able to achieve the goals I set for the company.

Today I have upgraded NACO Logistics Ltd. to a Travel & Tour Company, which is a 30 million share capital to reflect the objectives of the company. My hotel booking site is also one of the best in Nigeria today with more innovative features to meet international standard. I am currently working on launching NACO Group of companies. Today I have over 2,000 hotels in Nigeria alone with the vision to expanding beyond Nigeria. From my records I have over 20,000 satisfied clients that have used my services over the years.

Today I have been able to expand the business beyond hotel bookings alone. We are into Travels and Tours, Real Estate and Car Rentals. I also have an Automobile Company; I import cars as well with the intention of integrating more allied businesses.

Q: So are you saying you have all the money required for your business?

A: No I won't say I have gotten all the money required for my business. One key factor in every business is growth. The more capital at your disposal, the faster the growth of the company. I am still looking forward to getting more funds for the expansion of my businesses but I'm certainly no longer offering N2,000,000 for 50% of my company shares at this stage! (laughter). The same friend of mine that turned down the company's 50% share capital recently offered me 100 million for 20% shares but I turned it down

because my company is worth more than that currently.

Q: So are you saying you're not open to any partnership or accepting investors at the moment?

A: For now, I am not searching for a partner or investor. But if a good offer comes, I may consider it. What I am considering, however, is giving people franchises in the coming years. So I am focusing on building strong team for the company at the moment.

Q: Are your hotel booking services strictly for NBA Conferences?

A: No. I think this is the erroneous notion lawyers have about NACO. Our hotel booking and the other services we render are daily affairs. I want to use this medium to shed more light on this. Our services are not only available during NBA Conferences. The discounted rates we have in our partner hotels can be utilised by our clients (both lawyers and non lawyers) anytime, irrespective of the season. We also handle reservations & logistics for many other professional organisations, Religious groups and NGO's during their conferences and meetings.

Q: What would you say is the secret of the fastest growth your company has recorded?

A: In addition to God Almighty who gave me the idea, NACO Logistics is a company built on Trust, Integrity, Consistency and Self-belief. I strongly believed that I could transform my idea into something of value, and I am happy my vision came to fruition. Today, our partner hotels are happy with the level of patronage and visibility we give them. And those who booked through our company are also happy because of the value they get.

Q: So what are your future plans for the company?

A: My plan is to keep expanding the company until it becomes a global brand. I still have flair for legal practice. I am looking at handing over the management of the company to a capable hand one day and return to legal practice.

Q: What is your advice to young Lawyers who may want to expand to entrepreneurship?

A: From my story, you can see that to start a business, you mustn't have all the necessary funds before you take off. I started my multi-million naira company with just N40,000 in 2018. I didn't wait till all the needed funds were ready. So my advice is, Start Something. Do not wait till the right time. There is never a right time to start a business. The first stage is to conceive the idea. No matter how little the idea sounds, incubate it with consistency and integrity. Who could believe that booking hotels for people could be a lucrative business? But I made it look so attractive that some other lawyers are venturing into the business as well. NACO Logistics is the only company that runs a business that can promise a win-win for all the inparties involved. But it's also pertinent that they incorporate a company for whatever business they wish to venture into outside legal practice - especially when they want to merge the business with legal practice to avoid offending the Rules of Professional Conduct.

NEWSWIRE: Thank you, Mr. NACO for your time.

OBAH: You're welcome.



Nnanwike A. Obah with Mrs Oyinkansola Badejo-Okunsanya



L-R: Cordelia Eke, Nnanwike A. Obah (NACO) and Promise Iwezor

Infrastructure constitutes the physical building blocks of businesses and societies. Infrastructural maintenance is how we ensure quality of life and promote economic prosperity. Examples include mass transit transportation systems comprising road, rail, air and port networks and programs; telecommunications systems which include base stations, cell

incidents – namely, in Borno State on the 10th of September, 2024. The collapse of the Alau Dam led to the massive displacement of people and destruction of property, including buildings. This was not the making of the people that were directly affected; there were officials of government who simply ignored their planned schedule maintenance of the

MAINTENANCE CULTURE FROM A SAFETY PERSPECTIVE

By Femi Oguntunase

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sites and towers; electricity generation systems such as power stations, transmission lines or national grid lines; the educational systems made up of educational institutions with their respective buildings; sporting and recreational system made up of stadia, sport centers and other recreational facilities.

