

THE FUTURE OF THE PAST

AN INAUGURAL LECTURE,
2011/2012

OLUTAYO CHARLES ADESINA

UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

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THE FUTURE OF THE PAST

*An inaugural lecture delivered
at the University of Ibadan*

on Thursday, 8 March, 2012

By

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Ibadan University Press
Publishing House
University of Ibadan
Ibadan, Nigeria.

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Ibadan, Nigeria

First Published 2012

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ISBN: 978 - 978 - 8414 - 74 - 2

Printed by: Ibadan University Printery

The Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), Provost of the College of Medicine, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Dean of the Postgraduate School, Deans of other Faculties and of the Students, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen.

Preamble

I am deeply honoured to deliver this inaugural lecture on behalf of the Faculty of Arts as part of the 2011/2012 Academic Session Inaugural Lecture series. This lecture, coming from the Department of History seeks to draw attention to the great strides being made in historical studies and to establish a framework for a more flexible conceptualization of history as a forward looking intellectual discipline and as a viable critical methodology. By moving beyond the zones established by critics who believed that history merely deals with the 'fall and rise of one empire after another', or 'the death and ascension of one king after another (*oba ku, oba je*)', this lecture hopes to draw attention to contemporary expressions of historical scholarship and the viability of the vocation into the future. I am happy to give this lecture for other very significant reasons. First, for someone whose parents' greatest heartache was his refusal and lack of desire to go to school early in life, this lecture inaugurating me as a Professor of history in this great university represents one of the paradoxes of man's existence on earth.

As a small boy in the late 1960s living in the compound of St. Charles Grammar School, Osogbo, where my father was the Principal, I hated schooling with all my soul!!! Whenever my parents attempted to take me to school, I would scream, kick, scratch and fight. Seeing my reaction, they persuaded, cajoled and even encouraged me to embark on the noble task of going to school, all to no avail. They were so exasperated by my tantrums that one day they decided to leave me to my devices, hoping that would scare me into going to school. I was least perturbed when everyone entered

the car to go to school. I was determined to stay at home even when they proceeded into the car and I was actually left "home alone." However, parents being parents, always full of concern for their children, they came back a few hours later hoping to find a scared and remorseful me. What they saw when they returned finally made them to come to a far-reaching conclusion—that I must go to school at all cost. What did they see? They saw that I had succeeded in piercing and consuming twenty three tins of full cream evaporated milk! It would have been the whole carton had my mother not used a tin for my father's breakfast earlier in the morning. They rushed me to the hospital with so much alarm!!! Even then, I did not see what the hoopla was all about. Why should I, the only boy who knows how to enjoy himself end up in the hospital? But it became obvious later that my parents had learnt their lessons. They never left me alone in the house again. I was forced back to school in spite of my obstinacy. Of course, I thereafter became a nightmare to my class teacher whom I am sure dreaded each waking day when she would once again encounter the crying Adesina boy. The only thing I can say now to console that female teacher is that her reward is definitely waiting for her in heaven.

That rebellious boy, who hated going to school with a passion has not only gone ahead in some ways to advance the course of human intellectual traditions, he has in his over two decades sojourn in the academia gone on to win several distinguished academic fellowships. They include among others, the Atlantic History Seminar of the Charles Warren Center, Harvard University, U.S.A; Salzburg Seminar, Austria; African Visiting Fellow, Rhodes Chair of Race Relations, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, U.K; and, more recently, that of the Institute of Advanced Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, in New Delhi, India's most prestigious University.

Secondly and more significantly, this lecture coming out of the very famous Department of History at Ibadan offers me the unique opportunity not only to highlight my contributions to scholarship but to do so as one of the lucky inheritors of the intellectual stature of our forebears in the great

department. While it is obviously impossible to give a complete picture of one's research in a single lecture, it is important to note that, reflecting on their personal activities is profitable for historians, even if this may prove somewhat discomfiting (Zeldin 1976:237). Therefore, I am using this opportunity to explore and explain the many developments and diversification witnessed in the field since I joined the Department on December 1, 1993, and to explore the prospects of the discipline for the future. Giving this lecture as a member of the prestigious Ibadan School of History is indeed a rare privilege, most especially when it is noted that no inaugural lecture has come out of the Department of History in almost twenty years. More humbling is the fact that I am giving this inaugural lecture quite early after my occupancy of the chair of History, a departure from the long wait that has come to characterize inaugural lectures in this university over the years.

My area of research within the broad field of History is Economic History. But rather than focus entirely on the sub-specialty of Economic History in which several of my works are located, I have chosen to also connect the multifarious threads that bind the sub-fields of historical scholarship together. I intend to explore the multifaceted dimensions of historical scholarship through the interactions of sub-specialties within the discipline and within the prevailing discursive parameters. This approach provides a much more penetrating insight into human affairs in a global age. For several decades, the content of African history has been shaped in part by the links between African intellectuals, local discursive and political constraints, and overseas discursive and political constraints (Schoenbrun 1993:32).

The diminished importance that history and historical discourses have taken within the various trajectories of humanistic studies may have unwittingly contributed to our inability to address many of the problems confronting Nigeria and the developing world. The unfortunate block on which the discipline stumbled can ultimately be summarized in one word: Ignorance! The unpardonable neglect of history tends

to reaffirm the colonial rhetoric of the black man's inability to either govern themselves or chart a path towards socio-economic development. After all, how would a people who do not know where they are coming from know where they are going? A renewed interest in historical discourse may help us to shed light on several issues bothering us today and thus open up a new vista for research. With a careful retracing of our steps, the knowledge and understanding of history may yet find a place in the increasingly demanding task of repairing the torn fabric of human society. Since many countries of the developing world have abdicated their responsibilities in protecting and sustaining the tradition, livelihood, identities and aspirations of their people, the complexities imposed by neo-liberal policies and more profoundly, globalization have called into question the role of intellectuals and historians of the developing world. This pertains to the issue of helping to define the place, roles and positions of their peoples in the making of the modern world.

The global spread of ideas and cultures, the conflict between global citizenship and national citizenship, the interface of national interest and global interest, the issue of national sovereignty, poverty, the sharpening of ethnic and religious fault lines, territorial disputes, transnationalism, interpenetration of values and a host of other factors, have continued to agitate the minds of many citizens in the developing world. A major question arising from these is how scholars engaged in humanistic studies, most especially those in the field of history, should connect all these issues and help their people to make sense of their existence in a world of great flux. This is one of the challenges I have grappled with as a professional historian for over two decades. As an economic historian, a major question I have also faced is how the growing attention to interdisciplinary studies may have blurred hitherto assumed boundaries between humanities and social sciences, most especially in my effort to engage in historical analysis that encompassed social and economic dimensions.

Even more important to the social and economic milieu is the need to understand the nature and causes of underdevelopment, which has trapped our countries in a political and economic quagmire. Poverty, ethnic tensions, massive human suffering and poor public policy have adversely affected social conditions in developing countries, narrowing opportunities for human development (Handelman 2006: 5). As people are anxious to make a sense of their conditions in this dysfunctional continent that is rich in human and natural resources, there is an increasing need to expand the framework for interrogating the lack of sustainable progress. The negative historical notoriety illustrates the disturbing lacuna with regard to the purposes history serves and its meaning. The conceptual poverty also implies an abdication of control over history, historical discourse and the creation of historical consciousness by professionals in favour of a civil form of intervention with an increasing capacity by non-professional observers to define the trajectory of the field. Therefore, there is an overriding desire to provide a scientific basis for illuminating a future order beyond the current unfortunate conception of history and historical understanding as useless endeavours.

In making clear the place and role of history in the wider society, I will, in this lecture, address methodological, conceptual, epistemological, theoretical and strategic issues confronting the discipline. Also, in a series of cases, I will examine and detail the most obvious examples of increasing conceptual chaos, contradicting everything that history represents after which I will go on to establish the need for and the continued viability of historical scholarship as a critical tool of analysis and mode of study. The lecture also draws attention to the methodology and perspectives that will enhance the stature of the discipline within a national framework and the wider global context. However, it must be noted that the increasing specialization of history is such that it is becoming ever more difficult to appreciate the significance of what is being done in other fields with which

one is not familiar. Thus, one may not be able to explain issues beyond one's own special field (Zeldin 1976:237). Thankfully, we are all bound together by our interest in historiography, a field that will form a sizeable chunk of this discourse.

The Task of Preserving the Past

In the late nineteenth century, history as a discipline acquired its scientific nature and stature under the influence of German scholarship. This meant the critical examination of documents and manuscripts, using external and internal evidence to determine validity and relevancy. Ideally, the scientific historian sought to reproduce history with perfect objectivity, a noble if not unreachable goal (Tindall and Shi 1999: 969). Further, historical research involves the need to uncover the unknown, answer questions, seek implications or relationships of events from the past and their connection with the present, assess past activities and accomplishments of individuals, agencies, or institutions, and to aid generally an understanding of human cultures and societies (Berg 2001: 212; Carr 1964 :42; Bloch 1954 : 27).

In Nigeria, the Ibadan School of History emerged and defined this field within the aspirations of the age. It flourished from the 1950s and 1960s through the 1970s. The Department of History at Ibadan under the successive leaderships of Professor Kenneth O. Dike, Professor J.C. Anene, Professor J.F. Ade-Ajayi, Professor T.N. Tamuno and Prof. Obaro Ikime, was the pre-eminent school in the study of history in Africa. It developed a historiographical tradition that was popularized by its 'Ibadan History Series.' The school reflected the ongoing struggle for control of discourse on African history. The formation of a professional body, the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN) in 1955 and the creation of the Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (JHSN) in 1956, institutionalization of the Annual Congresses of the HSN, conferences and workshops as well as the publication of important monographs underscored that transition. With

the Ibadan school, and the growth of departments of history in Ghana, Kenya, Tanganyika (now Tanzania) and other African countries, the control of discourse on the African past subsequently broke free of an essentially European derived methodology and conceptual framework by focusing on local approaches as well as local and regional forms of historical action. The intellectual ideas and trajectory of the Ibadan School were shaped by the prevailing Nigerian social and political conditions, expressed in a language and style comprehensible to its primary audience.

Modern Nigerian historiography was initially derided as unviable by imperialist historians as encapsulated by Hughes Trevor-Roper's (1965:9-11) famous statement that Africa's history consisted of "the unedifying gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe." Hughes Trevor-Roper, Professor of Modern History at Oxford University and one of the most formidable British intellectuals of the 20th century had then concluded: "perhaps in the future there will be some African history to teach but at present there is none, there is only the history of Europeans in Africa. The rest is darkness and darkness is not a subject of history." Instead, Ibadan demonstrated how very viable African history was as an academic field of study (Adeoye 1992:1). Still is the story told about the marvels wrought by the School between 1950 and the late 1980s (See Lovejoy 1986; Nwaubani 2000; Falola 2005; Adesina 2006).

History and the Search for *Lebensraum* (Living Space)

Several major local and global factors have combined to affect the way in which history as a discipline is shaped, practised or viewed. In Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, history is no longer considered one of the most serious and vital academic subjects (Olorunfemi 2006: 21). The idea of history as one of the useless disciplines has remained deeply embedded in the national psyche since the late 1980s. Professor Emeritus of History, Jacob F. Ade-Ajayi, has consistently decried this regrettable development. The unfortunate removal of the subject from both the primary and

secondary schools' syllabi in the 1980s has done an incalculable damage not only to the discipline but also to our capacity to develop a sense of history. The government of my home state, Osun, even took this to a ridiculous extent when the state governor between 1999 and 2003, Chief Bisi Akande in a rare fit of grave-yard humour kicked out all the teachers of Arts-related subjects, including history, describing them as irrelevant to the state's developmental needs. The institutional relegation and denial of history as a field of study is in actual fact a demonstration of abject ignorance of the robust wealth of history and what its *raison d'être* is within any given society. Some criticisms leveled against history arise mainly from a misunderstanding of the dynamics involved in the discipline. As such, the idea of 'doing history' confronts the specialist with many problems, not the least of which is the rapid demise of the discipline as a field of study in the university. In spite of this, many of us in the field still believe that historical understanding is *sine qua non* to a more profound understanding of human society and the advancement of human relations. This is because nothing which happens, escapes completely from the grip of the past. Much of existing culture, social and economic institutions, and politics is the persistence or reproduction of earlier concepts and forms. Entities, events or systems, physiological, psychological, social and cultural, have careers in which at each point the state of the system stands in some determinate relationship to the state of the system at earlier points (Shils 1971:122). In other words, the past is almost inevitably the handmaiden of the present. This much I have pointed out in my 2005 publication (Adesina 2005: 18) where I inferred that the generation and sustenance of inter-group disrespect, antagonism and suspicion among Nigerian groups could have been a function of the transfer of prejudices from an existing social order to a succeeding generation. Even among the same ethnic groups, people go about with radically different versions of their history and these have continued to define the context of their relationships into the future. It is therefore not surprising to experience the continued

subordination of the consciousness of national identity to the cultural one. This has remained an ossified structure. The task of preserving the past has therefore consistently confronted us with a perplexing dilemma.

Since its halcyon days, history at Ibadan has suffered some setbacks, just as it has declined in other African universities, and indeed, in the United States and Europe. The current generation of historians in the department have been vilified and harangued for their lack of visible achievements. One critic had even predicted that it was limited "in its potentials for further expansion and renewal" (Ekeh 1989: 11). Our apparent lack of achievements has been described as dull, pedestrian, unimaginative and lacklustre. In recent years, vague generalizations about the 'death of the Ibadan School of History' are commonplace. Technically, such generalizations are unsatisfactory in that they do not go beyond the limited possibilities of parallel-hunting without attempting to study the mechanics of change. Methodologically, to understand this is a demanding task since it involves the onerous undertaking of tracking the dramatic changes that influenced intellectual interests in the "Ibadan School" since the 1990s. However, unlike its formative years, the challenges, aspirations and expectations of the present epoch have imposed on the present crop of scholars, challenges and expectations that are very different from previous times. We now address different kinds of issues and problems, and face different questions that require different responses. These arguments have been central to my engagement with historical discourse since my coming to Ibadan. Today, this forms my line of argument in making a detailed review of what is being done to achieve the knowledge and study of the past in a more sustained and profound fashion.

