

# **DEDICATION&GUTS**

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Permit me to start by heartily congratulating the family of late Chief Stephen Oluwole Awokoya for their unrelenting and inspirational exertions to keep alive the memory of their illustrious father. However, I must immediately contradict myself on account of the monumentality of the task they have set themselves. In any other civilized part of the world, the exceptionalism of this noble family would long ago have been accorded national recognition. In such nations exceptionalism is readily acknowledged, nurtured, cherished and preserved for future generations. Hence, we must sympathise with our hosts and plead with them not to surrender to despair. Rather we must urge them to soldier on until the battle is won in a country that is under the reign of terror exemplified by shock and fear as evidence of not only the collapse of education but also the subversion of science by ignorance and poverty. Now, we are all IDP's ( Internally Displaced Persons) living in fear of kidnappers, armed robbers, con artists, looters and money doublers!!

With all due apologies, we must be frank with ourselves and admit that the IDP's are not limited to those in refugee camps. By the same token, those who have failed us and consequently frustrated the fulfilment of the high (but legitimate) expectations and lofty ideals of Chief Stephen Awokoya and many others of his generation have by default consigned us and condemned future generations to the rapidly elongating list of IDP's.

To put matters bluntly, Chief Stephen Oluwole Awokoya was AWESOME!!

His contribution to education in general and science in particular suggests that he drew inspiration from Plato the classical Greek philosopher [427BC to 347 BC] who wrote on marble:

"By education I mean that training in excellence from youth upward which makes a man (and woman!!) Passionately desire to be a perfect citizen, and teaches him (or her) to rule, and to obey, with justice. This is the only education which deserves the name."

Our reference point deserves repetition-the emancipation of the entire Western Region of Nigeria by the indefatigable Chief Awokoya, under the visionary leadership of Chief Obafemi Awolowo, by that singular feat of launching the free Primary Education in 1955 without borrowing a single dime(or naira) nor dollar. It was a stellar demonstration of leadership anchored on commitment, determination, selflessness and a grand vision which was rewarded with reciprocal trust and sacrifice. We cannot but marvel at their statesmanship as well as exemplary management of scarce resources.

They had a sense of purpose which compelled them to toil day and night; and labour relentlessly come rain or shine for the greater good of the society and nation which they felt they had been called to serve.

As confirmation that the taste of the pudding is in the eating, the products of that spectacular but diligent social engineering have dominated our nation's landscape not only in science- as doctors, engineers, dentists, professors, geologists, pharmacists, archaeologists and information technologists as well as chartered accountants, lawyers, architects, businessmen/businesswomen, surveyors, farmers, journalists, civil servants, musicians, artists e.t.c.

We are obliged to be lenient. Hence, with considerable reluctance we should perhaps extend the list to accommodate our nation's unique brand of politicians!!

What is beyond dispute is that going by the solemn testimony of the beneficiaries of free Primary Education, their parents were far too poor to afford to pay school fees. Their choice of livelihood and survival would otherwise have been limited to toiling on the farms as labourers, carpenters, bricklayers, masons, hawkers, dare devil touts or sorcerers' apprentices.

Many of them are here in this hall and they remain eternally grateful to Chief Awokoya for opening the door of knowledge as well as opportunities to them and beckoning on them to sally forth to fulfil their God-ordained destiny.

However, we must not rest on our laurels or encourage complacency. Rather, we must take account of the strictures of the late President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy:

"For time and the world do not stand still. Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or the present are certain to miss the future."

I believe that from the record of the Stephen Awokoya Foundation, it is self-evident that the Trustees under the sterling leadership of Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye, the second best president (after Chief Obafemi Awolowo) we never had, are determined to ensure that our nation does not miss its future in science or lose its way on the path of rigorous pursuit of excellence.

We should also draw inspiration from Victor Hugo the French intellectual, philosopher and writer (1802-1885) who delivered the following verdict:

“The more school doors you open, the more prison doors you close.”

This is a powerful message which we must ensure is not lost on our government- local; state and national. We need to remind them that under the leadership of Ban Ki-Moon who was the Secretary-General until December 2016 the United Nation set 26 per cent of the budget as the benchmark of educational funding for developing countries such as Nigeria.

However, Nigeria chose to ignore the benchmark and every other mark. These are the recent allocations of our nation’s budget to education:

2017	7.4%
2016	6.01%
2015	9.5%
2014	10.7%
2013	8.7%
2012	10.0%
2011	1.69%
2010	6.40%

Let me share with you what Ban Ki-Moon tabled as a priority item of the United Nations:

**Headline:**EDUCATION FIRST

“ Education has shaped my life and the history of my country. I grew up in a society ravaged by war and mired in poverty. Schools had been destroyed. My classes were held in the open under a tree. We had no desks, chairs or other

basic necessities. The Republic of Korea was on its knees, but education enabled the country to stand tall again. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other international partners provided books and school supplies to help pave the road to recovery. I will never forget the hope that these basic tools gave us.

