

**3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL LECTURE AND AWARD OF POST-GRADUATE  
SCHOLARSHIPS OF THE STEPHEN OLUWOLE AWOKOYA  
FOUNDATION FOR SCIENCE EDUCATION 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH, 1998**

**CHAIRMAN'S OPENING ADDRESS - CHIEF (MRS) AWOKOYA.**

Our special guest of honour, Dr. Babashola Chinsman, our distinguished guest lecturer, Prof. Chimere Ikoku, trustees of the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya foundation for science education, distinguished Invitees.

I feel highly honoured and flattered to have been invited by the trustees of the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya foundation for science education to take the chair at this third annual lecture and to give an opening-address.

There is not a soul in this country, given an opportunity as I have today, who will not jump to his feet and feel elated notwithstanding the hotness of the seat that has been offered to him. For at each annual lecture organised as a befitting memorial to Professor Awokoya, the gap created by his departure to the great beyond in the field of science teaching and technological development in this country cannot but evoke in us the profound and irreplaceable loss we have suffered by his demise.

In accepting the trustees' invitation to be chairman at today's lecture, I asked myself what I have done to deserve such an honour for I am neither a scientist nor a pedagogue. I have achieved no international reputation or recognition, the type of which was associated with the name of the late professor Awokoya.

Admittedly we both attended the higher college Yaba but he had left the college three years before I went in. he graduated the same year, 1946, from the University of London as I did but in disciplines as wide apart from each other as the north pole is from the south pole. I am happy to note, however, that her majesty the queen conferred on him the honorary commander of the most excellent order of the British Empire (cbe) for his service to education as far back as in 1956, forty-one years before I was so similarly honoured.

Professor Awokoya, his charming wife, my wife and I met when the professor was in Paris and I would always recall the unforgettable lunch to which he treated us in one of those fashionable restaurants for which Paris is noted.

Notwithstanding the fact that Professor Awokoya was not my contemporary at school or at college, I have always had the highest regard for his academic brilliance and his quick wit. We shared a common friend in an equally brilliant medical doctor, by name, Dr. Folorunso Salawu. I remember the reputation, which the professor had earned for himself as told to me by Dr Salawu. Professor Awokoya, while at St. Andrew's College, Oyo, did no science but throughout his student days at the Yaba higher college in the science, not the art class, he led his class in science and his classmates were those who entered Yaba from King's College, Ibadan Government College and Umuahia Government College where science was intensively taught to students by expatriate science graduates from Cambridge and Oxford universities.

I am so glad that the family and trustees of Professor Awokoya are keeping up the momentum and are discovering from year to year subjects of a scientific nature that are of interest to all of us and which will necessarily stimulate the curiosity of scholars and research workers.

Science and technology, particularly information technology on which computers, telecommunications system, fax, internet and e-mail of today depend, have revolutionised our way of living. The regrets are, however, that those of us in developing countries do not appear to be adequately exposed to this field of knowledge. It is for this reason that I find the title of this year's annual lecture, "Science and African survival in the twenty-first century", most appropriate. Professor Chimere Ikoku could not have chosen a more topical subject on which to address us. Without attempting in any way to anticipate what he may wish to tell us and I must admit that I am not competent to do this - I should expect him to tell us what we in the developing countries, particularly in Africa, can do to get rid of our apathy towards the study of science and the application of its findings in our daily existence. We are virtually on the eve of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and we can therefore

look back on what our achievements in Africa have been in the field of science during the present century. I have no hesitation whatsoever in admitting that not much credit can be given to our achievements. If this is the verdict of history on our endeavours, should the 21<sup>st</sup> century see us continue as scientifically immature and undeveloped? Should we not aim at a breakthrough in some significant technological inventions and in agricultural science? Should our prolific writers not embark on the production of authoritative books on science and technology? And should we not aspire to produce Nobel Prize winners in chemistry, physics and medicine?

We are all here this afternoon to learn under the feet of Gamaliel, our distinguished guest lecturer who, I am sure, will do justice to the topic he has himself chosen and in which field of discipline Professor Awokoya will forever be remembered. As the 21<sup>st</sup> century dawns on us we shall hear from the horse's mouth that without an aggressive pursuit of science, we in Africa will continue to grope in the dark and be left far, far behind in the race for survival. I will plead with you all to listen most attentively to Professor Ikoku and be ready with your comments and questions.

I observe that the programme of events includes the award of post-graduate scholarships. Similar awards were made last year and two years ago. Scholarships have to be funded and although I have not been asked to lead a fund-raising campaign, I cannot help but appeal to those of us who are public-spirited to donate generously in support of the foundation's aims and objectives, particularly its scholarship programme. To the recipients, past and present, of the scholarship awards I will remind you of the debt of gratitude you owe to the trustees of the foundation. A debt which, I hope, you will repay by maintaining the highest possible academic standard in your studies, research work and upholding strictly the aims and objectives of the foundation.

Professor Chimere Ikoku by condescending to come and address us from your ivory tower you have done us proud and we shall remain eternally grateful to you. Thank you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, for your attention.

**Akintola Williams**

**NIIA, Victoria Island, Lagos**

**17<sup>th</sup> March, 1998**