

PROFESSOR IS-HAQ O.OLOYEDE: A MAN OF ALL MOMENTS

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The saying goes that a man of success achieves his goals but a man of significance changes his world. If there are people who understand the difference between the two, Professor Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board (JAMB), is at the forefront among them.

Prof. Oloyede's ascension to prominence was not a matter of coincidence; it was rather a product a clear vision, a sense of mission propelled by the keen passion to excel. In other words, here is a man who has internalized five d's as the operational blueprint for making a difference. He is a man with a *d*ream, who then develops a *d*rive to achieve it. With single-minded *d*etermination, remarkable *d*iscipline, this three-in-one man (*okunrin meta*) sets out to achieve his goal with *d*edication.

To Prof. Oloyede, whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well and on time. This is why he is seen as a workaholic, a man who electrifies his surroundings with an inimitable sense of duty, a man of action and guts. As Dan Gable once said, "Gold medals aren't really made of gold. They are made of sweat, determination, and a hard-to-find alloy called guts."

So, wherever Prof. Oloyede finds himself, whether in the classroom or podium as a lecturer, or at the National Political Reform Conference as a Co-Secretary, or as Chairman of the Committee of Directors of Academic Planning in Nigerian Universities, or the National Coordinator/ Executive Secretary of the Nigeria Inter-religious Council (NIREC) or Secretary General of the Nigerian Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) under the transformational leadership of the royals' royal, the Sultan of Sokoto, His Eminence, Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar, CFR, mni, or in several other capacities he has functioned or still functions, he is renowned for being extra-ordinary and first class.

A talented scholar and cerebral intellectual, Prof. Oloyede is an academic genius and administrative guru, who dominates his world with well-reasoned arguments and visionary ideas. A shrewd judge of men and matters, this man who accepts no half measures smashes reputations and sets records with his sterling qualities and impeccable credentials. A man of unconquerable will and a restless questing spirit, the Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council, Fountain University, Osogbo, is the proverbial golden fish that has no hiding place. With a Spartan commitment to duty, easy and amiable mien, Prof. Oloyede has remained a raving phenomenon to friends and foes alike with his honesty, simplicity, humility, loyalty, generosity and single-minded belief in service to Allah and humanity.

To tell a peacock a story of bright colours is to sing empty and discordant tunes to a care-free bird, yet the Qu'ran tells us, "And proclaim the Grace of your Lord" (Q. Ad-duha, 93:11) Though Oloyede does not see himself as special, this infectious simple and rare Nigerian is a man of many firsts, a special gift of God to humanity, right from the classroom to the boardroom. Due to limited time,

perhaps ten of his firsts would make a sample viz: first First Class graduate of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ilorin (1981); first Unilorin alumnus to bag a Ph.D. from his alma mater (1991), first alumnus President in the Governing Council of the University of Ilorin; first Unilorin graduand to become a Professor (1995); first academic Director of Academic Planning, Unilorin; first Unilorin product to ever become a Deputy Vice-Chancellor; and first Unilorin alumnus to become a Vice-Chancellor of a University in the world; first Secretary-General of the Association of West Africa Universities; first Nigerian to become President of the Association of African Universities and first JAMB Registrar to remit N7.8 billion to the Federal Government.

Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede was on October 10, 1954 ushered into the world through the family of Alhaji and late Madam Oloyede in Abeokuta, Ogun State. He started his formal education at Ta'limul Islam Ahmadiya Primary School in 1961 after which he proceeded to Progress Institute, Agege, where he bagged his 1st School Leaving Certificate with Distinction in 1969. He perfected his training as an Arabist at the famous Arabic Training Centre (Markaz) between 1973 and 1976. His insatiable quest for knowledge took him to the University of Ibadan, where he bagged a Certificate in Arabic and Islamic Studies while his passion for higher learning brought him to the University of Ilorin in 1978, where he graduated as Best Graduating Student in 1981. The University of Ilorin scrupulously engaged him as Assistant Lecturer in 1982 and he subsequently obtained his higher degrees in 1985 and 1991, rising through the ranks in the process till he became a Professor in 1995.

A true scholar to the core, Prof. Oloyede is a keen advocate of training and in this respect, he leads by example as the prodigy is never ashamed of being a student. He obtained his Postgraduate Diploma in Education just in 2003 and became a Certified Teacher by Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria in 2005. Between 1994 and 1995, he received Special Proficiency Training on Information and Communication Technology at the International Centre for Communication Art and capped his ICT proficiency with a Certificate in Advanced Digital Appreciation Programme - Tertiary (ADAPT) at the International Centre for Communication Studies and Digital Bridge Institute, Abuja, in 2007.