Even in the worst circumstances, education helps to give children confidence to face the future. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, I want every child, without exception, to have the same sense of opportunity that I had. The power of education to transform lives is universal. When you ask parents what they want for their children — even in war zones and disaster areas — they seek the same thing first: education. Parents want their children in school.

Children have a fundamental right to free primary schooling of good quality. Governments have pledged to uphold this right. I am deeply concerned that education is slipping down the international priority list. Education First stems from my resolve to answer the call of parents everywhere for the schooling their children deserve — from the earliest years to adulthood. We must place education at the heart of our social, political and development agendas.

This is not a matter of choosing education over other issues of great importance. Our internationally agreed development goals are a complex tapestry, and education is an indispensable thread. Educated mothers are more likely to have healthy children who survive. Educated families are less vulnerable to extreme poverty and hunger. And educated nations are more likely to enjoy vibrant economies, political stability and respect for human rights.

Education is not simply a moral imperative; it is the smart choice. Every dollar invested generates \$10 to \$15 in returns. Yet worldwide, some 61 million children are still not in school. Our shared ideals are simple. We want all children to attend primary school and to progress to secondary school and relevant higher education. We want them to acquire the literacy, numeracy

and critical-thinking skills that will help them to succeed in life and live as engaged and productive global citizens.

This is a pivotal moment for collective action. The 2015 deadline for achieving the internationally agreed goals for education is approaching fast. The achievements of the past decade have shown what it takes to succeed: political will at the highest levels, sound policies, and resources to scale up proven methods. But to achieve a breakthrough, we will need an unprecedented mobilization of all traditional and new partners. Education First aims to rally a broad spectrum of actors to spur a global movement to achieve quality, relevant and transformative education for everyone.

We must not deny the promise of quality education to any child. The stakes are too high. When we put education first, we can end wasted potential and look forward to stronger and better societies for all.”

Also, on the 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2014 Graca Machel (the widow of Nelson Mandela) and Melinda Gates (the wife of the richest man in the world according to Forbes magazine) sat down, while attending the United Nation’s General Assembly in New York, exclusively with BBC’s Laura Trevelyan to talk about efforts to educate women and girls. They were firmly of the opinion that empowering women around the world starts with alleviating poverty, promoting education for girls and women’s health. They jointly declared their outrage at the kidnapping of girls seeking education in the North-East of Nigeria (the Chibok girls). According to them, those who pay the highest price for war are women and children who are mostly uneducated.

Even Nelson Mandela would be embarrassed that what he crafted into words had already been captured by the deeds and dogged determination of the combination of Chief Adekoya and Chief Awolowo. Nevertheless, we must give credit to Mandela for his clarity of vision.

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world FOR THE BETTER. ” (Emphasis on the last three words is mine).

At the risk of stating the obvious, perhaps we need to remind ourselves that the superlative achievements of the Awolowo/Awokoya (The Two Awo’s!!)

nuclearonslaught on ignorance, illiteracy and deprivation did not go unnoticed by the rest of the country. In due course both Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe and Sir Ahmadu Bello, the respective Premiers of the Eastern Region and Northern Region strove to match (or even surpass) the wonderful results in the Western Region that were too glaring to be ignored.

Indeed, a few weeks ago His Royal Highness, Alhaji Muhammadu Sanusi II- the Emir of Kano declared that he would no longer give his blessing to the building of private mosques in Kano. His preference is for education. Hence, he enjoined his subjects to convert the mosques into primary schools. This is not totally unexpected of a moslem prince who had the benefit of attending a catholic primary school in Kano followed by King's College, Lagos where nobody cared about anybody's religion, tribe or race. Nevertheless, he must have stirred the hornet's nest sufficiently to provoke the following front page report in "Saturday Sun" newspaper of March 11, 2017.

**“Headline:** “POLYGAMY LAW: SANUSI UNDER FIRE” Emir of Kano, Muhammadu Sanusi II threatens to introduce a new law that will restrict polygamy in Kano State:

“Those of us in the [mainly Muslims] North have all seen the economic consequences of men who are not capable of maintaining one wife, marrying four. They end up producing 20 children, not educating them, having (leaving) them on the streets, and they end up as thugs and terrorists.”

Please let us add the memo from Mallam Nasir El-Rufai, the Governor of Kaduna State to President Muhammadu Buhari:

“The danger of this current state of affairs is that we are inadvertently creating successive generations of poorer, barely educated, unskilled, hopeless and angry children of the poor, side by side with increasingly richer, privately educated, skilled and optimistic children of the privileged. It is a demographic and social time bomb waiting to explode as the poor and hopeless youths are easy recruits of insurgents, violent politicians and criminals.”