Infrastructure facilitates the movement of people, goods and services, and is a determining factor in the production of goods and services. Infrastructure powers businesses, facilitate tourism, connects workers to their jobs and citizens to opportunities in various sectors. It also forms the basis on which a country is perceived globally. Maintenance of these infrastructures is as important as raw material exploitation because of its economic value. Maintaining infrastructure can be seen as a goldmine. No wonder countries with limited resources, but with a better maintenance culture and systems are doing better than our country in terms of development.

In Nigeria, maintenance culture is extremely poor. What is worse, it has eaten deep into the fabric of governance to the extent that it has now become the norm in our governance system hence. Or how else can one explain a situation where our refineries, medical institutions, transportation, communication systems, the national grid system and others are in such a deplorable state, and the challenge of reviving these infrastructural facilities now seems so herculean. This state of affairs not because Nigerians don't the capacity but because it is no longer the prime focus or priority for those saddled with such responsibilities, let alone the average citizen. This is why, in spite of the huge investments in the power sector over the years, the national grid has collapsed about 105 times within the past 10 years. Statistically, this shows an average of 10 national grid collapses per year – simply because we continue to do same thing over and over again to achieve the same result.

This lack of a maintenance culture/systems led to another of our litany of unfortunate

dam. They are culpable, and they need to be sanctioned.

Dams are built to hold back water for use in irrigation or electricity generation. Around the world, thousands of dams are in need of repair, with Nigerian dams being in the top category due to longstanding neglect. Many have become too weak to protect local communities in the face of sustained heavy rains. Admittedly, we have seen instances of dam elsewhere in the world. The question is, what lesson do the nations affected learn from such incidents, and how do they apply these lessons? How can Nigerians use the lessons learned to improve our system? The warning signs are always there, just that we routinely ignore them – at least until thousands of lives are lost, people are displaced from their homes, and so forth.

We Nigerians are a reactive, not a proactive, people. But the truth is that when safety concerns are regularly ignored – as is the case in Nigeria – people always pay for it in the most tragic ways. The worst part of it is the poorest, most vulnerable people – not those in government – that suffer from the neglect of government and its relevant agencies.

Research shows that the Alau Dam was constructed in 1986 for irrigational, flood control, and water supply purposes. Eight years after, precisely in the month of September 1994, the dam collapsed, displacing more than 4,000 people and destroying millions of naira worth of property. 30 years after, on the 10th of September 2024 it collapsed again. The basic reason for this, apart from the age of the dam, was the sheer lack of maintenance and oversight on the part of the management and the government. For nearly two years, according to a HumAngle satellite analysis of the dam, only one of the facilities has been functioning. The facility located on the western side of the lake has been non-functional since October 2022, with the surface destroyed beyond recognition. In that same month, satellite images also showed that, water uncontrollably overflowed the damaged structure. In



November 2020, satellite imagery captured the extent of the damage to the dam – with more than 50% of the structure wrecked beyond recognition.

In short, the dam was an accident waiting to happen; the warning signs were there in plain sight, but the government officials and the management chose not to heed them. No routine schedule maintenance was carried out, and the necessary resources budgeted were not either provided or deployed. Maintenance of that dam in good condition would have saved the lives of Maiduguri residents.

Infrastructure wears out over time and neglected infrastructure will result in degradation, with negative effects on the environment affecting the economy of the area, and leading to greater costs in terms of reconstruction, the resettlement of displaced persons, etc. Maintaining infrastructure goes a long way in reducing youth unemployment. Proper investment and capital budgeting on infrastructural development, as well as its regular maintenance, play a crucial role in overall development. Regular maintenance of infrastructure prevents deterioration, enhances connectivity and opens up new market opportunities in the service sector. It attracts investments and promotes trade, leading to job-creation and economic growth. It enables the establishment and growth of industries, and attracts domestic and foreign investments. Robust infrastructure, such as power generation and distribution networks, allows businesses to operate efficiently, reduces operational costs, and boosts productivity. As a result, new businesses emerge, existing businesses expand, and job opportunities multiply.

It is time for Nigeria to pay more than lip service to infrastructural development and maintenance. The growth of our economy, and even our very lives, depend on it.

NBA-SBL TRAVEL, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE TAKES A STEP BACK IN TIME — EXPLORING HISTORICAL GEMS: BADAGRY 2025



Point of no return

The Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee of the Nigerian Bar Association Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL) recently organized a captivating two-day tour themed - "Exploring Historical Gems: Badagry 2025". The event, which held on the 26th and 27th of July 2025, was a remarkable journey through one of Nigeria's most significant historical towns — Badagry.