In this lecture, I have chosen to examine the changing dynamics that have influenced patterns of historical discourse since the late 1980s. Understanding this will illuminate why, a sense of historical creativity in the present period diverges significantly from the past. It is apposite to point out that

historical research; writing and teaching have not developed in the last decade or more in a cultural vacuum. The cultural changes of the post-Cold War era have had a dramatic effect on the place of history and historians in the cultural life of human society (Evans 2002:10).

Developments in the world in general and Nigeria in particular since the 1990s have redefined the existing traditions of historical scholarship. I became a member of the academia in the 1990s, a period “when many historians had begun to feel a sense of acute crisis in their profession” (Evans 1997: 284, Evans 2002:7). As a young historian who came to the Ibadan School of History in December 1993, the increasingly impassioned debate on globalization, authoritarianism, autocracy, gender, underdevelopment and development, the unipolar world and a host of other issues reflected the prevailing concerns of the day. Broadly speaking, the political, social and intellectual environments of the late 1980s and early 1990s began to shake off the old nationalist idealist concerns that had defined historical scholarship in the previous decades. On the global stage, the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the ascendancy of liberal democratic values in the 1990s, the collapse of Communism and disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War, the collapse of Apartheid in South Africa and the spread of neoliberal capitalism with its entrepreneurial state of mind—all had profound effects on historical scholarship and interest.

Locally, acute unemployment, ethnicity, poverty, neo-liberal economic policies, the annulment of the June 12 1993 presidential elections in Nigeria, disillusionment with African leadership, the virulence of the National Question, and even the widespread popularity of the American visa lottery programme, had all begun to affect historical scholarship and interest in diverse ways. All these created new intellectual demarcations between the new period and the period in which we were trained. My generation was trained in the 1980s during the period of great revolutionary fervour dictated by

patriotism, liberation struggles, and kindled by the “rebel music” of Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and of course, the Afro Beat King, our own Fela Anikulapo Kuti. Many of us were brought up intellectually as budding radicals ready to use history for political purposes. The realities of the 1990s, however, dictated otherwise. As a young, vibrant newly recruited teacher, I met a generation of students that was almost losing faith in preceding values, structures and institutions. The feedback system I developed early in my career received and processed a signal that things were changing at a pace that the unwary would find difficult to keep up with.

Today, history has become a subject of rich and diverse complexity. The discipline now offers new ways of studying history outside and beyond traditional programmes defined by political boundaries—the most pre-eminent approach of the Ibadan School in the 1950s and 1960s. Since the 1990s, sub-fields of history have developed at a very fast pace. While some people have chosen to look at the past through feminist and gender lenses, others have chosen to focus on the now important fields of diplomatic, military, social, cultural and economic history, historical and site preservation, public history and development studies. For any historian to make any impact in the global age, there must be recognition of a more complex picture of historical discourse that draws on both historical and prevailing realities. Many teachers of history have now virtually become disillusioned either because they failed to engage in strategic thinking in their fields or failed to retrain and re-focus their scholarship in the light of newer developments in their chosen fields. How this translates to the death of history as we knew it will be seen subsequently as our lack of understanding of present realities or our inactions helped in promoting to a great extent, the travails of the discipline. Traditionally, the field has focused on narrative, causation, and description and in some cases just knowing the events or in general providing explanations. But more and more, we are now being forced

back to what Thucydides pointed out centuries earlier, that it would do little good to merely describe events without drawing useful lessons from them.

One raging controversy among historians of this generation is how useful is it to concentrate on real world issues with or without the use of theories. The willingness or unwillingness of a historian to embrace the new development has continued to influence historical scholarship on both sides of the spectrum at Ibadan. This position is rooted in the assumption that the embrace of theory inclined history too much towards the imperialism of the Social Sciences. However, one has to realize that Thucydides, one of the fathers of history in his discussion on how states and rulers use power, played a crucial role in originating what is now known as the Realist Theory that today shapes the understanding of strategy and power. He did this through his focus on relative power between Greek City States when he noted: "The strong do what they have the power to do and the weak accept what they have to accept" (Thucydides 1954:360). Critics have pointed out that the themes that Ibadan focused on constituted the problem, while others felt it was the poverty of methodology. The use of theory in historical discourse is a criticism that has continued to generate much debate. Peter P. Ekeh (1980: 11) had delivered a pungent criticism of the Ibadan School of History: "The School shows clear signs of exhaustion borne out of limited theoretical premises." This theme was recently the focus of a paper presented at the Department of History Staff/Postgraduate Seminar by Professor Tunde Lawuyi of the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, in which he pilloried the Ibadan School of History for its lack of dynamism. He also alluded that the travails of the Ibadan School of History in the contemporary period arose from "the strategic choice of doing history the old way."

In my career as a teacher and scholar at Ibadan, I have reflected on these arguments and criticisms. I have also considered the recent developments in historical scholarship

worldwide. It is my position that history and theory can indeed be complementary and no one should underestimate the significance of theory in historical discourse. With this knowledge, I have participated greatly in ennobling the academic tradition bequeathed by our intellectual forebears in this noble but much-maligned and misunderstood discipline. Paradoxically, I am a product of massive social change in historical discourse with the orientation of the discipline evolving from the search for causation to the search for meaning. This inaugural lecture therefore encapsulates the strategies and advantages that membership of the field of history has conferred on me and my intellectual career. Since joining the Department of History at Ibadan, it seemed each interaction provided me with a new insight or discovery, taking me further into the immense possibilities provided by historical discourse.

However, in its more than six decades of existence, the Ibadan School has been praised and vilified in equal measure. In spite of this, the Department has established a reputation that is impossible to ignore. One important virtue is that in spite of the criticisms, the quality of its scholarship was never questioned. I joined the Department upon my graduation with a Ph.D degree from the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife where I was nurtured by an intellectual tradition, which had great respect for Ibadan but had also started to see the Ibadan School as conservative and antiquarian. The development of rival schools of history with different historiographical flavours in the country (i.e. ABU, Zaria) and on the continent (i.e. Dar es Salaam) revealed the inadequacies of the Ibadan School. The impression therefore was that any scholar interested in starting his career at Ibadan in the 1990s would definitely be entering the winters of academic life. That was indeed very scary. So, my coming to Ibadan was like beginning a relationship with some old relic that had outlived its usefulness. Many of my friends regarded me with so much pity and concern that I arrived in Ibadan with much foreboding and trepidation. Although my understanding of

things have changed since I arrived in Ibadan during the Harmattan season of 1993; I discovered then that my mentors and friends were not the only ones that regarded Ibadan as a little bit rustic. Others were also pointing to the absence of debates and profound publications as pointers to the fact that the Ibadan School of History has lost its depth and shine. But the course of history shows that neither history itself nor the ideas of history is a static phenomenon. Andre Gunder Frank (1991: 77) affirmed this more succinctly: "There may be transitions, but a transition is a transition between a transition and a transition." That precisely is the experience of the Ibadan School of History.

The World Order and Historical Discourse

The only and sole dynamic in life is change. Change comes when societies grow in size and density and people begin to specialize (Grisworld 1994: 46). The pervasive effect of change has redefined the tone and texture of history as a discipline. In the field of history in Nigeria, change was driven by local, national and global realities. Nationalist ideals, the essential dynamics that drove the Ibadan School of History for a long time, atrophied. In fact, by the late 1970s, the cry for more work on social and economic history had become more strident (Ikime 1979:2). Historical discourse began to focus more on concrete reality as the study of history began to flourish in a new direction. Globalization, the youth sub-culture, human dynamism and development are some of the triggers that prevented history both as a phenomenon and as a discipline, from being static.

A point of departure from the more recent critics of the Ibadan School is the fact that as the world became more complex, people also became sorted in diverse ways. Obviously, the Department of History at Ibadan that existed between the 1950s and 1970s existed in a specific historical period. Modern Nigerian historiography early in its career was characterized by its near unanimity as to the purposes, goals and methods of a particular brand of historical

scholarship (Adeoye 1992:1). The scholastic and intellectual achievements of the Ibadan School were premised on the need to decolonize our history and on the concomitant issue of nation building. These were two significant matters that created the fundamental bond among the first and second generations of scholars of the Ibadan School. According to Emile Durkheim (1864-1917), the French sociologist working in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the social production of culture had characterized that state of things as mechanical solidarity, wherein people were bound together because their lives were similar. This is akin to a period when the shared beliefs and understandings of a people constituted their collective consciousness, governed their thoughts, attitudes and practices (Grisworld 1994: 46). At Ibadan, the dominant field of the day of course was political history. A studious look at the development of history at Ibadan reveals the fact that we preferred a multifaceted evolutionary process rather than a linear approach. The period since the 1990s has been marked by diversity rather than linear progression of scholarship as we left behind the linear approach to history in favour of a multifaceted evolutionary process. The realities of the world since the decade of the 1990s offer some intriguing insights into why this became so.

When the University College, Ibadan came into existence in 1948, it was structured on the British educational model. By the 1950s, the involvement of Nigerians in historical scholarship at the University College, coupled with the growing spirit of nationalism, led to the questioning of the prevailing pattern and approach to education in general and historical scholarship in particular. This imposed the need and desire for new and expanding horizons and direction. There developed a concerted attempt to transcend the clearly racist boundaries imposed by colonialism and imperialist historiography. By taking historical scholarship out of existing boundaries, the Ibadan School of History created a new direction that was to define the identity and projections of scholarship in the department until the 1980s. From the 1990s, a much more pronounced intellectual diversity among

the department's historians developed fields that include social history, legal history, diplomatic history, environmental history, women's history and gender, and economic history with interests in development and underdevelopment in the Third World, popular culture, underground economies, and migration. These fields and sub-fields have helped us to expand and enrich our understanding of what history now includes. We now have different specializations, different fields of knowledge and expertise and different life experiences—all of which inform and influence our outlooks to life. It is therefore very difficult either to develop or recapture the collective representation that the Ibadan School of History stood for in the past. The inability of the Ibadan School to move out of the earlier approach was responsible for its characterization as backward and static. The new generation has taken on board all the criticisms and moved on to address issues relevant to their age. That of course does not mean we have taken our heritage for granted. There remains a strong linkage between the old Ibadan school and the new. What is important at this point is to examine how, within the intellectual diversity that developed, we have promoted or contributed to the tradition of intellectual discourse. Unfortunately, as inheritors of the glories of the Ibadan School of History, we were trapped in the inscrutable struggle to live up to the expectations of those we succeeded. Nevertheless, the intimate scale of the Department of History at Ibadan and its focus on Africa has made it possible for the department to mount an interesting range of courses and also made it possible for scholars and students to espouse the African experience in its interlocking dimensions. We have been building on the foundations which have been laid since the 1950s.

Economic History: The Road from the Past to the Future

The field of Economic History has offered me an exceptional opportunity to bring together a multiplicity of ideas interpretive of socio-economic existence in the developing world. My academic career took off in the Department of

History after my predecessor and the first Professor produced by Ibadan in the sub-specialty of Economic History, Professor Wale Oyemakinde retired from the University. I missed the opportunity of being mentored by him by a few years, as he had already left the services of the University before I came in. I am therefore privileged to step into his large shoes as a Professor of History with specialization in Economic History.

Economic history deals with the past in a way no other branch of history does. Unlike traditional historians who reject the concept of forces as identifiable agents creating or conditioning historical events (Elton cited in Fogel et al, 1983), economic historians deal with both humans and the forces creating or conditioning historical events. Given the fact that I have located a significant proportion of my work within the field of Economic History, it is imperative that I also highlight some of my contributions in this field. It is important to state that while Economic History is significantly different from other varieties of history, there remains a large measure of cross-fertilization of ideas between them. The economic historian requires skills in history, economics and other ancillary subjects.

Economic history has offered me the opportunity to use history as a tool to understand and critique the problems of development in the developing world. That has been my major pre-occupation in the last twenty years. There is a considerable self preservation instinct in the lives of every society. The significance and impact of this on the development paradigm adopted by every society is considerable. As a people, we are faced by a historical choice—to go back to dependence and underdevelopment or see ourselves as a people working towards the achievement of sustainable development. The major thrust of my argument in this regard is that we cannot continue to depend on the developmental models foisted on us by an external social formation in our yearnings for progress. In the days when Omoniyi Adewoye and Rowland Adeleye, two distinguished historians who

served this country creditably as Federal Commissioners were in government, the Nigerian state, which they served, had a clear direction as to what should be achieved. There were development plans and policies. Since this developmental approach was abandoned, the strategies of development adopted never had any clear or precise direction. I have canvassed for a developmental state that will recognize the systematic approach to development with ample attention to our historical experiences. Several of my works have followed this trajectory.

I have engaged in innovative historical interpretations and analyses of economic life and social change in our society (Adesina 2011). In this task, I have stressed the interdependence of socio-economic and historical forces. Some of my works have identified fiscal, financial and currency matters as issues of historical importance. A ground breaking work in this regard is my analysis of the underground economies (popularly known as the black market) (Adesina 2002: 77-91). In this work, I highlighted the transmutation of an arbitrary way of life into a legitimate way of life.