Perhaps it would not be out of place for me to disclose that every Friday night at the Lagos Motor Boat Club, a corner of the club overlooking the calm waters of the Lagoon, is the arena (or battlefield!!) for a marathon debate between old boys of King's College Lagos and old boys of St. Gregory's College over the unresolved issue of which school is (or was) better. It is an extension of their everlasting and intense rivalry in academics, sports, literary debates and

integrity/character. I must confess that as we speak the old boys of St. Gregory's College are entitled to bragging rights based on their successful transformation of their school which was in danger of collapsing on account of overcrowding, poor teachers ( and poorer teaching equipment), lack of funds, indiscipline e.t.c. It was the old boys of the college who came to its rescue by investing massively in the principal, Monsignor Babasaiye Akpalla. Today, the school is back to its old glory, looking pristine and majestic. It could even be mistaken for a university campus!!

The least we can do is to recommend Monsignor Babasaiye Okpalla of St. Gregory's College, Obalende and Mr. J.A Gbadamosi (Officer of the Order of the Niger) the former Principal of Ahmadiyya College, Agege who celebrated his 90th birthday last week for special commendation by President Muhammadu Buhari.

I must also record my eternal gratitude to Justice Charles Archibong (Rtd), an old boy of St.Gregory's College who in the dispute between Statoil Nigeria Ltd and Inducon Nigeria Ltd delivered a judgement which specifically ordered that my firm, J.K. Randle Professional Services should be appointed to audit the relevant accounts and submit a forensic report to the Court for a fee of U.S. \$1 million. Even though I am yet to receive even a dime, that must not be allowed to stand in the way of recognition of his generosity of spirit and remarkable professionalism.

However, nothing must disturb our weekly Friday duel at the Boat Club where the vigorous debate usually lasts until well after midnight accompanied by generous lubrication provided by wine, champagne and exotic dishes as compensation for the lousy food we endured at our respective boarding schools.

I refrain from making any comments about the deplorable state of affairs at Kings College or even more appalling disasters at Queens College, Yaba where two students are alleged to have died from drinking contaminated water and living in terrible unhygienic conditions. For all we know, those two institutions are living on borrowed time unless there is massive intervention by invoking the spirit of late Chief Stephen Awokoya. As a chartered accountant I can truthfully confirm that when you borrow time, there's no way you can pay it back!! Indeed, by placing so much emphasis on science education, Chief Awokoya predated what more developed countries such as China, Japan, South Korea, the United States of America have formally adopted as the

fulcrum of their curricula-"STEM" stands for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics.

We must nevertheless give credit to the former Secretary for Education [2009 to 2015] in the United States of America, Arne Duncan who declared on CNN:

" Education is the key to eliminating gender inequality; to reducing poverty; to creating a sustainable planet; to preventing needless deaths and illness and to fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity. Education is an INVESTMENT (emphasismine) and one of the most critical investments we can make."

The late John F. Kennedy was even more profound when he progressed from the epigram:

" Do not think of what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country" (that is precisely what Chief Awokoya did) to what should resonate with all of us who are gathered in this hall:

"Our progress as a nation can be no swifter than our progress in education. The human mind is our fundamental resource."

The same incisive conclusion must have prompted Chief Awosika to labour assiduously to free the minds of hundreds of thousands of indigent students from bondage and uplift them to fulfil their god-given potentials.

Indeed, it was Chief Obafemi Awolowo who posed the question:

" What is education and in what way can it contribute to the attainment of national freedom?"

Being an astute lawyer, he was quick to provide an answer to his leading question:

"Education is that process of physical and mental culture whereby a man's (and woman's) personality is developed to the fullest."

Let me remind you that we started off with a huge conflict. In our hearts we have a deep urge and obligation to congratulate the Awokoya family but our head (and thinking cap) tells us that we should rather sympathise with them because their patriarch has set them an impossible task.

We in the J.K. Randle family have found ourselves in the same situation.



It is an ambush from which we are trying to extricate ourselves by salvaging whatever is left of our legacy and heritage. The land on which the hall where we are gathered was built by my grandfather Dr. J.K. Randle and in his lifetime he shared it with "...the people of Lagos for their peaceful enjoyment and recreation." It was known as the "Love Garden". It was as blissful as it was serene. Next to it was the Dr. J.K. Randle Swimming Pool which he also built. Both the garden and swimming pool were funded for several decades by his estate after his death on 28<sup>th</sup> February 1928.

As you are all well aware both the Chief J.K.Randle Memorial Hall (named after my father) and the swimming pool were demolished without any prior warning by the government on 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2016.