This man of unimpeachable integrity has received several awards and honours in his dazzling and inspiring career and he is a member of many professional bodies. He is a recipient of the Arab League Prize for the Best Certificate Student in Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Ibadan; recipient of Merit Award by Islamic Mission of Africa, proprietors of Crescent University, Abeokuta; Fellow, Islamic Academy of Cambridge, United Kingdom; Fellow, Academy of Religion; Fellow, Society for Peace Studies and Practice; Fellow, Academy for Entrepreneurial Studies, Nigeria; Fellow, Nigerian Institute of Management; and Fellow, Nigerian Academy of Letters.

Prof. Oloyede has been a long-time member of the Nigerian Association of Teachers of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Professors World Peace Academy of Nigeria and the Nigerian Association for the Study and Teaching of Religion and the Natural Sciences. He is a Board Member of the African Center for Religions and the Sciences and representative of Unilorin Local Societies Initiative at the Metanexus Institute of Science and Religion, Philadelphia, USA and several others. He has won the Federal Government Scholarship, University of Ilorin Merit Scholarship and several national awards, including Officer of the Federal Republic (OFR).

This distinguished gentleman had served the University of Ilorin, Kwara and Ogun States and indeed the Federal Republic of Nigeria in several capacities. His achievements are so many and etched on stone that recounting them will fill several pages. Yet, it would be unfair to the University of Ilorin and its alumni if it is not mentioned that when this illustrious graduate of the University was the Vice-Chancellor, the University was taken to such an Olympian height that Vice-Chancellors visited him regularly to understudy him. Within a period of five years, this great man of honour took the University of Ilorin from being an unranked University to one of the best 20 in Africa, according to international ranking agencies.

Not only did Prof. Oloyede take the University of Ilorin to its apogee, he also electrified the global university system with his sterling leadership qualities and high-octane administrative acumen. No other Nigerian Vice-Chancellor has achieved being Chairman of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors (CVC)/ Association of Vice-Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), President of the Association of African Universities (AAU), Board Member of both the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and International Association of Universities (IAU) within a tenure of five years, apart from being the initiator of the Association of West Africa Universities (AWAU) through the Ilorin Declaration.

As a prolific author and astute academic, his hundreds of research works have appeared in scores of several national and international journals. Prof. Oloyede has written, co-written and co-edited books and papers published in many outlets in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Switzerland, United Kingdom, India, Pakistan, USA, among others. He has presented academic papers in conferences all over Nigeria and across the world.

Little wonder that awards and recognitions have been swarming him but the self-effacing Oloyede has been driving them away. Nevertheless, he was on Saturday, November 27, 2017 garlanded by the well-respected *New Telegraph* newspaper as the “Most Outstanding Public Servant of the Year”. As the blind can see and the deaf can hear, Prof. Oloyede stands tall today as one of the greatest symbols of President Muhammadu Buhari’s anti-corruption crusade. It was therefore not surprising that when the Presidency released a statement on December 30, 2017 to showcase the achievements of the Federal Government,

JAMB's name was conspicuous in it. Subsequently, when the Minister of Information and National Orientation made an intervention in response to a statement, JAMB under Prof. Oloyede still featured prominently as a major achievement of Mr President.

Known for saying his mind without minding whose ox is gored, Prof. Oloyede is not unmindful of the fact that maggots would detest sanitary inspectors. In his frenetic pace for standard and excellence wherever the combination of hardwork and good luck puts him, he steps on toes with integrity. So, one would agree with *The Punch* in its editorial of January 8, 2018 that "a leadership with integrity is critical....It is a fact that the Registrar of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board, Is-haq Oloyede, showed with the N7.8 billion his agency remitted, against 3 million annually remitted by his predecessors." Perhaps, part of his inspiration for being who he is lies in the words of Bill Cosby: "I don't know the secret of success but the secret of failure is trying to please everybody".

A no-nonsense man of super-abundant physical and mental energy, Prof. Oloyede loathes corruption so much that corruption too loathes him in kind. At a personal level, it was through him that I learnt that it is not a shame to be broke. Ten years ago, as Vice-Chancellor, he needed to send me on an errand and he told his son, now a medical Consultant, to withdraw money from his account. He was told there was no money there. He mentioned another account and he was informed the last money there had been withdrawn under his directive. We had to wait till his next salary was paid. I learnt to assure myself since then that being broke is normal, after all, the Vice-Chancellor was broke!

A versatile scholar, a shrewd manager of men and materials, Prof. Oloyede is a family man, happily married to the woman of his dreams, a supportive, devoted, caring and enduring Dr (Mrs) Raheemat Oloyede and the marriage is blessed with children, including a set of male twins, and an expanding clan of grandchildren!

It is my singular honour to present to you the man of the moment, and indeed the man of all moments, a preeminent professor, astute administrator, exceptional scholar, academic mentor, redoubtable Registrar, dynamic Chief Executive, prolific writer, incorruptible leader, marvelous manager, inimitable consultant, wonderful Fellow, intellectual juggernaut, inter-religious activist, compulsive communicator and outstanding personality, *okunrin takuntakun*, Prof. Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede, OFR, FNAL, FNIM, FIAC, FAR, fspsp, etc!