I have also done a critique of economists of the developing world who exist in ignorance of the history of their own people. Some of the theories they bandy around are based on assumptions which may or may not be true for a historical place or time (Coleman 1985). In my 2010 work entitled *The World the Economists Made: A Historical Analysis of Economic Policies and the Crisis of Adaptation in Anglophone West Africa.* (Adesina 2010a) I pointed out that economists and the countries of the developing world have had a long and complicated history of relations. One of this set of relationships came down to us as the desire to find ways to transform existence in several parts of the developing world according to the book of rules of a social formation with a totally different set of values and ideological background. Yet, centuries of relations have failed to find a common ground that would transform our societies from one battling with existentialist problems to lands of meaningful,

focused and sustained existence. This has formed a distrust of both governments and economists in several climes. The central proposition of the paper is that there are tensions and contradictions between economic policies and doctrines suggested by economists and livelihood in West Africa.

The difficulty of developing sound economic policies and doctrines for countries of the Third World has been a perennial one. This is because the scholarly and professional communities of Third World economists working in tandem with their counterparts in government and in the developed world may have become witting and unwitting tools for the underdevelopment of the developing world. As a result of this, Africa's development and growth agenda have in recent times been threatened by mass and intractable poverty and social deprivation (Adjasi and Osei 2007:449). For several decades, economists, political scientists, and government officials reckoned development as being coterminous with an increase in a nation's gross national product that is the total amount of goods and services produced. But by the 1970s awareness grew—in both the developing nations of the Third World and the developed industrialized nations—that some of the social changes which were coming with economic growth were undesirable. More people were coming to understand that for economic development to result in happier human beings, attention would have to be paid to the effects that economic growth was having on social factors. Was an adequate number of satisfying and challenging jobs being created? Were adequate housing, health care, and education available? Were people living and working in a healthy and pleasant environment? Did people have enough nutritious food to eat?" (Seitz 1988: xii). No other indicator of this observation is more apposite than a succession of economic policies and even worse, the succession of crises that afflicted countries of the Third World in the aftermath of the adoption of such policies. This has increased the social, economic and political disenchantment and disequilibrium in several countries as the capacity or ability of men and women to earn income and accumulate wealth have been severely

circumscribed. Following on the heels of these, of course, are issues bordering on acute poverty and competition for scarce resources, which in turn fuel ethnic, cultural and religious differences and violence.

Much detailed research remains to be done before we fully understand the roles of economists and the implications of economic policies in the occurrence of poverty and underdevelopment in West Africa. The misadventures occasioned by several policy experiments have over the years been linked to the poverty and insecurity witnessed in these countries. In addition, the pains of economic exclusion occasioned by decades of bad governance and corruption have unleashed on several countries of West Africa an army of poverty-stricken individuals and families, violence, corruption, unequal trade between nations—all that have snowballed into poverty.

Economics sometimes looks at poverty from a unique angle. The poor deserving their own poverty is one part of this, that is, people are poor for not being competitive enough—neglecting the fact that policies deprive the people of decent health care, housing, food—also sometimes not seen as rights but as rewards for hard work. In other cases, it is erroneously based on the assumption that the average poor person will seek pleasure at the expense of more practical needs. Another set of propositions saw poverty in Africa as the result of the people's fatalistic attitude to life, irrational value systems and archaic social institutions (Babalola 2002: 882).

But economists themselves have recognized the failure of economic policies and by extension, the role of economists (or a lack of the proper understanding of the terrain) in the economic malaise that has troubled Africa and the Third World. Since independence, Nigerian economists have operated with wrong, incomplete, outdated data and information. With this, it has been difficult to achieve economic and social development. Wolfgang Stolper in his *Planning Without Facts* (1966) established the baseline for a critique of post independence economic policies, plans and actions.

Stolper, a development economist who was head of the Economic Planning Unit in Nigeria between 1960 and 1962 warned against the use of meaningless financial aggregates, especially investment ratios, capital/output ratios and savings rates. He also did a trenchant critique of the fashionable practice of shadow pricing (Streeten and Scherf 1971:55). Stolper's work was the first attempt to bring to the wider public knowledge the dearth of complete and timely data for planning and management purposes in Nigeria (Koko 2010).

Another critique of economists arose from Professor Sam Aluko (2007: 85), Nigeria's foremost economist:

...Why does the African continent lag so much behind in spite of its abundant resources and the fact that the economic theories paramount in Europe, America and Asia are equally and efficiently adumbrated in Africa and continue to be so effectively adumbrated? The African economists are in no way inferior to their foreign counterparts. They leave Africa for Europe and America to study economics and come top among their colleagues, in spite of language differences, environmental and material handicaps. They return to Africa to propagate the same dominant theoretical constructs. Foreign economic experts also add their own constructs to the attempt to uplift the African economies from the morass into which they find themselves. The more the theory and the intellectual inputs the more relatively backward the African economies seem to become...Something must, therefore, be wrong not so much with the theories but with their relevance to the past and the present state of the African economies.

Writing in the same vein two decades earlier, John L. Seitz (1988: xi) who spent eleven years working for organizations which were concerned with economic and political

developments in the Third World, voiced the inappropriateness of some of the economic policies adumbrated by 'experts':

In the 1950s and 1960s I went as an employee of the US government to Iran, Brazil, Liberia, and Pakistan to help them develop. Disillusionment came as I realized that we did not really know how to help these countries relieve their widespread poverty...

The foregoing provides the historical background against which the critique of economists and economic policies for and in the Third World should be understood.

The difficulty of developing sound economic policies and doctrines for and in the Third World has been a perennial one. This has increased the social, economic and political disenchantment in several Third World countries. But since independence, this had become a crisis of self-immolation since many of our economists were trained in the liberal or neo-liberal tradition or even in Socialist economic traditions without an eye for historical and cultural realities of their own social formations. Since then, the scholarly community of Third World economists may have become tools for the underdevelopment of the Third world. No other indicator of this observation is more appropriate than a succession of economic policies and even worse, the succession of crises that afflict our world in the aftermath of the adoption of such policies. Following on the heels of these, of course, are issues bordering on poverty, competition for scarce resources, which in turn fuel ethnic, cultural and religious difference and violence.

But evidence as to how the economy fared in Nigeria has proved very indicting. Twenty years after the introduction of SAP, the major indices of human development were negative. Nigeria was ranked 159 out of 177 countries in the 2006 Human Development Report of the United Nations Program (UNDP). The report placed Nigeria among the "low Human

Development” nations of the world (Xinhua News Agency 2006). This was consequent upon the adoption of the doctrine of economic liberalization, the Structural Adjustment Programme policy. This has been described as a period when people lost control over resources and access to income, becoming impoverished in the process (Next 2010).

However, the capacity of African economists to understand the terrain in which they operate could be a problem. The need for food and shelter defines who we are, not only as Africans but as human beings. But there is more to being human in Africa than these two desires. The desire by economists and Western observers to reduce Africans to spendthrifts and alcoholics may be a misunderstanding of the cultural milieu. A cross-reference to other Third World countries will be adequate to explain this. The study by two MIT economists, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo in 2006 gave examples of Udaipur, India where in a year “more than 99% of the extremely poor households spent money on a wedding, a funeral, or a religious festival,” and South Africa, where 90% of households living under \$1 per day spent money on festivals. But for them, spending money on festivals, weddings and funerals gives the poor a sense of community (Mukoma Wa Ngugi 2010).

I concluded that many of the accepted theories of economic growth, most especially those crafted within classical and neo-classical intellectual boundaries have remained inapplicable in Africa. These countries set out on the path of reforms that were generally regarded as efficiency enhancing. Unfortunately some of these policies had been prescribed by western advisors and experts, all in an atmosphere that had neglected to resolve key problems associated with governance and administration, which had hindered the meaningful distribution of power, opportunity and resources (Aderibigbe 2010:117). These had implications for distributive justice. Even so, it has become increasingly difficult to introduce, implement or sustain any credible economic programmes given the peoples experiences in the past and their cynical attitudes to any reform programme.

The failure of these policies and the attendant chronic institutional weaknesses witnessed in these countries reflect the loss of control by both the economists and government in protecting public interest. Several economists have, however, hidden behind the excuse that several genuine advice were ignored by governments and that this absolves economists of any blame (Aluko 2010). But there is no doubt that economists have been part of the problem. For instance, the 1977 Technical Committee on Nigeria's Revenue Allocation was headed by Professor Ojetunji Aboyade, a renowned economist and the committee included other economists such as Professor O. Teriba, and with expert support from Professor Dotun Phillips and Dr. Adebayo Adedeji. This committee ultimately contributed to the confusion that pervaded Nigeria's revenue allocation formula. The committee in its report hid under subtle subterfuge of econometrics. The technical committee translated its recommendations into statistical and mathematical calculations that required a huge volume of accurate statistical details to back them up. The report was considered unrealistic and Pius Okigbo, a well-known economist was one of the critics of the report (Adesina 1998:237).

This scenario tallies with the reason for the failure of economic programmes identified by Gunnar Myrdal (1898-1987), the Swedish economist and Nobel Laureate. Myrdal had criticized the Econometric Society of "ignoring the problem of distribution of wealth in its obsession with economic growth, of using faulty statistics and substituting Greek letters for missing data in its formulas and of flouting logic." For him, the models for economic development used by economists are in the basic tradition of static-equilibrium models, which fail to grasp the complex interrelationships among economic, sociological, political, and psychological factors that mold economic development. He further argued that for anyone to understand economic development, "history and politics, theories and ideologies, economic structures and levels, social stratification, agriculture and

industry, population developments, health and education, and so on, must be studied not in isolation but in their mutual relationship" (Economic: Quasi 2009). That is still valid even today. Perhaps, that was the same context in which Polly Hill chastised economists at a Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER) conference in March 1962 for not doing enough "field economics." (Wells 1999:144).

In his book, Jeffrey Sachs (2005) has outlined a plan to eliminate extreme poverty by 2025. For him, the poverty trap of disease, physical isolation, environmental stress, political instability, lack of access to capital, technology, medicine, and education can be eliminated by coordinated attempts to help the poor reach the first rung on the "ladder of economic development" so they can rise above mere subsistence level and achieve some control over their economic futures and their lives." But this is being circumscribed by economists and economic policies in Africa.

That we are now foot-mats for the capitalist economy is because our economists have accepted to be the handmaidens of imperialist economic thought. The constructive otherness provided by so-called renegade economists has been consigned to the dunghill of history. In Nigeria and several Third World countries, this has oftentimes been punished. In Nigeria, leftist economists like Ola Oni, Bade Onimode, Omafume Onoge were hounded by neo-imperialist forces for deviating from laid down paths. The economists of the twenty first century should, however, seek to produce an invigorating and indispensable work whose scope will ultimately serve as the sub-structure upon which would be constructed a superstructure of progress and development.

The pervasiveness of poverty in West Africa not only represents the progression from error to error by 'mainstream' economists, but also reflects the demand for new directions in tackling growth and development matters. Economists of Africa should now avidly support greater use of history and sociology (rather than mathematics and econometrics) to provide a better understanding of the African economy. We

should now begin to see progressive commitment and constructive non-conformity among economists of the Third World as the platform for meaningful development. They should begin to develop new policy and theoretical directions that elevates African ideals and aspirations. In other words, our economists must become nationalists truly committed to finding lasting solutions to the chronic problems facing the Third World. This should be based more on the aspirations of their people rather than on the doctrines, philosophies and theories of others. Scholarship in economics in Africa must now begin to make a thorough study not only about the economic conditions of Africa but also about the people. The otherness of the Third World is equally important to enable the countries make the transition from one battling with existentialist problems to a land of meaningful, focused and sustained existence. But this will not come from a vacuum. The values, ideals, needs, aspirations and fears of the people must become significant in economics.

For as long as our economists refuse to learn the history and culture of their own people, so long will they be agents of underdevelopment, crisis and conflict. Henceforth, economists must work hand in hand with their country's historians, sociologists and anthropologists. They will then be able to benefit from one another's research to avoid the pitfalls that had been the bane of the economists of the past. This should no longer be left to a small minority of so-called intellectuals. In material and intellectual terms there has to be a change. But it should not only be academic it must also be transformatory. We need to remember that although commerce is very valuable but what is most valuable is our kinship. Our humanity as a people must take precedence over profit. Economists should help us build on this on an ongoing basis, beyond the graphs and the theories.

There is a sense in which the existence of poverty in Africa is regarded as an age-long social reality. The cure for poverty in these countries is to foster broad-based sustainable economic development facilitated by proactive public policies, one that set priorities for a more inclusive and

overall development strategy and in more humane terms. There is therefore the need to democratize economic policies and strategies in a conscious way that would facilitate the access of all to available goods and services, and creating the conditions that give equal opportunities to every member of the society. Also, as part of the solution to ending cycles of poverty in Africa, African economists must begin to understand the cultural milieu in which their policies must flower, and to understand those things that define who we are as human beings rather than as mere statistics or markets. This much was amplified by Sam Aluko in a crucial suggestion (2007: 79-80):

... the past and the present directions of scholarship in economics in Africa are deficient and need a new orientation, reorientation, a new relevance in the pursuit and dissemination of economic scholarship in Africa, a challenge of a new horizon in the theory and practice of economics in Africa.

If this foundational move is followed, the new class of economists schooled in this approach has the capacity to save Africa from squalor, deprivation and want. Finally, as Dibua has noted, the resolution of Africa's developmental problems should be rooted in African realities rather than based, as they have been, on "preconceived theories, models and paradigms" that replicate "Western institutions and experiences" (Dibua 2006 :3,5).

In 2003, an African-American journalist visited me in the Department seeking to know how Africans commemorated (and commemorate) the enslavement of brother Africans during the Atlantic slave trade. This revealed the fact that the wound represented by that obnoxious trade was still very strong. This strong observation provides a background for the recent debate kindled by a Professor of History at Harvard University, Henry Louis Gates Jr. on who was to blame for the enslavement and sale of Africans. It is quite obvious that

several Africans aided the sale of fellow Africans. For this argument to be tenable, however, much evidence must be provided to show the complicity of our forefathers. It should be recognized early also that Africans in the Diaspora should definitely be enraged by centuries of oppression and exploitation. But a studious reading of the history and experiences of Africa and Africans, both at home and in the Diaspora would reveal that their stories are the same. The point of departure here is that the bitterness expressed by the African Diaspora is both against the whites and the blacks.

