

**Welcome Address by The Chairman, Board of Trustees of SOAFSE,
Prof. A. F. Ogunye
During The 26th Annual Lecture, Award of Honours & Post-Graduate
Scholarships**

Before I welcome you all, I want us to observe a minute silence for three members of the BOT who have departed into eternity since our last outing in 2020

- 1. Senator Olabiyi Durojaiye, the founding Chairman up till his death in August 2021.**
- 2. Mrs Aduke Awokoya-Ogunwale**
- 3. Prof. Ayinde Adalemo**

PROTOCOL

My address this afternoon is on Late Prof. (Chief) Stephen Oluwole Awokoya The Unsung, Most Eminent Educationist Of Nigeria And The Founding Principal Of Molusi College 1949/1951

Professor (Chief) Stephen Awokoya was born on the 9th of July, 1913, at Awa Ijebu, Nigeria. In all the schools he attended up to Yaba College, Lagos (1934-1936), the first position was literarily reserved for him in all the examinations he took in all the schools he attended.

He attended University College London and was the first Nigerian to obtain a degree in Chemistry (1946)

He was at various times a School Master at St. Peter's School Aremo, Ibadan; Science Tutor at St. Andrew's College, Oyo; a Senior Master at Abeokuta Grammar School and later the founding Principal of Molusi College, Ijebu Igbo on January 28, 1949. Without a man of his calibre as the first Principal, Molusi College would have been a stillborn baby or would have been murdered in its infancy, and the whole world at large would not have known what had been lost.

Molusi College has an enthralling history both in its subsequent resounding greatness as an Educational Institution as well as its very epoch-making birth. Molusi College is a conqueror child littered in the midst of warfare and turmoil.

At that time, a neighbouring community near Ijebu-Igbo felt that another Secondary School in Ijebu area would reduce the greatness of the Ijebu-Ode Grammar School, which, all over years, had dominated the scene as the only Secondary School in Ijebu Province.

The then Colonial Government too did not welcome any concept of "Education for All." It wanted Education for only a privileged few for the sustenance of an Elitist Society where a well stratified class of a few will dominate the multitude of

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uneducated people who will be available for cheap labour. And so, Government approval was not forthcoming.

At the home front at Ijebu-Igbo, there was internal “war,” uprising and rioting! A section of the Ijebu-Igbo Community started agitating that the siting of Molusi College should be in their area instead of where it was sited. It was an internal combustion!

The three fronts, as such, define the furnace into which Chief Awokoya decided to plunge his head by accepting the principal-ship of Molusi College and risking his very brilliant career.

The then Colonial Government was bent on murdering the baby school at birth when they sent an expatriate “INSPECTOR OF SCHOOLS” to inspect the school on its first day of opening which was the 28th of January 1949. He spent about 30 minutes “INSPECTING” the school and went back to write a comprehensive volume of report about the non-viability of the school and recommended THE IMMEDIATE CLOSURE OF THE COLLEGE by the Government.

Meanwhile Professor Awokoya countered the report of the “Almighty Inspector” by writing a Rejoinder Report. Chief Awokoya continued running the “ILLEGAL COLLEGE” which we, Molusians proudly today declare as our cradle built with gold and diamond and which the world at large recognizes today as one of the best among the good schools in Africa, nay, in the world.

For example, at the last WASC, Molusi College presented 247 candidates for the SSC 3 examination. 246 students passed with at least 5 credits including English Language and Mathematics. That is Professor Awokoya Legacy.

Like procuring insomnia for the people in the then Government, Professor Awokoya kick-started Molusi-College with two surprises to the Government, the first was that Molusi College was going to run a FOUR-YEAR COURSE for the then Cambridge School Certificate, whereas all schools in Nigeria were running a SIX YEAR programme for the Cambridge School Certificate! The second was that the school would start by teaching ALL THE THREE SCIENCES (Physics, Chemistry and Biology) to the students starting with the first set! Over these two ideas, the officials of the Education Department as the Ministry of Education was known at that time were raging with anger. The then Chief Inspector of Education who was an expatriate for sure almost swore to commit suicide. **HE DID BOTH! ALL OBSTACLES WERE TRAMPLED OVER BY THE GREAT GIANT!**

The rest is now history that Molusi College and Chief Awokoya triumphed gallantly. The first set of the students wrote their Cambridge School Certificate Examination after spending 5 years in the school instead of four years originally designed because he left to join the government of Western Region in January 1952. The students offered the sciences for their examinations. This feat was concluded by Dr. Tai

Solarin who took the baton from Chief Awokoya in January 1952. He played the able role of great successor. He had unusual energy, profound knowledge, zest, and indomitable courage.

The rewards of the duo of Awokoya and Solarin went thus that the school presented 33 candidates altogether for the first Cambridge School Certificate Examination in Nov/Dec 1953. ALL THE STUDENTS who offered Physics with Chemistry PASSED! Twenty-seven sat for Biology, twenty-one passed! Later on, the school succeeded in recording that ALL THE FIRST THREE of her students who went for University Degree Courses with their mates who spent SIX YEARS in all the other older schools passed again! Lo and behold, these students studied Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics for their University Degree Courses! One specialized in Physics now Professor Akin Osiyale and the other two specialized in Mathematics, Mr. Olatunde Balogun and late Mr. J. A. Rowaiye. One of those who specialized in Mathematics, Mr. Olatunde Balogun even did his own SCIENCE DEGREE Course by Private Study using the very Molusi College laboratory for his practical for his Advanced Level Subjects and he PASSED! That class also produced Senator Biyi Durojaiye, who never followed the trio who studied the sciences but studied privately and graduated at the same time with Honours degree in Economics of University of London.

