



LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY, OJO

TOWN AND GOWN: Giving in the Age of Scarcity

Commemoration Lecture by Prof. Akin OYEBODE

Thursday, 22nd November, 2018

A Commemoration Lecture delivered at the Official Opening of 500-Seater Aderemi Makanjuola
Ultra-Modern Lecture Theatre in Lagos State University, donated by Mr. Aderemi Makanjuola,

TOWN AND GOWN : Giving in the Age of Scarcity*

By

AKIN OYEBODE**

Protocols

Introduction

May I commence by paying tribute to the authorities of this great citadel of learning for inviting me to deliver today's lecture on such an inimitable topic, more so at a time when our country is at a cross-roads in terms of socio-ethical values as well as political and socio-political development. Today's event gives a lot to cheer and portends tremendous hope for the future despite the pervading and suffocating climate of depravity, self-seeking and self-serving pursuits and general anti-intellectualism. That a benefactor of the community of scholars and their students can extend his goodwill and encouragement to those engaged in academic pursuits at this time and age bespeaks the abundance of the initiative of private endeavours in firming up the scholarly enterprise.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, we are here to celebrate the union of town and gown as exemplified by the hand of fellowship extended by Mr Remi Makanjuola to academia through his benevolence and philanthropy by way of donation of a well-appointed, 500-seater auditorium for the enhancement of pedagogy and assisting in rolling back the turf of ignorance within the portals of this institution. By this great act of ensuring that the world is a better place than he found it, our hero of the day is laying an enviable example to others who are richly blessed to make a worthy contribution towards human capital development in this country.

* Lecture Appropos Mr. Aderemi Makanjuola, delivered on the occasion of the donation by him of an Auditorium to the Lagos State University on Thursday, November 22, 2018.

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The Interplay of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Public Private Partnership and Transformation of Physical Infrastructure

It has almost become axiomatic that in terms of development and transformation of the landscape and environment generally, the state or government cannot go it alone, hence the necessity for the more privileged or affluent members of the society to chip in whatever they can to assist in achieving society's sustainable development goals. While there is no compulsion in extending solidarity of private persons to the common cause, it would seem that enlightened self-interest, more often than not, elicits feelings of empathy from the highly heeled when they dip their hands into their deep wallets to assist the underprivileged and disadvantaged. The Lord might love a cheerful giver but no sin is committed by those who have but choose to look the other way. Nevertheless, it makes a lot of business sense to contribute some quota into societal well-being not just as an insurance against frustrations of the underprivileged but as a reflection of social solidarity and concern for the privations of the marginalized.

And while we are still at it, let us once again acknowledge the initiative of Mr Makanjuola to mark his natal day by donating a state-of-the-art auditorium to the university in order to add value to pedagogy add improve the university landscape. While most of us are used to his helicopters criss-crossing the city's airspace, his endeavour should serve as a notable example of what his friends as well as the movers and shakers need to do in order to enhance facilities in the nation's higher educational institutions.

It is a notorious fact that government has not been able to make adequate financial resources for the maintenance of our institutions in the face of competing demands from other sectors of the national economy. This, therefore, compels the management of these institutions to explore alternative sources of increasing the Internally Generated Resources (IGR) necessary to put our educational institutions on an even keel and enable them to compete admirably with their counterparts all over the world.

Thus far, Nigeria has been able to win only one Nobel prize and in Literature. One is earnestly yearning for the day when our scholars and scientists would win global laurels in the natural and social sciences. However, I hasten to add that that can

only come to pass with hefty contributions by our more endowed compatriots into the research and development budget in the universities, research institutes that have the capacity to engage in thinking about thinking and roll back the frontiers of ignorance in our national life.

The paucity of research grants belies the tremendous capacity bottled up in our higher institutions which would surely be opened up with the availability of financial resources, well provided laboratories and libraries all aiding the much-needed solutions to most of our existential problems. As a product of some of the world's highly acclaimed universities, I make bold to say that if we are provided the tools, we would deliver the goods.

The Town-Gown Dichotomy and Nigeria's Education Crisis

The divide between town and gown has thrived for so long that it has become more of a shibboleth or self-fulfilling prophesy. For far too long, universities had been conceived and operated as ivory towers, more than anything else. Today, our universities seem to be more tower than ivory and should now re-discover their goals and aspirations as solution providers to society's problems and yearnings.

Today's it is a well-worn statement that we are in an education crisis with many calling for national summits on the matter. However, perhaps we need to parody Clemenceau's view on wars and generals by suggesting that education was far too important to be left to educationists. We now need to bring everyone with a useful idea and contributions on board. This is where philanthropists come in. We should no longer resist the notion of cost-sharing and place education at the top of budgeting and the nation's agenda. The current situation offers a unique opportunity to link gown with town. Parents, relatives, benefactors should all proffer solutions to the unacceptable level of degeneration and threatened collapse of the country's educational system.

Finally, let me once again salute Mr. Remi Makanjuola on his birthday and noteworthy contribution to the growth and development of Lagos State University and hope that all men and women of goodwill would follow suit and make LASU attain its dream as one of the leading universities in the nation.

I thank you very much for your attention.