Some of my works then began to dwell on the issue of slavery and slave trade and the resulting schism and the blame-game between Africa and its Diaspora. These works developed a schema for cooperation and collaboration between Africa and its Diaspora for continental, national and/or institutional development. The sale of Africans for over five centuries has continued to elicit the interest of every African historian. In my paper entitled, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Interrogating the Slavery Blame-Game and International Understanding in a Global Age*" (Adesina 2010b), I highlighted the numerous challenges posed by various reactions to the issue of slavery. The Trans-Atlantic slave trade yielded great dividends for those—Africans and Europeans—who partook in it. But it is also important to note that slaves were procured not by direct sales only but also partly by force and partly by other means. The gratuitous invocation of the horrors of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the roles of our African forefathers in the obnoxious trade, by Diaspora Africans to interrogate and converse across the Atlantic with their African brothers or to make a point is rearing its head in the contemporary period. While this move has come as an indictment of the continent and its people, its reverberations may have a rippling effect on African relations and global understanding. The trade in slaves between the 15th and 19th centuries had raised surprisingly few objections in the minds of either Africans or Europeans. According to Crowder (1962:65), "Once slavery had been instituted it was

hopeless to expect Africans who profited from it to have any more conscience about it than the Europeans who bought slaves, especially since in this case the Africans were not usually selling their own people, but members of other tribes (sic) whom they considered very often not only as inferior, but also as only fit to be slaves...". The slave trade no doubt represented the response of indigenous communities to a new economic situation. Although the trade brought great benefits for many African traders and societies, it equally brought great suffering to many Africans, both on their way to the coast and on the Middle Passage to the Americas where they were held as chattels (Crowder 1962:77). The consequences of this trade for human relations and for the future were immense.

A major question that should concern the present generation of historians is: can the feelings of abuse, exploitation and degradation experienced by the African Diaspora be assuaged in the contemporary world? This question becomes valid when matched against certain feelings across the Atlantic. Ideas about Africa in the Atlantic world on slavery were neither monolithic nor in agreement. In fact, the relationship between Africa, Africans and the African Diaspora is riddled with complexities that have and may continue to define relations between them. One major plank on the theme of African slavery was that of sympathy and understanding. Some of the early African Diaspora writers underscored the victimhood of the Continent.

In several cases, the concern is not with every individual voice or view but the collective voice of the people as represented by all socio-economic interests (Alferdteen 1990:64). But while oral history has helped the African Diaspora to recover its African past, it has also served as tools to help present Africans as major actors in the obnoxious slave trade. For instance, a major thought that has survived among Yoruba descendants in the Trinidad is the memory of the Yoruba civil wars and their devastating impacts. These bred such memories which remain evergreen in Trinidadian

songs recapitulating how their forebears ended up in slavery. For Trinidadians with roots in Oyo, according to Maureen Warner-Lewis (1997), the fact that the Ijebus were very active in the acquisition of prospective transatlantic slaves is recorded, remembered and transmitted in a song, which several drummers and families in Trinidad all knew well:

*The Ijebu are coming,
Run, hide,
People are hatching conspiracies
Against each other (Warner-Lewis 1997)*

In recent times, a new scholarship has developed that sought to base its statements and conclusions on the Trans-Atlantic slavery on what Africans did to help the course of the Atlantic slave trade. At the vanguard of the new interpretations is the Harvard Professor, Henry Louis Gates Jr., one of the most influential African-Americans in the United States who in April 2010 contributed an OP-Ed piece in *The New York Times* entitled *Ending the Slavery Blame-Game* (Gates 2010). This was perhaps an attempt to understand the heinous crime of slavery from the point of view of someone who considered himself a direct victim, a perspective that allows him to resist the sermonizing from Africa that has inextricably been wound up with the reparation issue. Who should take the reparation being asked for? Africa or the descendants of African slaves in the Diaspora? For Professor Gates, however, “there are many thorny issues to resolve before we can arrive at a judicious (if symbolic) gesture to match such a sustained, heinous crime. Perhaps the most vexing is how to parcel out blame to those directly involved in the capture and sale of human beings for immense economic gain.” Gates’ anti-Africa impulse found resonance in his outright rejection of earlier positions on the Atlantic slave trade: “...While we are all familiar with the role played by the United States and the European colonial powers like Britain, France, Holland, Portugal and Spain, there is very little discussion of the role Africans themselves

played. And that role, it turns out, was a considerable one, especially for the slave-trading kingdoms of western and central Africa..." (Gates 2010).

Professor Gates blithely proceeded to more or less significantly absolve the European nations of the complicity in the slave trade thereby standing the stories generations of Africans had learnt about their roles in the slave trade on its head: "For centuries, Europeans in Africa kept close to their military and trading posts on the coast...How did slaves make it to these coastal forts? The historians John Thornton and Linda Heywood of Boston University estimate that 90 percent of those shipped to the New World were enslaved by Africans and then sold to European traders. The sad truth is that without complex business partnerships between the African elites and European traders and commercial agents, the slave trade to the New World would have been impossible, at least on the scale it occurred. Advocates of reparations for the descendants of those slaves generally ignore this untidy problem of the significant role that Africans played in the trade, choosing to believe the romanticized version that our ancestors were all kidnapped unawares by evil white men, like Kunta Kinte was in "Roots." The truth, however, is much more complex: slavery was a business, highly organized and lucrative for European buyers and African sellers alike...But the sad truth is that the conquest and capture of Africans and their sale to Europeans was one of the main sources of foreign exchange for several African kingdoms for a very long time...(Gates 2010).

There is no doubt that Professor Gates utilized the apologies by a few people to recreate a factual and comprehensive acceptance of culpability by Africans in a very complex enterprise. That became the basis for a definitive national culture and moral heritage to free the West of a large portion of the blame, and it was this that was of particular significance in his narrative. He noted: "In 1999 for instance, President Mathieu Kerekou of Benin astonished an all-black congregation in Baltimore by falling to his knees

and begging Africa-Americans' forgiveness for the "shameful" and "abominable" role Africans played in the trade. Other African leaders, including Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, followed Mr. Kerekou's bold example." To attempt to delve too much into this issue would of course amount to double jeopardy for Africa. Thus, this may not only be a renewed attempt to demonize Africa but could also be clearly seen as a move that smacks of an effort couched in a pro-imperialist propaganda. This image of Africa is not too far from the images of barbarism painted by racist scholars and ideologues in the West in previous centuries. The only difference this time is that it is coming from a person who has African blood running in his veins. Already, Professor Gates' position is beginning to generate much debate across the world.

The recent debate on the issue of slavery and slave trade, and who was to blame for the heinous trade has had powerful reverberations across the world. The earlier forms of globalization had Africa at the losing end. But what should be the nature of the fight that would collectively reclaim the dignity of the African man and woman, give us life, freedom, dignity and prosperity? That is the question we must all be ready to answer in earnest in the 21st century. For us to foster global understanding within the context of the African experience therefore, we must move away from the cathartic rants of the previous centuries, Africa for Africans, reparations, back to Africa etc, which have been over-flogged—to a more critical and self-reflective engagement with the African past, present and future.

The Historian and the Future: Any Connection?

There is now a need to reconsider the purpose, agency and context of history and historical studies. What in actual fact is the essence of history as an intellectual discipline? Pedagogically and intellectually, history helps us to enhance our understanding and vision of society as well as sharpen our analytical skill. The knowledge of history gives people a

collective sense of corporate achievement and thus enlarges the personality of each member beyond the self. Unfortunately, we have all somehow fallen into the temptation of ignoring history and history matters a great deal. For a country like Nigeria attempting to define its national purpose and identity, the neglect of history is therefore a tragedy of immense proportions. As humans, we are apt to think about history only in respect of the past but this obviously is a negative effort. This lecture therefore addresses the issue in two related respects. First, what is the future of the historical discipline? and second, what does history and a historian have to do with the future? In my research, I found a very strong and extensive connection between history and the future.

The future, John Lonsdale, the distinguished historian, affirmed (1989: 127), "is treacherous territory for historians. It is also their continually imagined ideal." The question then is why should historians be interested in the future? Let us begin by highlighting the views of Sir Herbert Butterfield (1900-1979), the British historian, philosopher of history and the author of the popular book, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), who spent his career developing the view of the past. He once said that "the task of the historian is to understand the people of the past better than they understand themselves." (Available at <http://educationforum.ipbhost.com/index.php?showtopic=2664>). If that is then taken together with the saying by Alice Morse Earle (1851-1911), the American historian and author who proclaimed: "Yesterday is history. Tomorrow is a mystery...", the question that comes to one's mind is what then is the connection between the past, which is the task of the historian, and the future that is still a mystery? Do they have anything in common? The view that connects both is presented by Thomas Buckle (1821-1862), the English historian who asserted that, "There will always be a connection between the way in which we contemplate the past and the way in which we contemplate the present." This has been amplified by Otite (1992: 22) when he affirmed, "Man is not only a culture bearer. He is also a culture creator

both in spiritual and material terms. As such he contains his past and links his present with the future. Any human generation, therefore has a distinct social heritage, a kit for life, in which our past is always present." This is a mandate that historians have been waving like a flag. We therefore stand at a vantage position to play a role in this connection. A more valid question is, is it possible to remove the hands of the past from the present and the future? This is brought into bold relief by one of William Faulkner's most famous lines, "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (*Requiem for a Nun* 1951). Also, in his seminar paper entitled, "Problems of Writing Contemporary African History", which was presented at the departmental seminar in 1980, Professor J.F. Ade-Ajayi contended that, "the historian cannot understand the present as an entity in itself but only as a continuous part of the past" (Ade-Ajayi 1980:4). This position was echoed by Lonsdale (1989:127), "They may not admit it, even to themselves, but historians cannot help but judge the human successes and failures which they find in their recreation of the past other than by the light of their own hopes and fears for the future." From that perspective, one is brought to the realization that the past has an overwhelming influence on the present and on the future.

What I have tried to do here and which has informed my academic and research careers over the years involves an examination of the meanings, nuances and the complex issues, events and ideas of the past that have shaped the present but with great implications for the future. This agrees with the position of Notter (1972) (cited in Berg 2001: 211) who asserted that historical research extends beyond a mere collection of incidents, facts, dates or figures, but is the relationship among issues that have influenced the present, and will certainly affect the future.

Historical Cognition in Popular Culture

It would appear that in Nigeria, the basic idea of history and historical change derives from opinions, which have continued to mouth clichés and certain untruths about history.

This produced an unhistorical cosmology that has continued to drive the societal misconceptions of the values of history both as a discipline and as an idea. Unfortunately, each individual has continued to define history within the narrow prism of his specific needs. It is obvious that the lack of attention by professional historians to the civil society and what the society consumes or portrays as history has provoked an intellectual crisis that may be difficult to invalidate for a long time. We were so busy talking about history to ourselves and our students that we forgot to educate our people in a continent shattered by poverty, conflict, war, corruption and large scale instability. Different views of and about history have developed in diverse ways that such developments deserve careful analysis for us to make a substantive intervention in or correction of the errors. Several references, allusions and invocations have been made to clichés such as the ‘the dustbins of history’, ‘the rest is history’ and ‘dunghills of history.’ These have become too widely accepted for us to actually agonize over the location of these. But several other perspectives of history have developed, which have not been entirely palatable. In Nigeria, we have developed a whole pool of people, whom we can describe as being cognitively distracted in their understanding of history. With regard to history (both as a discipline and as a phenomenon) our people’s mental processes or perception, memory, judgment and reasoning are highly questionable. As a result of this, several colorations of ideas about the past have emerged. If we do not take steps to erase such misconceptions, the future of history may be in jeopardy. We shall proceed to examine some of these.

It appears that historical interpretations are very strange or foreign to many of our compatriots. This becomes noticeable in our people’s pre-occupation with recurring historical phenomena, which has resonated through the ages. One of this is the cut and dried issue of ‘history repeats itself.’ This has been bequeathed to us by espousers of such interpretations from time immemorial. In recent times, Chief Olusegun Okikiolu Obasanjo, Nigeria’s former President has

remained indefatigable in the attempt to help us define history or describe what it does. This kind of position has remained widespread and imputes to history what it is not and what it does not do. For Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, history not only belongs to one of those trite disciplines but behaves in a particular predictable manner. On Tuesday, 1 March, 2011 at the Peoples Democratic Party's presidential rally at the Tafawa Balewa Square in Lagos in the build-up to the 2011 April elections, Chief Obasanjo while campaigning in support of President Goodluck Jonathan proclaimed without equivocation:

Mr. President, people normally say they do not want history to repeat itself; it is bad history that must never repeat itself. When the history is good we should pray that it repeats (emphasis mine). In this TBS (Tafawa Balewa Square) venue, your predecessor, late President Umaru Yar'Adua, campaigned here about four years ago and won the presidential election, that is good history. Having been on this platform this time around, all that you need from me is to congratulate you. Let us congratulate ourselves for this victory (The Punch, Wednesday, March 2, 2011a, p.2).

While it is often remarked that "History repeats itself", this cannot strictly be right. This is because there is confusion between what people consider as 'history repeating itself' and 'historic recurrences.' Historic recurrence is the repetition of similar events in history (See Trompf: 1979). Since historic recurrences can sometimes induce a sense of resonance or *déjà vu*, it draws a misleading conclusion. As historians, we know history never repeats itself since it is impossible to experience the exact or detailed repetition of events, *dramatis personae* or characteristics. One is therefore by no means left with the conclusion that it is not possible for history to repeat itself.