I remember VERY VIVIDLY that science equipment from Molusi College were borrowed by Nigeria College of Science, Ibadan in January 1963 for the practical examinations for the University of London Advanced Level. One of the whinstone bridges which was allocated to me had been used earlier at Molusi College which Prof Awokoya procured thirteen years earlier as Molusi College Principal.

He gave us an inspiring School Motto:

ONLY THE BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR MOLUSI COLLEGE

And also left us an inspiring School Anthem which he composed the words and the music.

Only the best, the best, the best, the best
Is good enough for Molusi College
For Molusians shall lead in every walk of life.....
In church, in state
At bar, at school;
In commerce, in service, in every walk of life,
We shall feed the nation
We shall house the nation
We shall heal the nation
Better than everybody
We shall clothe the nation
We shall carry the nation
We shall please the nation

Better than everybody
We shall serve and guide and lead mankind
To the glory of God
And the peace of mankind

(Words and music by Late S. O. Awokoya Principal 1949 -1951)

When Chief Awokoya joined the Government as Minister of Education in 1952, nemesis, however, later treated the evil “Inspector” who wrote a damaging report when he came to inspect Molusi on the opening day about 3 years earlier. The “Evil Inspector” of that day misplaced the answer scripts of some students who sat for their Grade Two Teachers Examination. He was an examiner. He dared not confess that he lost the whole batch of the scripts. So, he sat down in his room and “cooked” up random scores for each candidate as to suit his fantasy.

Meanwhile, the lost scripts had been found by someone who delivered the scripts to the office of the Minister of Education. Chief Awokoya was the Minister! The nefarious “Inspector” could not produce the scripts when the Minister asked to see the scripts. Later, the unmarked scripts were shown to him, intact, as he himself parcelled the scripts when they were given to him for marking. He left the shores of Nigeria in the following midnight! Nobody sacked him! He did the honourable thing, at least on that occasion!

Chief Awokoya period in politics was active but brief during which he was a member of the Drafting Committee of **the Macpherson Constitution** for Nigeria and was **the first Minister of Education in the old Western Region**. As a Minister of Education, he implemented the Universal Free Primary Education Scheme in the old Western Region between 1952-1956. **In 1956, Chief Awokoya was on the Queen’s Honours List and was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for his pioneering work in Education.** On leaving politics in 1956, Chief Awokoya went back into his first calling, which was education. **BUT IN NIGERIA HE HAD NOT BEEN HONOURED.**

He was later invited by the late Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa to head the Federal Emergency Science School (Later called Federal School of Science) in 1958.

In 1961, he became:

1. The first Nigerian Chief Federal Adviser on Education, during which he was instrumental in the take-off of the African Scholarship Programme for American Universities (ASPAU). Those trained under ASPAU returned to boost Nigeria high quality man-power development. (Provide names of SOAFSE honourees who were ASPAU scholars)

2. He was responsible for the Federal Policy Paper No. 1 of 1961 which outlined the setting up of the National Manpower Board, the National University Commission, and the Bureau of External Aid for Education.

Between 1962 and 1963, Chief Awokoya was the Scientific Secretary to the United Nations Conference on the Application of Science and Technology to Development in Geneva, where he coordinated the contributions of Sierra-Leone, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria, and the Cameroons.

He was a pioneering member of Council of University of Lagos and served on that Council between 1962 and 1966.

Upon completing his United Nations assignment, he was appointed the Permanent Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Education, a post he held with that of Chief Federal Adviser on Education between 1963 and 1967. During this period, he was a consultant to several International Organisations such as the United Nations, International Institute of Education Planning and World Book Encyclopaedia among others. It was also during this period that the National Education Research Council (NERC) was inaugurated in 1965.

In 1967, he was appointed a Director of UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation), in Paris, France. At various times he was the Director of the Division of Science Teaching, the Department of the Application of Science and Technology to Development, the Department of Scientific and Technological Research and Higher Education.

In 1973, he was awarded a Doctor of Letters (DLitt) degree (Honouris Causa) by the University of Lagos.

By 1973, when he retired from UNESCO, he had risen to the post of Deputy Director-General for Science which is the highest non-political post at UNESCO, Paris.

In 1974, he was appointed a Professor of Education at the University of Ife. While at the University of Ife, Professor Awokoya was the President of the Chemical Society of Nigeria (1976-1979); member of the Board of Trustees of the International Foundation for Science, Sweden (1975-1981); head of the Nigerian Delegation to the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology at Vienna (1979) and was a consultant to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Economic Commission for Africa and the Association of African Universities.

Professor Awokoya was the Chairman of the Lagos State Planning Committee of the Lagos State College of Science and Technology (1975-1977).

Professor Awokoya was the author of many books and numerous publications.

He retired from the University of Ife in 1984. He passed on to the great beyond on March 15, 1985.

THIS IJEBU MAN HAD NOT BEEN HONOURED DESPITE ALL THESE CONTRIBUTIONS HE MADE TO THE UPLIFTMENT OF EDUCATION AS THE MOST EMINENT EDUCATIONIST OF NIGERIA EITHER BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT OR HIS STATE OF ORIGIN, OGUN STATE.....

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