Participants converged at the take-off point, the train station at Ebute-Metta, with palpable excitement as they set out to explore the rich and

often sobering history that Badagry has to offer. The tour, supported by the Lagos State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, was meticulously planned to immerse attendees in the deep narratives of Nigeria's past.

Heritage Museum: A Glimpse into the Horrors of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

The first stop was the Heritage Museum, housed in an ancient colonial building that has been thoughtfully preserved and

transformed into a repository of history. The museum chronicles the grim tales of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, detailing the harrowing experiences of enslaved Africans and their eventual journey to emancipation. The attendees were warmly received by knowledgeable tour guides and curators who gave a vivid narration of the exhibits, each artifact a haunting reminder of the human cost of slavery. The walk through the museum was both educational and deeply emotional, offering participants a solemn moment of reflection.

First Storey Building in Nigeria: The Birthplace of Western Education and Christian Evangelism

Next, the group visited the iconic First Storey Building in Nigeria, constructed in 1845 by Rev. C.A. Gollmer, a missionary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). The building is not only a landmark of architectural history but also a cradle of monumental achievements. It housed the first



Departure from Ebute Meta Train Station



Caribbean Bonfire Party



Gloria Ireka, Uche Ogumede Akingbade and Leander Umeh

African Bishop, Samuel Ajayi Crowther, who translated the Holy Bible from English to Yoruba within its walls, and also served as the residence of Nigeria's first western education teacher, Mr. Cladius Phillips. The guides narrated these accounts with passion, bringing to life the pivotal roles these figures played in Nigeria's educational and religious history.

Vlekete Slave Market: Echoes of a Tragic Past

At the Vlekete Slave Market, one of West Africa's largest slave markets, attendees were taken through the grim realities of human commodification. The site, though silent now, echoed with stories of countless men, women, and children who were once paraded and sold into slavery. The guides and curators spared no detail, painting a vivid and heart-wrenching picture of the atrocities that occurred there, while also emphasizing the importance of

remembering these histories to prevent their recurrence.

Lunch at Suntan Beach: A Moment of Reprieve and Refreshment

After a morning steeped in historical narratives, participants were treated to a delicious lunch at the picturesque Suntan Beach. Badagry's famed coconuts were a highlight, with attendees relishing fresh and nutritious coconut water — a refreshing pause that perfectly complemented the serene beachside ambiance.

Whispering Palms Resort and Caribbean-Themed Bonfire Night

As evening approached, the group checked into the tranquil Whispering Palms Resort, where the day's experiences gave way to an evening of vibrant relaxation. The Caribbean-themed Bonfire Party was a delightful spectacle — attendees embraced the theme with colourful outfits, while the night came alive with rhythmic music, lively games, and an undeniable sense of camaraderie. It was a

perfect blend of history, culture, and leisure.

Point of No Return: Walking the Final Path of the Enslaved

Day two commenced with a visit to Gberefu Island, where attendees embarked on a poignant journey to the "Point of No Return." A short seven-minute boat ride transported them to the island, from where they walked the same path once trodden by thousands of slaves towards the Atlantic Ocean, where ships waited to take them to unknown lands. The weight of history was palpable as participants silently reflected on the resilience of those who made that tragic passage. Before concluding the tour, attendees explored local craft stalls, purchasing beautiful souvenirs crafted from coconut shells, cowries, and other locally sourced materials — tangible reminders of a journey that touched their hearts and minds.

A Journey Worth Remembering

As the tour wound to a close, the group made their way back to the Ebute-Metta train station, bidding a heartfelt farewell to the historic town of Badagry. The tour not only offered an educational deep-dive into Nigeria's past but also fostered a greater appreciation for the preservation of our heritage sites. It was a well-curated experience of reflection, learning, and cultural celebration — a resounding success for the NBA-SBL Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee ably led by Mrs. Chineye Oragwu.



Chinenye Oragwu, Chairperson Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Committee (extreme left) with other members

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"I think you'll go far at this law firm, Oliver, now that you've had your conscience removed."



"I would climb the highest mountain and swim the deepest ocean to win your love, but my lawyer says I should get the terms in writing first."



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"We structured the deal so that you'll need a lawyer to explain it."



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