In Nigerian journalism, the same power to define history has also been evident. In the column, *Republican Ripples*, Olakunle Abimbola in his criticism of our politicians sounded this note of warning:

*As for their Abuja sponsors, whose sense of impunity gifts (sic) these South-West reprobates Dutch courage, **history is there to make mincemeat of them and their illusory power** (emphasis mine). Before then however, let them be wary of turning Nigeria into another Somalia. Destroying the judiciary, because political crybabies and mandate robbers would not be consoled, because they have lost what they stole, is akin to building a sold (?) expressway to Mogadishu. Are the Abuja demigods too far gone to realize this self-imposed danger? (The Nation, Tuesday, March 22, 2011, p.21).*

Looking at the statements above, not only did Chief Obasanjo believe that he has the capacity to define what history is, but also arrogated to himself the capacity to represent popular memory. Whether the election of Yar'Adua was good history for us or not belongs to future historians. In the same vein, our journalist friend believed he has the power to sentence people to death with history. To him, history has the capacity to make mincemeat of people. History from popular perspectives seems to be of extremely dubious value.

There is also the view that history through introspection and self-appraisal when not carefully handled drags you backwards—an enterprise that is regarded as very injurious and should be discarded with all of one's vigour. This much was revealed in a conversation with a national newspaper by a former socialite, Jennifer Madike who once bestrode Nigeria's social scene like a colossus. Madike while trying to draw away attention from her sordid image created by her brush with the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency and her incarceration for five years for alleged drug-related

offences, proclaimed the act of remembering one's past a dangerous and useless avocation, "I don't want to recollect or talk about it. In life people always want to drag you backwards to remember your past. They want your past to continue destroying your future. That is history, the future is where I am going to spend my life and that is where I am going, the future." For Madike, remembering the past destroys one's life! Even when she grudgingly accepted the validity of the existence of the past, she was careful to wrap everything around God, and with history only treated as a pernicious abstraction. To her, it was something that was just ornamental. According to her:

My past is only there to make me to be more careful and learn from it. God has warned me a lot about going back to the past because he has forgotten the past and anyone who wants me to remember my past when I have already learned from it wants to destroy me (Sunday Punch, March 14, 2010, p.36, "I regret making wrong choices in life" - Jennifer Madike).

With this position, Madike has foreclosed the capacity to evaluate one's experiences as a precondition to learning from the past or even use such experiences to serve as useful examples to others. Perhaps also, to her, history and trauma are the same. What she was going through was a post-traumatic experience, not history, for we know history is not the same as trauma even though many think or perceive events in their past exactly as she did. But it is obvious that regretting one's past does not obliterate that past. It is a constant companion in your trip to the future. The past cannot be totally forgotten. To do so is an illusion.

We take the next example from Suleiman Adokwe who from 2011 represents Nassarawa South in the Senate and whose views about history should never be written in the Constitution. He has developed a peculiar form of history—history 'written upside down.' Let us visit his views:

... There's no government, there is no community, there is no religion that would encourage total spending of its revenue. As a Christian, my bible is very clear about savings; savings is a part of your religious obligation. The basis upon which Joseph became prominent was because he saved for the rainy day otherwise, **the entire history of Israel and Egypt would have been written upside down...** (emphasis mine) (*The Punch*, Tuesday, October 18, 2011b: 15).

While I agree totally with the earlier section of his statement, as a professional historian I have not been able to understand the kind of history referred to in the latter part of the quote. If such a history actually existed or exists, then it must then be read standing upside down or sitting upside down.

There are also those who feel everyone is, and should be a historian so that history can be bent and cuddled in one's own favour. In other words, there is the tendency of non-professional historians to always skew their stories to cast themselves in good light. This has been remarkably handled by one Haniel Ukpaukure. In his article entitled, *History and Akwa Ibom 2015* (*Daily Sun* November 30, 2011; p.20), he affirmed, "History is one fact of life a lot of people would love to rework because it is often so inconvenient, even threatening in its raw form to those who would rather duck the unpleasant parts of their past. So the better to cauterize it, cure it of its inconvenient rough edges, and thus remake it to suit individual interests. Well, it is not just possible to reinvent history for the simple reason that as the communal repository of the past, history is accessible to all and sundry without the intermediation of a gatekeeper. No one can shut out the people from their story; they know it, even intimately, and would eagerly point out- and even readily resist—any attempt to distort it." His position is in the mould of that old and great African proverb that says, "Until the lions have their own historians, the history of the hunt will always glorify the hunter." In contrast, professional historians seek to

write objective history—one devoid of biases and prejudices. They cannot afford to recapture everything from the past blindly and uncritically like the writers of chronicles and theocratic accounts.

A final example in this section is the public outcry generated by the issue of fuel subsidy removal. Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State, speaking to reporters on behalf of the Nigerian government on Monday, 12 December 2011 after the meeting of the National Economic Council (NEC) in Abuja, Nigeria's federal capital city, asserted that:

What is happening is a case of Nigerians not trusting the government and it is a case of making a mistake because you can't use the process of yesterday. Those who think of yesterday and today will miss tomorrow. Because people think there was so much waste yesterday, (they say), how are we sure that if this one happens it will be utilized properly? (The Nation, "Sambo, Governors: fuel subsidy removal certain," Tuesday, December 13, 2011, p. 2).

It is indeed worrisome to see a governor advocating for the relegation of the past in our journey to the future. We must always remember the past so we can guard against the mistakes of the past.

However, all is not lost as the intervention by the writer of the *Hardball* section in *The Nation* newspaper of Tuesday, 20 December 2011 reveals. In his piece entitled, "'Victory' in Iraq's unwinnable war" in the aftermath of the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq in December 2011. Commenting on what he called 'the shoddy thinking of the Bush (Junior) administration and the starry-eyed theorists who cobbled together the conceptually naïve idea of a "New American Century", he proclaimed:

The Iraq War has now ended, with the same Obama proudly but disbelievingly claiming victory. He had no choice but to posture

ludicrously. If Obama is re-elected, he may also find the courage to end the Afghan war, If not, his successor will do it, for that war is also unwinnable. The dynamics of history, however, ensure that either because of hubris or incompetence, leaders will always embark on stupid military adventures for various, largely untenable reasons. We should expect that someday, wars, and the stupidities that spawn them, will end with the end of history. But can history ever end?

I have drawn my examples from people from different parts of the country. That is instructive enough to tell us that our people have over the years developed peculiar definitions and understandings of what history is and/or what it does. What are some of the causative forces for this problem? What is certain is that while professional historians have remained complacent, others have taken over the initiative to teach society about what history is and what it does. However, it is important also to say that there are certain inherent risks in allowing history to be told by everyone in whatever way or form they liked. This is the problem we have encountered with surrealist historiography.

Surrealist Historiography and African History

Surrealism privileges visual aspect as the bearer of meaning. It allows a very different historical picture to emerge from historical processes. Although visual representations have informed the narrative structures of historiography, it has remained both a source of inspiration and a battleground (Forshage, n.d). In several instances, those who do not care for historical detail trade misunderstandings and errors that unfortunately reach wider circulation than history books.

This section should be understood as a critique of the creative art's attempt at conflating entertainment, history, adventure, commercialism, sympathy, and identity politics. Unfortunately, the fantastic narratives of the interface of culture and modernity in Africa embedded in the film, stage

plays or even drama ultimately translate into a tool for the (mis)education of African children about their own people. The contexts of the film and stage plays while on the one hand playing significant roles in popularizing history have on the other hand prevented a full understanding of that same history. In other words, films on Africa, stage plays by African dramatists and playwrights, and more recently, Nollywood and others provide particular challenges to conventional historical understandings.

Several films, stage performances and plays written by both Africans and non-Africans challenge our conception of history. In several cases, the thematic areas have emphasized the sublime and the ridiculous. For example, *The Gods Must be Crazy*, a 1981 film remains one of the most fascinating stories about one of the groups inhabiting the Kalahari Desert in Southern Africa. It produces exhilarating laughter, excitement and suspense. It however, goes beyond that. It is a double edged film that has also succeeded in transmitting myths, cultural stereotypes and exclusion. In the film, the “gods dropped” a mesmerizing coca-cola bottle from the sky into a traditional African community. From that moment, chaos was born. This led a full-blooded man from the community to proceed on a long journey to return the bottle to the ‘gods’ “at the end of the world.” This is the film industry’s attempt at marrying entertainment, adventure, commercialism and identity politics. Unfortunately, the fantastic narratives of the inter-face of culture and modernity in Africa embedded in the film ultimately translated into a tool for the (mis)education of African children about their own people. An entire ethnic group was presented as stupid. This is the kind of thing that leads to the development of stereotypes. The local people inhabiting the Kalahari Desert not only became victims of colonial dispossession; they at the same time suffered the trauma of being cast in derogatory lights. We have continued to be buffeted by such arrogance and misinformation.

The question that comes to one’s mind is how does this happen? We must look to the creative arts industry for answers to how this is accomplished. Femi Osofisan, the literary giant, renowned dramatist, poet and award winning

playwright, who had spent his entire career in the theatre arts provides an insight to how this sometimes happens. Although the example comes from a work of fiction, it can be stretched to understand what happens in historical reconstruction. Osofisan explained:

.. for instance, in my adaptation of Fagunwa's novel, Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale, which I made for the now moribund Chams Theatre Series, my original conception was to make one of the hunters a woman. But my director was so worried about this at the time, pointing out that the play was already quite loaded, that I agreed to shelve the idea. But although Fagunwa himself did not state this, we must not forget that we had women hunters too, some as courageous and daring as the male ones we hear about. And when you think about it really, there is no reason why one of Fagunwa's heroes, especially the one called Olohun-Iyo, cannot be female! One of these days I will definitely return to this. (The Sun, December 3, 2011, p.27).

He further explained the reasons for his adoption of this approach:

As far as I know, surrealism as a style, as a movement is not qualified by geographical frontiers...It is true that I have employed elements of the surrealistic now and then in some of my prose, because as you know, daily living in this part of the world is an almost continuous intermingling of both the tangible and intangible aspects of existence. To capture that in full dimension, you do need an apprehension of this dual level of consciousness, for which surrealism is sometimes the best weapon for the writer...(The Sun, Decemebr 3, 2011, p.28).

Osofisan's, philosophy of history is also clear:

... I am not saying we should renounce the past— anyone familiar with my works knows already how heavily dependent they are on ancient rituals and folklore—but that we take from the past only those aspects we are sure will help us make fuller sense of our present, and help us advance into the future (The Sun, December 3, 2011, p.28).

But Osofisan equally recognized the danger represented by an uncontrolled passion of the creative arts industry for improvisation and inventiveness, and the dangers these portend for our collective future:

Take the so-called Nollywood for instance. This is a robust industry that has developed out of private initiative. It has created an enormous market all over the world, and become immensely popular, immensely influential. Which is where the problem arises, because the promoters of Nollywood are not thinking of culture, or of the country's public relations profile. All that concerns them is making money, and by the fastest means possible. Their first and primary concern therefore is to find what themes or methods will bring in the fastest buck ... Most people I know are worried about this, and wish to correct this. But how? That has been the question. (The Sun, December 3, 2011, p.27).

Perhaps, for the historian, the question is 'how?' With the way things are therefore, since Nollywood and many of our playwrights are now more influential than the Historical Society of Nigeria (HSN), and since millions of Nigerians would rather daily consume "history" according to Nollywood and other works of fiction than from history written by professional historians, the discipline of history

and our understanding of the past and how it can be apprehended are in grave danger. Thus, until historians reshape and reposition their tools and trajectories, this will continue to be a problem. The distortions of our history are palpable. So what alternatives have historians provided and how have we intervened in identifying and explaining social reality in a country that is bereft of a reading public? There have been conscious and determined approaches to redress the problem. But as we also try to fashion tools to reposition history, other challenges surface from those who would wish to convince us of the comatose nature of history as a discipline.

History and the Search for a New Identity

From the last decade of the 20th century, there was a steady drop in student enrolment in the history department. Many of those who enrolled were reluctant students who came into the department as academic refugees after being denied admission into Law, Political Science and even English! Because of dearth of students, the Department of History at Ibadan by 1998 had to change its entry requirements for students to come into the department. This was to ensure that we kept our jobs! We started to accept other subjects such as Government and Economics in lieu of History as entry requirements into our B.A. History degree course. From that period, we began receiving a new generation of History students who had no prior interest in or understanding of the subject. We have evidence to show that a large percentage of them eventually went through the course as “living deads.” A survey carried out at this University and Osun State University in 2010 revealed that most History students, and therefore, a significant number of the next generation of historians had no preference for the subject. It was an option of last resort. While some have grown to like it once they took a few classes, many others have remained apathetic (Adebayo 2010: 4). Students that have not developed interest in the subject can drive an uncommitted teacher crazy. You

should see the vacant eyes and disinterested disposition of such students in the classroom. Their demeanour suggested a dislike for both the course and the teacher. Some of them have graduated cursing their luck and the lecturers teaching such a “boring and useless course.”

Since the turn of the century, several parents, observers and many of our students have remonstrated with us to do something about the course. Pressure then began to pile on us from every angle to change the name of the department into something more trendy and highfalutin. The inexplicable desire for high-sounding titles and degrees added fuel to the fire. On innumerable occasions, we have received deputations from both high and low, advising us to add something to our name to stave off extinction. Even a very senior historian nurtured in the brave old traditions of the Ibadan School of History had discreetly sent a note to us to adopt the path of ‘sanity’ and prevent extinction by going the new way. There were even those that went as far as suggesting that the department be merged with Classics or the Institute of African Studies. Subversive elements even suggested that the department be scrapped entirely. Such people did not appreciate the fact that not all disciplines can be market-oriented. Some are important as service departments while others serve academic and intellectual purposes. All these help in the creation of the total personality. Despite the pressure, we have remained true to the time-honoured intellectual traditions of historical studies. We have thus come to the conclusion that changing the name of the department offers no cast-iron guarantee for the protection of what we do in exchange for filthy lucre. But our desire to maintain a healthy value in the discipline must also be supported by renewed efforts to tackle the problem of irrelevance from its roots. The solutions go far deeper than the mere changing of names and boosting student enrolment. Just as we realize the danger of sticking to tradition, the problem associated with the change of name is obvious—history becomes a junior partner in a marriage of

convenience. It offers no guarantee for the survival of the discipline. The change of name is a reaction to the needs and requirements of our society. But that is not enough.