We are now in the same boat as the Awokoya family!! In our own case, we plan to build a first class Medical Centre/ Teaching Hospital to replace the ruins for which we did not bargain. It is the least we can do in memory of our illustrious ancestors who committed their resources and devoted their lives to education, sports and philanthropy.

We are yet to come to terms with the proposed agenda of the government.

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was both a formidable lawyer, one of the best in land matters (check with the Oniru family) as well as a legendary politician; and he was also a friend of my father (both of them were born in the same year-1909). I have no doubt that were he alive today he would have readily offered his professional skills and commitment to justice in our favour. Furthermore, in order to ensure the support of Chief Awokoya we would feel obliged to add a Medical School/School of Science. Also, in recognition of the unassailable evidence provided by those who are vigorously advocating the formidable healing powers of classical music, the MUSON Centre will serve as the special wing of the hospital in order to cater for those who truly deserve to augment their conventional medical treatment with generous lashings of melody, rhythm and elevating sonatas.

As for the Chief J.K. Randle Memorial Hall, the proposed ten-story edifice will bear testimony and keep faith with the original and sacred commitment to arts, culture, music, drama e.t.c as well as serving as the epicentre of social and communal interaction.

We are in the cusp of history. It is our resilience that is being tested. If nothing else, it is very much to the credit of our ancestors that they did not hide their

money in soakaway pits, grain silos, overhead water tanks, underground/basement garages or the most egregious and audacious of all—U.S. \$9.8 million in the slums of Kaduna.

After all these years of giving and more giving, we cannot continue to give way (or give away). Like the Awokoya family, I humbly submit that the J.K. Randle family deserves a change of fortune.

In a sense, Chief Awokoya and Chief Awolowo were like Siamese twins who were joined at the hips in their crusade for education. While one provided the vision, the other supplied the drive and energy. Consequently, they earned themselves the rare recognition of being Savant Leaders.

Professor Adebayo Williams is here with us and I have his permission to share with you his incisive and brilliant exposition:

“A savant leader is a person of great wisdom and prodigious learning approaching the benchmark of genius but who prefers to use his formidable intellectual endowments in the service of statecraft. He is the modern equivalent of the Platonic philosopher-king. All the great leaders of the earlier epoch, even where they were soldiers, were men of prodigious intellect who preferred to use their mental gifts in the service of the people: Lenin, Trotsky, Churchill, De Gaulle, Mao, Nehru, Amilcar Cabral, Senghor, Nyerere, Nkrumah, Zik, Awolowo and lately Nelson Mandela.”

They are the champions of value driven and purposeful lives for whom the recurring decimal is: “How can I add value to the lives of the poor and wretched?”

Chief Awokoya was an unrepentant advocate of science education. I am not sure whether or not it extended to political science. Science is all inclusive anyway. Regardless, he would have taken to heart what Franklin D. Roosevelt [1882-1945] a great American President declared:

“In our personal ambitions, we are individualists. But in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up or else we all go down as one people.”

The crunch of course comes with the question posed by W.B. Yeats:

“How can we know the dancer from the dance?”

That is precisely why Chief Awokoya’s emotional investment in science education has rightly been acknowledged as phenomenal. Both Chief Awokoya

and Chief Awolowo were austere, frugal and disciplined. So how can we equate their monumental exertions and reconcile their intimidating educational attainments/bequests with the present Nigerian experience of a nation in the intensive care unit as it reels from one crisis to another?

Our forefathers consistently demonstrated dedication and guts. Hence, they must be puzzled by the timidity and frivolities of their successors who prefer cavalier compromise to principled commitment in the belief that the first option available is fine and easy-why not settle for it? That is why we are entitled to challenge the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya Foundation for Science Education to proceed, in haste, to raise the bar.

The departed Chief Awokoya whose spirit we can invoke only with trepidation provided both the road map and compass to greatness. The navigation has been handed over to his successors who should grasp the nettle by launching the Stephen Oluwole Awokoya University For Science.

Finally, I must confess that as a Lagosian, I can readily appreciate why the Awokoya children are so steadfast in their adoration and adulation of their late dad.

In Lagos, we have our own peculiar language known as "Eno" which is a sub-text of Yoruba. Beyond that, we have our own religion "Abalaye" which is neither Christianity nor Islam. Rather, it enjoins us that on the day of judgement, when the Almighty would be seated on his throne, it is our fathers who would plead for forgiveness on our behalf-on one condition only.

"Lord, spare them. They have been good children."

By the same token, if we have disappointed them; tarnished the reputation of the family or undermined its integrity, they would quietly protest:

"The DNA does not match. This is not one of us. Please sentence him to hell with hard labour."

The evidence is overwhelming. The Awokoya offspring have indeed been good children. They deserve not only our sincere gratitude but also the abundant blessings of the Almighty.