There is an inevitable logic in retaining the old nomenclature. We should not as professional historians be seen as undermining the field. Even if we add "Strategic or International Studies" to the name of the department, as is now popularly done by lesser endowed universities in response to the market and the future nexus, we are not likely to follow that route to self-immolation. It is hard to imagine Ibadan without its famous historical landmark—the Ibadan School of History. The identity of the Ibadan school is a national heritage that must be preserved. Those who came later and do not have the tradition that Ibadan has developed over the years should be allowed to enjoy this unusual privilege.

Going hand in hand with the pressure to rename the department is the challenge that is currently preventing us from doing what we should be doing. Under the guise of internationalization, the University of Ibadan has in a way helped in recolonizing us, as we have lost the advantage of becoming an agenda setter. There is no doubt that with the new promotion guidelines with which this university seeks to foster rigorous and prime research, there is an element of dysfunctionality. These goals must now be subjected to critical scrutiny. In addressing the research and publication question, this institution raised and addressed one salient question but neglected to raise and address another. The question which has been addressed is: By which means are we advancing the frontiers of knowledge? By its insistence on vigorous research and high profile outlets, the University has succeeded in raising the stature of intellectualism in this institution and this is commendable. The question that has been neglected and which constitutes a grave error for a place like Ibadan is this: How are research frontiers consolidated, made hegemonic or subordinate and disarticulated? Of course, this new question must be asked within the context of

the role of African universities in the growth and development of African nations and not necessarily solely within the context of globalization as is currently the case.

In the crucial decades of independence and nationhood, African universities were noted not only for the training of the national manpower but also the way they have shaped and developed attitudes, skills and values of the dominant elites who constituted a very important influence on the pattern of post-independence development (Omer-Cooper 1980:23). Unfortunately now in the 21st century, Africa is self-adjusting to a template created by the West for itself and now being imposed on the rest of the world. In retrospect, this can only seem a vast obstacle to African development in the modern world. Even the entire European colonization project described as a major obstacle to African progress had been rolled back for more than 50 years now, yet we do not appear to be making any meaningful progress towards self-sustaining development. The African experience contrasts sharply with the Japanese experience or any of the Asian Tigers for that matter. This much was revealed by Basil Davidson (1992:42) in his work, *The Black Man's Burden*, that chronicled the African's deep disappointment with the post-independence nation-state. He asserted:

Japan was able to accept 'Westernization' on its own terms, at its own speed, and with its own reservations, ensuring as far as possible that new technology and organization were assimilated by Japanese thinkers and teachers without dishonor to ancestral shrines and gods. Japanese self-confidence could be salvaged. Such an outcome was impossible in dispossessed Africa.

In the intellectual climate of the present epoch, no matter how much we talk of the virtues of African history and culture, proponents of Western science and technology mantra have continued to repudiate accommodation with traditional values and institutions. In other words, there could

be no question of depending on indigenous institutions and culture in the continent's search for progress. Such institutions must be abolished to give way for our mission of "catching up with the West." Yet, our universities' engineering units have not produced the ideas, formulae, recipes or even the necessary machines that would launch us on that scientific path in the mould of the Asian Tigers. Of course, it is now becoming even more impossible for twenty-first century Africa to build self-confidence because thinkers and teachers in Africa generally and Nigeria in particular are assimilating Western knowledge on terms dictated by the West. This has led to a slavish acceptance of models drawn from entirely different social formations. We have therefore continued on the erroneous path of trying to build national capacity on non-African lines. The university system has seldom, if ever, looked so inadequate as it has done in the last decade or so, most especially since we have consistently failed to nurture creativity based on useful and useable research. In more recent years, the politicization of certain aspects of our intellectual life and the scramble for influence through high offices has created dysfunctional consequences. By so doing, African universities are now clearly part of the problem rather than the solution to the continent's lack of progress.

Universities in sub-Saharan Africa, Ibadan inclusive, are now more interested in publication outputs that reveal scientific outcomes in terms of published documents in scholarly journals rather than lay emphasis on painstaking and profound research or in a set of publications that would help the nation and by extension, the continent to achieve progress in a meaningful way. It is even more terrible now that people scramble to publish for promotion rather than engage in deep, profound and painstaking research. This is now becoming an established order, reinforcing an insatiable ambition either to expeditiously climb up the academic ladder or imitate foreign ideas, customs and values. Here, I must align myself with the position of a former Minister of Education on the question of our competitiveness on the world universities scale and the desire to attain a world class

academic status in the nation's mere six decade university experience. "Meeting the world standard is not a pressing issue and should not take priority over other more fundamental needs. You have to be good first, before you can be very good, and very good before you can be excellent. Nigeria must cure itself of putting the last things first" (Okojie et al. 2010: 24; Omolewa, 2010). In this academic rat race, it is not only knowledge in the humanities that has remained endangered but also its main tool—books, are relegated to the background as important products of our research endeavours. The non-availability of published materials by our own scholars has made us dependent on materials produced abroad for our teaching and research. A commentator recently had cause to lash out at what he regarded as our lack of intellectual productivity:

Rather than grow away from dependent philosophies and borrowed norms, the problem worsened...Since Nigeria's tertiary institutions have been virtually destroyed, and little research takes place in their precincts, it is not surprising that for any Nigerian to be regarded as an expert he has to first sojourn abroad. Now the rout is complete, the country is barren of any real intellectual endeavour, few books are being written and fewer still read (The Nation, Hardball, 2012a: 64).

These negative tendencies are being corrected.

The Ibadan School had battled the imperial historiography to a standstill through ideas expressed in its publications. The role of books in this major onslaught cannot be underestimated. The style of imperialist historiography, it would be recalled, set out to deal with history in terms of civilization with the dehumanizing habit of representing Africa as a continent with no history (Osadolor, O.B. and L. E. Otoide 2008: 401-418.) How soon we forget the idea of history expressed by G.W. F. Hegel:

Africa is no historical part of the world: it has no movement or development to exhibit. What we probably understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, undeveloped spirit, still evolved in the conditions of mere nature, and which has to be presented here as the threshold of the world's history (Hegel 1956: 99).

Since imperial historiography did not seek to represent any fairly accurate reconstruction, they represented viewpoints necessary for the justification of imperial rule. There is no indication in the world today to assume that this imperialistic attitude has abated. For the sake of our self-esteem and stature, we must continue to protect our own heritage. The price of freedom is eternal vigilance. People have erroneously assumed that since we are now part of the globalized world, the work of the earlier African scholars are accomplished and we no longer need to proclaim our Africanity from the rooftops. That may to some extent be true. But the challenges are new and the labourers are few. Africa exists in the world today as a junior partner and globalization is gradually turning into an erosion of our values and ways of life. This has been amplified by Awe (2008:112), "We stand the risk of being victims of this option more significantly as we do not have the technology to do more than accommodate what is being offered to us globally, nor are we fully prepared to deal with this new influx and to accommodate it on our own terms; indeed we do not have as yet the capacity to develop the right infrastructure to sustain even our present way of life and culture." What should the historian of Africa do?

As a historian, I am aware that certain books have helped nations to achieve a sense of purpose and direction. In the United States for instance, intellectual currents of the day worked to bolster the American spirit of expansionism. Charles Darwin in his *Descent of Man* (1871) used his idea of natural selection as a handy argument for imperialism. During the 1880s Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, the President of the Naval War College at Newport, Rhode Island, through his

book, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783*, became the leading proponent of sea power in the United States. He argued that national greatness and prosperity flowed from sea power. With his work, he began to shape public opinion and influenced a gradual expansion of the United States Navy (Tindall and Shi 1999: 1036-7).

Books embody great ideas that have the capacity to shape the destiny of any nation. Unfortunately, the great stampede caused by the Ibadan promotion guidelines has focused emphasis on journal articles. This is not to say that journal articles are not important. They are very important in that they serve as outlets for our newer and profound discoveries. But books are equally important. They provide roadmaps for our scholarly endeavours. Unfortunately, we have now stopped working on producing good books that will take several years to produce, in favour of quick journal articles that count very highly in the scheme of things. Anyone who is interested in writing a very good history book now will find to his sorrow that the younger folks publishing in journals have overtaken him. It is therefore important to understand the peculiar nature of each discipline in rewarding hard work and excellence. We need to review the factory-line type production of professors that does not try to understand the peculiar needs of different fields in our system of rewards. In cultural terms, it may now take another generation or two before our arts, culture and intellectual verve return to what it was two generations ago. History is in full retreat and with it our sense of value and self esteem. How shall we reclaim our past to ennoble our future? We now turn to the strategies we have used and those being advocated to uplift the discipline.

History: A Discipline Restored

The need to advance historical knowledge is central to our survival as a people. Historians must therefore seek within their specialization to advance the knowledge of their people. Original scholarly contributions in extremely diverse ways are therefore important to the restoration of the discipline of history to its pride of place. This is a gradual and painstaking

process. Since I joined the Department in 1993, I have been propelled by the need to contribute in a significant way to the advancement and elevation of historical scholarship and debates. The department itself has continued to provide the platform for scholarly research, academic excellence, national development, and global understanding. With my abiding passion in fostering the role of research in human understanding, I am indeed proud to be associated with the processes that enhance both intellectual and human capital and the continent's socio-economic development. The products of my final year course (HIS 403) "Development: Concepts and Realities in the Third World", inundated me with encouraging feedback on insights gained from the course. The curriculum has enabled me to touch on the world and this has inevitably fostered high quality research that will serve to enhance our knowledge on development issues.

My assumption of duty on November 1, 2001 as the Acting Head of the most prestigious School of History in Nigeria posed a challenge that demanded all my attention. Though lacking experience in running a department, I was determined to live up to the expectations of those who had reposed so much confidence in me by raising the general academic tone of the department, making the department more visible and at the same time striving towards academic excellence. In addition, I was also determined to pursue my personal intellectual engagement more vigorously. I set up many ad-hoc committees involving all cadres of staff, for the advancement of the department. Between 2001 and 2003 several initiatives were pursued to change the public face of history. First, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the University of Ibadan and the Kennesaw State University, Georgia USA on October 24, 2003 at the behest of the Department of History to engage in mutual educational exchanges, study, pedagogy, research, publication, and other mutually beneficial scholarly activities. The then Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dele Falase encouraged the immediate consummation of the agreement and by June 2004,

the agreement had come into operation with the exchange of academic staff. Till date, there is no confirmed member of academic staff in the department that has not participated in the exchange visit. The agreement is in its second five year term. We similarly encouraged academic staff to apply for conferences and attend scientific meetings in different parts of the world. Our experience has confirmed the department as one of the most internationalized in the University. These have yielded great dividends in terms of publications and attitudinal change.

The Department also established three lectures series to bridge the gap in our understanding of the world we live in. These were the Historical Documentary Lecture Series; the Distinguished Alumni Lecture series; and the Distinguished Lecture Series. In all these lectures, we impressed it on our guest speakers to provide a handle on their experiences, invigorate our knowledge of people and society and the world around us. I instituted formal mentorship by attaching students at the undergraduate levels to academic advisers and mentors. I also re-introduced the study of French for History students and the Department of European Studies was deeply impressed with the performances of our students. When I returned as the Acting Head on June 1, 2006, I concentrated on recruiting staff, enlarging the curriculum, deepening our intellectual profile and engagements, and generally elevating the intellectual standards of the Department. We also earned full accreditation for the programme from the National Universities Commission (NUC).

A major plank on which my administration rested was the interchange of ideas and global understanding. Towards this end, the Department convened a major conference, the University of Ibadan-Kennesaw State University Joint International Conference on Globalization, Migration, Citizenship and Identity (November 6-9, 2007). Two influential books, Akanmu Adebayo and Olutayo C. Adesina (eds) 2009, *Globalization and Transnational Migrations: Africa and Africans in the Contemporary Global System* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, U.K, Cambridge Scholars Publishing). 361pp;

and Akanmu Adebayo, Olutayo C. Adesina and Rasheed Olaniyi (eds). 2010, *Marginality and Crisis: Globalization and Identity in Contemporary Africa* (Lanham, Maryland, U.S.A. Lexington Books, 276 pp) emanated from papers presented at the conference.

Digital Archives: The Oral History, Information Retrieval and Documentation Unit

The idea of an Oral History, Information Retrieval and Documentation Unit was incubated by Dr. Laray Denzer, the Head of Department from 1995 to 1997. The Unit was designed as a major repository of oral information derived from endangered sources. The idea was to record and preserve the voices of those who had in one way or the other been witnesses to or part of history in the making. These included those who fought in the First and Second World Wars, surviving members of the nationalist class, and politicians of the First Republic, among others. Dr. Denzer provided the seed money for the take-off of the unit from a personal research grant she secured. The succeeding Heads of Department, Dr. B.A. Mojuetan and Dr. (later Professor) Dare Oguntomsin built on this initial effort. They secured the space for the Unit and began a systematic purchase of the equipment required for its take-off. From 1997, our students began to deposit tapes and CDs of oral interviews recorded in the course of their research projects. The systematic effort to ensure the growth and development of the oral history programme received the support and encouragement of the entire staff of the Department.

The mutually transformative process generated by a sustained digitization programme and the recording and preservation of oral records of Nigerian history began during my tenure as the Acting Head of Department between 2006 and 2008. Under my leadership and as the Principal Investigator, the Department secured a grant of \$19,100 from the U.S. Department of State under its *Ambassadors' Fund for Cultural Preservation* with which it launched a well-funded digital initiative designed to preserve local memory. The Department's documentation Unit began its first major

project under the theme, *UCI and the Making of the New Elite, 1948-1962*. The focus was on the development of the University College, Ibadan (UCI), with emphasis on everyday life and culture seen from personal perspectives and experiences, but with a broader emphasis on the historical development of Nigeria. The digitization process began slowly and was painstakingly carried out to ensure a successful preservation of local memory.

Within the context of a wider initiative, the Department had the intention of not only creating a database, gathering information from all surviving members of UCI but also to create and present useable material for present and future historians. We were interested in preserving the past in digital form. Parts of the recording were screened when the University celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in November 2008. In preparation for that celebration, the Department of History, the home of the famous *Ibadan School of History* gave itself the onerous task of producing a documentary on the early days of the University. This entailed the interview of a sizeable proportion of the 1,125 (one thousand, one hundred and twenty-five) persons who were at the University between 1948 and 1962 but now spread across the length and breadth of Nigeria. Surviving members of this group, who constituted the nation's first set of elites, had by then become an endangered species as many were sickly and others were ageing fast. The interviews recorded on digital cameras and audio cassettes were not only going to be turned into great professional documentaries depicting the early history, growth and development of the University and the nation, but were also designed to be deposited at the *Oral History, Information Retrieval and Documentation Unit* specially created by the Department of History for gathering such information from a wide spectrum of Nigerians.

The materials derived from the research initiatives will be made available to future researchers. The oral history project highlights the idealized vision of the *Ibadan School of History* and the trajectories emerging from the narratives. Furthermore, the project is designed as a critique of the

dialogic process. The analytical attention paid to different issues and episodes, as well as generalizations and empirical backing to several matters of historic importance will be accomplished. Crucially, this archival effort not only represented a great endeavor in historical reconstruction and preservation, but also one that will remain enigmatic and rewarding. We are also likely to build a new generation of historians weaned on the doctrine of self reliance and/or in professional accomplishments as film and documentary makers and script writers. Our products would serve as the advance guard of the world of Docu-drama, which is the marriage of two unlikely forms—documentary and drama. While the documentary is the record of factual events, drama is the imitation of life. The Docu-drama, a hybrid genre comprising the documentary and drama can serve as an alternative source of recording and disseminating historical facts (Ogunleye 2005: 480).

There is however an acute sense of structural imperfection based on years of stunted growth and fiscal inadequacies. Today, if a Nigerian citizen does not go to a tertiary institution to study history, the past for such persons will continue to remain a history (Ogunleye 2005:479). We need to correct this in different ways. The department and the discipline of history will make more progress if we are specially supported on advancing the digital project. In tandem with that, we are going to make surer progress if we are allowed to recruit first rate staff and consciously rebuild the department for a more purposeful intellectual engagement with society. The piecemeal approach in this rebranding effort is making little impact on the intellectual firmament.

Developing a Sense of History

What is the value of history as a subject, and how viable is it as a mode of inquiry and/or as a phenomenon? This question is appropriate seeing that we are a people alienated from our history and culture and given the fact that we are a people privileging scientism as the highest stage of knowledge and

well-being. Osofisan's warning about neglecting the arts is apt here. According to him:

I have always said this, that the government has a duty, a moral and political duty, to support the arts, if they really want to develop the country. Because development is holistic; it is not just the building of roads and hospitals, but also of minds, of the intellectual, spiritual and cultural health of the people. Everything must go hand in hand. (The Sun, December 3, 2011: 27).

Unfortunately, history and many of the Arts-related subjects have consistently been lumped together as the unserious and useless disciplines. Not too long ago, the then President Olusegun Obasanjo publicly dismissed such courses as sociology, history and mass communications as "useless" (Abati *The Guardian*, Nov. 23, 2006) stating that reading such courses in the University amounts to 'mis-education.' To be sure, Chief Obasanjo was not the only one initially ignorant of anything about history. Even Henry Kissinger, the renowned American diplomat and scholar was at one time also infested by this culture of denial about the value of history, when he confessed his initial ignorance of forces that have shaped historical situations. Kissinger, in a chat with reporters in January 1974 on his return from the first shuttle diplomacy to the Middle East as U.S. Secretary of State admitted: "As a professor, I tended to think of history as run by impersonal forces. But when you see it in practice, you see the difference personalities make." (Isaacson 1992: 13). When Kissinger developed a real sense of history, his eyes opened to reality and this apparently accounted for his success as one of the most colorful statesmen and diplomat to capture the world's imagination in the twentieth century.

Should history as a discipline therefore concentrate on narrations without drawing out abiding lessons? More than anything else, a major task that stares us in the face now is how to help people to acquire and ensure the development of

a keen sense of history. Another strategy of revamping the discipline of history is to systematically put an end to sending our retired senior colleagues to academic Siberia by bringing them out of retirement and engaging them in a way that is positive for historical writing. Now free from academic administration, the active ones should be encouraged to engage in research and supported to produce unfinished manuscripts. These retired senior colleagues who are mostly individuals with special insights on account of their investment in the life of the mind and can still make their impact felt are a generation that is gradually being lost. They, on account of their theoretical knowledge and based on their willingness can still apply their store of knowledge to address societal ills. Therefore at both ends, the old and the young must reconnect. It is no use waiting for the ruling class to do this for us. The political class neither have the interest nor the sense of history to chart a course towards the attainment of sustainable development. The more our policy makers and intellectuals move away from African history, values and traditions, the more they move the society away from sustainable development.

Our engagement with development issues must focus ultimately on the potential for positive change provided by our particular situations rather than on any mechanistic notion of external prediction. In other words, developed societies cannot offer any final criterion of development any more than the history of their emergence provides models of necessary, possible or desirable change for developing countries to emulate (Bernstein 1981:24). In recognition of this, and as part of our strategic thinking in the Department, our vision is to engage in deep research, produce more books, and move beyond the conventional B.A.; M.A.; M.Phil.; and, Ph.D. programmes by adding new courses and programmes that would address some of the concerns I have addressed in this lecture. The department is working quietly to achieve this in the nearest future. We must also begin to bring our compatriots to the realization of the imperatives of having a sense of history. As professional historians therefore, our

commitment to bringing people nearer the light should not waver. The epistemological foundations of our discipline should be deeply framed on an Africanist ideology—one that is increasingly sensitive and effective to ensure the welfare and survival of our Commonwealth.

There is this obvious belief that due to the lack of knowledge, we have descended into social chaos that characterizes such careless polities. Now, there has to be a focused and sustained effort to educate our children, intellectuals and the general public concerning the imperatives of a sense of history and a sense of direction. The way to do this is to develop what is known in saner and more organized climes as the Grand Strategy. This refers to the collection of plans and policies that comprise a nation's deliberate effort to harness intellectual, political, cultural, diplomatic and military tools together to advance a country's national interest. The study of grand strategy not only lends itself to vigorous interpretive academic debates, it is also important to any nation that is desirous of positive development. What then is the role of the historian in this? The historian must be ready to synergize. My three-year experience as an Associate Lecturer teaching in the Master of Strategic Studies Programme (MSS) of the Department of Political Science, University of Ibadan has opened my eyes to this. Our combined action would definitely produce a result not independently obtainable. Grand strategy blends the disciplines of history (what happened and why), political science (what underlying patterns and causal mechanisms are at work?), public policy (how well did it work and how could it be done better?), and economics (how are national resources produced and protected?). The programme is an excellent way to bridge theory and practice since it brings together academic history, academic political science and economics, and the real world experience of practitioners. The University of Yale in the U.S. has pioneered an extraordinarily popular Grand Strategy Programme headed by two distinguished historians, Professors John Lewis Gaddis and Paul Kennedy (Feaver 2009). Duke University in the U.S. has also followed suit.

There is no iota of doubt in my mind too that the study of grand strategy would revolutionize the way we educate and train students in this country. I am therefore suggesting that we begin a process that allows us to do a better job of training the next generation to engage critically with the onerous task of designing and implementing a grand strategy for our survival as a people. Ibadan should be at the vanguard of helping this nation develop a grand strategy. But of course, there are inherent institutional, psychological and individual challenges that must be addressed in revolutionizing our curriculum. We shall need a large dose of goodwill to get this off the ground.

Education requires patience and discipline. Among the historian class, there is now a high level of intellectual nomadism that has not kept faith with deep and profound historical research. Academic rigour and intellectual contributions that inflame or influence change in debates or create new paradigmatic imperatives are now giving way to the mad race for upward mobility through ill-defined and hurriedly written and badly edited works in different books and journals. In other words, we now sit down to inscribe pretty essays instead of doing in-depth studies based on archival analyses and field researches. Of course, this has affected the level of discourse and research in the discipline. The ripple effect downwards is incredibly significant. Not only do these publications lack any meaningful contribution to knowledge, the authors lose valuable time sitting behind desks producing near worthless papers and moonlighting from lectures. Several collated reports from history students from different campuses have been collated in this regard. At another level, there is display of intellectual rascality and grandstanding that is at variance with the tradition of seriousness usually associated with the discipline. Education is also a matter of attitude. Although the mentorship system suffered greatly in the late 1990s and 2000s, we can still through a profound restatement of values and discipline, unlock the potentials of the present and future generations through positive mentoring. History, both as a discipline and as a phenomenon

is capable of offering all of us a sense of where we want to be as individuals, as a people and as a nation.

Critical to the decline is the politics of the discipline. If historians at their national congresses and network meetings dissipate energy on planning what to do rather than how and when to do it, then there are problems that are both fundamental and self-serving. We must sound a note of warning that the leadership elite would continue to ignore, even deride, the power of historical judgment if historians do not take the power that they have, most significantly, the judgment passed through rigorous study and analysis very seriously and accelerate the task to rebuild respect for the academic discipline (Adebayo 2010:1). We have the onerous task of snatching the historical discipline from the jaws of intellectual aridity and complacency. Developing a sense of profound, useful and useable research is what can assure us of a smooth journey into the future. We must begin with the battle of the mind. We must recognize that the crucial factor in the saliency of history is the fact of our expectations in the historical specificity of needs of various generations. For our generation, I deciphered that there was the desire to make a sense and meaning of our existence arising from our role and position in the structural arrangement of society. The basic events are not understood by a society that does not put too much premium on basic history. If the young children and the present generation of students are not involved, the future is in jeopardy. The danger now is that most things are even getting lost in their intellectuality and therefore lost to public focus.

There is a crying need about a joint intellectual/public consciousness—with emphases on intellectual works, film documentaries, popular books, history books for children and plays. Academic and popular writers of history must synergize. My works have therefore been tailored to anticipate this reality. For years I ran a column on the pages of a national newspaper designed to bridge the gap. This strategy has defined my intellectual pursuits over the years. By the

turn of the 20th century, I made it extremely clear that we must begin to envision a substantive and fundamental rethinking of historical knowledge, scholarship, practice and understanding. I have done this by taking a new and creative approach, charting a new trajectory that may help define the study and practice of history in a global age.

The major lesson that history teaches is that history is the parent of the future. The future nestles comfortably in its womb. Therefore, history does not stop with the past and the present. This has been succinctly described by Eric Wolf (1959:106), who affirmed: "every society is a battlefield between its own past and its future." In other words, no nation can be delivered from political and social afflictions outside of its ability to conceptualize and contextualize her problems and come up with ingenious solutions to them (Olukotun 2012:20). In the case of Nigeria, this has been put more poignantly by Ekemenah (2012:8).

The cause of our troubles lies deep beyond the symptomatic issues of poverty, corruption, politics, fuel subsidy and religion. It is a problem of utter disregard for the law of homogeneity and balance in state formation as in their further division into component units and in their relations with one another and with the various systems and institutions that surround them. It is a problem of cultural clashes on many fronts, of an unwholesome copying of foreign concepts without any consideration for the relevance of such, locally or an attempt at adapting such to the home soil.

One thing is very clear from this: We must turn away from cultural imperialism and begin to nurture our culture and identity as the basic tools against the culture of impunity and the lack of concern for our future.

The implications of the foregoing for our society and the solution to the problems can now be reiterated. It is only

when we understand how we got to this point and where it is leading us that we can begin a process that will steer us away from the road to perdition. Making history irrelevant to our developmental aspirations is therefore a grave mistake. History and the understanding of our culture must constitute the fountain spring of our future development. The knowledge of history should provoke not only historical understanding but also cultural preservation and development. I hope our governments at various levels and the society itself will encourage the youths to take an interest in African/Nigerian history as an important step in the struggle for continental and national progress, freedom and dignity. A community that neglects the instructive values of the past and the essence of its own being is a dead community.

The final proof of knowledge is practice. The knowledge of history is guaranteed to free man from ignorance and injustice. The journey from the cave of ignorance to the height of knowledge begins with the knowledge of history. But is this a self-evident truth? Even among historians there seems to be a lack of deep understanding of what history is and it seems they pay attention to dates and facts of events without any significant attention to the lessons of history inherent in the events. It is perhaps this plastic attention that has prevented historians themselves from understanding change and the need for change? What then is history and what is the purpose of history? Historians themselves are not fully agreed on this. However, one thing they have all agreed on is the well-worn aphorism that, "the only thing we learn from history is that people do not learn from history." Our greatest example in recent time is provided by the tragic drama of a Professor of History, Ivory Coast's Laurent Gbagbo. Gbagbo, who was defeated in an election in November 2010, but refused to accept the electoral verdict and relinquish power. He continued to cling to power after his opponent, Alassane Quattara won 54 per cent of the votes, according to U.N. certified results. Gbagbo rejected the outcome, claiming fraud in pro-Quattara constituencies in the north. In the end, he was captured like a rat from his

presidential bunker on April 11, 2011 after inflicting so much suffering on his country and his people.

It is now clear that the present and future teachers and scholars of history cannot continue to ignore their responsibilities in embarking on a comprehensive re-examination of issues concerning the development of our society. This is because we are now at the mercy of foreign experts and scholars who advance incredulous ideas and theories on the continent's cultural dynamics, economic woes, political conflicts and paralysis. Unfortunately, they build their analyses on their limited knowledge of African history, religion and peoples. Also, while commenting on the difficult conundrum that was the *Boko Haram*, a columnist recently called for some of the nation's controversial issues to be addressed by indigenous experts (*The Nation*: 2012b:64). In relation to history and historians, the columnist pleaded for a more robust engagement with the polity:

We also need our home-grown experts, particularly historians, to postulate urgently on the Boko Haram phenomenon. For more than a year the President Goodluck Jonathan government had dithered on the problem, afraid to fight, reluctant to run and too weakened to negotiate. Our historians, unlike foreign historians and analysts, should be able to tell us, using their analytic tools, the pitfalls in negotiation, what impact it would have on our people's psyche and culture, and what the consequences of negotiating with terror are, drawing upon contemporary examples from other nations. Since the eclipse of the Ibadan and ABU schools of history, we seemed to have gone to deep slumber. Our theories and experts must come out of their shell, write and speak on controversial issues, stir debates, for the country has become a closed and constricted enclave of intolerance and illiberal discourse...

One other illustration that intersects with the future of history and historians derives from a personal missive I received recently. This makes it very obvious that as national issues are being discussed there are those of the subaltern who equally feel that historians have a role to play in solving not only contemporary problems but also problems connected with the deep human past. The six-paged letter (complete with five annexures) was purportedly written by a Sunday School teacher at Christian Education Department, Sunday School Unit of a Church in Benin City, Nigeria. In the letter entitled, *The Reason Why Boko Haram is Fighting Against Western Education in Nigeria*, it condemned in one breadth the violence unleashed on Nigerians by the Sect, and in another pilloried the Federal Government for the extra-judicial killing of the late Mohammed Yussuf, the leader of the Boko Haram Sect. Surprisingly, it also in a deeply sympathetic tone justified the unassailability of the reasoning of Boko Haran for waging a war against Western education, citing the controversial topic of Evolution Theory in Chapter 26 of the 2008 edition of the Biology textbook recommended for Nigerian Students.

He then admonished me thus:

I want you to carefully go through the false or unintelligible scientific experiment presented in Chapter 26 of the Biology textbook attached to this letter for you to see the reason why Boko Haram members are fighting a Jihad against the Federal Government and Ministry of Education for promoting a sinful theory borrowed from Western education curriculum...Evolution Theory in JSS 3 Social Studies and SS3 Biology syllabuses across West African schools, especially in Nigeria is morally wrong, dehumanizing, unscientific, unintelligible and completely alien to the people of Africa...

The question that immediately comes to mind is why the contents of the Biology textbook should be the concern of a Professor of History. The author made this extremely clear on page 5 (five) of the letter:

...We appeal to all Professors of History across African Universities, especially in Nigeria to join us in creating awareness of the proposed world destruction by the Western Evolutionists to the world leaders, security forces, educational agencies, research institutes and other relevant bodies...

From the foregoing, it is clear that the expected role of the historian is gradually becoming part of the Nigerian national discourse. The historian's craft may provide the singular, significant check against the culture of impunity and horrendous lack of concern for the future exhibited by our contemporary future elite (Adebayo 2010). The foregoing analyses should therefore not be understood as the seeming impotence of our schools of history but as part of a wider and renewed desire to see the field of history and historians serve as a significant tool of national rejuvenation and human progress. Peoples' expectations are now on the emerging importance of many spheres of human endeavour rather than just a concentration on the remote past. Unfortunately, history and historians have in the last decade or two become disabblingly isolated from the scheme of things. The inaccessibility of history and historians is indeed an anomaly, which had seen us positioned on the margins of an expanding cultural system. Thankfully, several people have once again started to see the discipline as a significant ingredient in the remaking of human civilization in the 21st century. The role of the new Ibadan School of History in the rejuvenation of ideas central to society's march towards sustainable development and social and cultural advancement must be enhanced through self-assertion and strategic thinking.

In this global age, it is exceedingly clear that we must begin to envision a substantive and, fundamental rethinking of historical knowledge, scholarship and practice. It is therefore high-time we abandoned our age-old aloofness and connect more deeply with our society. This becomes very glaring when we look at the error of our policies and pronouncements on identity, nationalism, tourism and a whole lot of other issues. We daily tout our culture as a profound testament of our rich values and our capacity to initiate dialogue between cultures. Unfortunately, we are a nation that is always trying to promote the culture we are already alienated from. We must consequently begin to ensure that we write significant things into the memory of our nation and its people. In tandem with that, we should begin to hold in high esteem, those who reconstruct and write history. This is because they represent the knowledge of the past and the hopes of the future. We on our part as professional historians should back our desires and decisions by deep commitment to our discipline and keep the conveyor belt of ideas moving in the right direction. The future does not belong to those who forget their past. It belongs to those who have used the understanding of their past weaknesses and strengths to prepare for the future.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, when I was small, I convinced myself that schooling was unnecessary. But who knows what those 23 tins of milk did to turn things around in my favour. The kid that was adamant about going to school is now a Professor. The lesson from this is that the mind is a terrible thing to waste. Let us together help our compatriots to develop their minds. Therein lies the route to happiness for all of us. On that note, I must conclude the lecture by borrowing the words of Pliny the Younger (VI.16) in his letter to the historian Tacitus:

For my part, I deem those blessed to whom, by favour of the gods, it has been granted either to do what is worth writing of, or to write what is worth reading; above measure blessed those on whom both gifts have been conferred.

Acknowledgements

In the light of the foregoing, I owe a debt of gratitude to several people who have done what is worth thanking them for, either by generously giving their time and inputs in so many areas or by advancing the course of my life in several ways. First of all, I would like to thank my wife, Oluwakemi and my children, Aanuoluwapo, Olajumoke, Ebunoluwa and Ireoluwa, for their love and steadfastness. I deeply appreciate my parents, the Late Pa. John Oyebade Adesina, and Mrs Ruphina Olajumoke Adesina—the regimental sergeant-majors—who bore the responsibilities of giving me life, hope and direction. My appreciation as a matter of course goes to all my siblings, Wunmi, Foluke, Femi, Yewande, Yemi, Biyi and Seun for serving as pillars of support throughout my formative years. Let me also appreciate in a very significant way those who taught me history in the secondary school and succeeded in kindling in me an everlasting fire: Pastor Francis Isola Eluwole (now a Pharmacist); Mr. Eben Adefiwitan; and, Mr. George O. Tinubu. God bless you all.

I owe several academic debts to the following: the Grand Old Man of Nigerian history, Professor J.F. Ade-Ajayi and, the Grand Old Woman of Nigerian and Women's history, Professor Bolanle Awe for providing the right stimulus, anchor and direction for several generations of young historians; Professor Akanmu Gafaar Adebayo (formerly of Obafemi Awolowo University) of Kennesaw State University, Georgia USA, the teacher, mentor and advisor, who showed me how to understand the relationship between research and writing; Professor Akin Olorunfemi, who painstakingly supervised my Ph.D thesis and continues to serve as guide and mentor; Professor Olufemi Omosini, my indefatigable teacher who sent me as an Ife ambassador to join the Ibadan School of History; and, the Dean of Arts, Professor Kola Olu-Owolabi, for his encouragement and friendship.

I also want to express my profound appreciation to Professor Omoniyi Adewoye, a former Vice-Chancellor of

this University, who recruited me and nurtured this “Ife person” in the best traditions of the Ibadan School of History. I sincerely thank Dr. LaRay Denzer who ensured my Ibadan years were and have remained productive. My Postgraduate teachers and supervisors at Ife stand tall in ensuring that I went through the crucible: Professor R.A. Olaniyan, Professor Femi Omosini, Professor Biodun Adediran, Professor Sola Akinrinade, Dr. Segun Osoba, Dr. Kemi Rotimi. At Ibadan I do appreciate the support and kindness of Professor Kunle Adeniran, Professor F. A. Adeigbo, Professor A. L. Oyeleye, Professor Aduke Grace Adebayo, Professor P.A. Ogundeji—Former Deans of Arts. I thank Professor Samuel O. Asein, Professor I.A. Akinjogbin, Mr. Samuel O. Omogunwa and Professor Segun Oladipo of blessed memory for their love and kindness. May God Almighty continue to grant them eternal repose. Dr. B. Sofela, my current Head of Department has been able to recreate a sense of intellectual well-being in the Department. I thank Professor Dare Oguntomisin, Professor I.O. Albert, Dr. Kingta Princewill, Dr. B.A. Mojuetan, Dr. Ayo Kehinde, Dr. Akin Alao, Dr. O.B. Olaoba, Dr. O.B. Osadolor, Professor Ayodeji Olukoju, Dr. Victor O. Edo, Dr. Afe Adogame, Dr. R.O. Olaniyi, Dr. P.K.N. Ugboajah, and Muritala Monsur Olalekan for their friendship and support. Finally, my most sincere appreciation to several other people on whose knowledge, comments and friendship I have drawn over the years. They include Professor Akin Mabogunje, Ambassador Audrey Ajose, Professor Festus Adesanoye, Professor I.A. Odejide, Professor M.Y. Nabofa, Professor Akinjide Osuntokun, Professor Adigun Agbaje, Professor Bayo Okunade, Mr. Sakin Babalola, Professor & Mrs. S.O. Titilola, Professor Kunle Amuwo, Professor M.O. Abdul-Rahmon, Mrs. Modupe Omogunwa, Mr. Abiodun and Mrs. Iyabo Sonibare, Engr. Segun and Professor Foluke Ogunleye, Elder and Deaconess Victor Adelekan, Professor Bolade Eyinla, Professor Yomi Akinyeye, Professor R.T. Akinyele, Professor Funke Adeboye, Professor Siyan Oyeweso, Professor Kunle Lawal, Professor O.B. Lawuyi,

Professor Remi Raji-Oyelade, Dr. Babatunde Ayeleru, Dr. Rasheed Ajetunmobi and Dr. Simon Heap, the 2010 British-Nigeria Commonwealth Fellow in the Department of History.

Finally, it is God whom I ask to make our deeds acceptable in His sight. He suffices me. He is a good protector.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I thank you all for listening.

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BIODATA OF PROFESSOR OLUTAYO CHARLES ADESINA

Professor Olutayo Charles Adesina was born in Ipetumodu in the Ife North Local Government Area of Osun State on January 27 1964. He was educated at St. Clare's Nursery and Primary School, Osogbo, Osun State, St. Joseph Primary School, Usi-Ekiti, Ekiti State, and St. Augustine's Primary School, Ipetumodu, Osun State. For his secondary education, he was at Origbo Community High School, Ipetumodu. He later attended the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, where he obtained his B.A (Hons.), M.A. and Ph.D degrees in History.

He was appointed Lecturer II in December 1993 and rose through the ranks to become a Professor in 2007. He was the Ag. Head of the Department of History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan from 2001-2003 and from 2006-2008. As the Head of Department, he initiated the University of Ibadan/Kennesaw State University Links agreement that has facilitated the interchange of ideas between both institutions. He served as the co-convenor of the 'Joint International Conference on Globalization: Migration, Citizenship and Identity, University of Ibadan/Kennesaw State University, Georgia, USA', which held at the University of Ibadan from November 6-9, 2007. In 2011, he also served as the Chairman of the Conference Committee on the 1st Faculty of Arts Biennial International Conference.

Professor Adesina has widened his academic and professional expertise through the attendance of scientific meetings locally and internationally and through highly competitive awards. He has held many distinguished academic fellowships, including the United States Information Agency's (USIA) International Visitors Fellowship, Boston College, U.S.A (1994), Atlantic History Seminar Fellowship, Charles Warren Center, Harvard University, U.S.A. (1998) and, the fellowship of the prestigious Salzburg Seminar, Austria, (2001). In 2004/2005, he was the African Visiting

Fellow, Rhodes Chair of Race Relations at St. Antony's College, Oxford University, U.K., and in 2009 he was a Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. Professor Adesina has carved a niche for himself as a scholar and historian. In 2009, he served as a member of the Committee of Experts of the Department of National Archives of Nigeria to the House of Representatives, Abuja, Nigeria on the 'Public Hearing on a Bill for An Act to Repeal The National Archives Act, 1992 and to Establish the National Archives and Records Administration.' Between 2009 and 2011, he also served creditably as a member of the Committee of Experts to set up the new Faculty of Arts, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Nigeria. Since 2008, he has been a Resource Person/ International Panel of Scholars working for the African Humanities Programme of the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS).

In 2008, Professor Adesina was Guest Editor, *Journal of Global Initiatives* (Special Edition on Globalization and the Unending Frontier, Vol. 2 No. 2, 2008), Institute for Global Initiatives, Kennesaw State University, Georgia, U.S.A. He has been a member of the *Shifting Cities* Research Group under the auspices of the Volkswagen Foundation, Germany (coordinated by Professor Flora Veit-Wild, Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany) and, member, the Popular Economy and Social Life Study Group, University of Ibadan. He is also currently a member of the Advisory Board, *Comparative American Studies*, an International Journal, (London, Sage Publications).

He has over 60 publications comprising journal articles, monographs, chapters in books and books. He is currently completing a book-length manuscript on the history of Indians in Nigeria's economy and society.

Professor Adesina is the third in a family of seven siblings. He is married and blessed with four children.