

REPORT ON THE FIRST GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK NATIONALITIES,
THEMED: “THE PAST, THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF A RICH
HERITAGE” HELD IN OSOGBO, OSUN STATE, NIGERIA FROM THE 23RD
TO 26TH AUGUST 2010

Theme: The Past, Present and Future of a Rich Heritage

Venue: Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria

Date: August 23-27, 2010

HOST ORGANIZATION: The Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding, Osogbo (CBCIU), supported by UNESCO, the Federal Government of Nigeria, Osun State of Nigeria.

PARTICIPANTS & OBSERVERS INCLUDED:

The United Nations (UN and UNESCO) Economic Community of West African States, the African Union, Ambassadors and Permanent Delegates from UNESCO, Federal Ministry of Tourism and Culture (Nigeria); Envoys of Foreign Missions based in Nigeria; the United States National Conference of Black Mayor; Participants from the United Kingdom, Brazil, Australia, Israel, West African nations, South Africa, Centre for Black African Arts and Civilization (Nigeria); African Traditional Rulers/Institutions ; Academics (Global); Non-Governmental Institutions (Global).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND: The organizers realized the fact that despite globalization and its attendant accomplishments, cultural and heritage information on Africa are mostly of the dark, colonial days. Rather than project the positives of Africa’s cultural heritage, even this (old information) has been supplemented and reinforced by news of famine, destruction and blood-shed. This has led to the misunderstanding of, as well as, the lack of real knowledge on Africa. Consequently the crises of cultural, religious, linguistic and educational misunderstandings which have widened the gap between Africa and the black race on one part, and the rest of the world on the other part persist.

In line with UNESCO’s belief in and sponsorship of intellectual exchange and dialogue among cultures as the best prospects for peace, the 1st Global Conference of Black Nationalities is a clarion call for global peace and international understanding of the Black Race, through Culture and Heritage. Therefore, the conference was an invitation to the participants - black intelligentsia, non-black academics, as well as, the global vanguard of culture to “Come BACK HOME” to re-examine the PAST, evaluate the PRESENT and strategically look into the FUTURE of a RICH HERITAGE - the Black Heritage. As a result, participants were exposed to and will had an equally fulfilling opportunity of knowing more about the black race while appreciating cultural differences among the various peoples of the world with a view to promoting global understanding.

The Conference of Black Nationalities was held a time that Africa, African descendants, black people from across the globe were being encouraged to achieve more and to take a grasp of their fate and future. The 1st Global Conference of Black Nationalities took a cultural and mutual understanding perspective to help accomplish its major objective through inter-cultural and religious dialogues. The Conference reinforced UNESCO's role and efforts to promote and encourage reciprocal knowledge of culture, ethnicity, language and religion as a means for sustainable development and the proffering of plausible solutions.

MODALITIES: The 1st Global Conference of Black Nationalities took a critical look at the positive potentials of open discussions to understand the culture and heritage of Africa as a means to understanding and embracing the Black Race. It is aimed at promoting a dialogue on the African Diaspora: Identification and Mobilization towards a common agenda of elevating the Black Race and Africa. By so doing, it will serve as a major contribution to UNESCO's events and programmes for 2010 and beyond, as they impact the Black Race/Africa, particularly:

- The celebration of the United Nations International Year for Rapprochement of Cultures - 2010, the objectives of which are similar to those of the Conference.
- UNESCO's International Day for the Abolition of Slavery. By starting the Conference on August 23rd, 2010 with its attendant opening ceremonies/speeches, the conference contributed to the objectives of the annual international day fixed for August 23rd.
- It enlightened the world about the Osun-Osogbo Festival – a UNESCO classified World Heritage site - and its cultural ceremonies as a tourist attraction. Participants at the conference had a first hand experience as they participated in the year 2010 edition of the festival

AREAS OF DISCUSSIONS:

- Governance and Leadership.
- The Leadership Role of Black Women in the society
- Tourism Development: Cultural Tourism and Ecological Tourism.
- Slavery: History, Challenges, Opportunities and the Future.
- The history and impact and influence of Black Culture in modern societies
- The African Diaspora: Identification and Mobilization towards a common agenda.
- Sustainable Development

OTHER KEY EVENTS INCLUDED:

- Access to and/or Participation in the annual Osun-Osogbo Festival
- Access to and/or Participation in an Exhibition of Black Arts and Culture from across the globe
- Performances by different Black/African performers and cultural troupes, including film shows

- Visits to different ancient monuments in Ile-Ife, as well as, visits to historic and sacred groves/monuments that make Osun State the cradle of the Black Race
- Interactions and Press access to representatives of the African Traditional Institutions.
- Interaction with visiting dignitaries from several nations and corporate leaders for investment and economic development.
- Tours of other tourist attractions in adjoining locations to Osun State
- Special reception by His Imperial Majesty, Ooni of Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade (the Spiritual Head of the Yoruba Race) at the Royal Palace.

OUTCOMES AND CONTRIBUTION:

The outcomes and contributions of the Conference include the following:

- Contribute to the global soul-searching given globalization and the “new” expectations of the Black Race for more prominent contributions.
- Development of a database of participants and resources to be shared and used to galvanize and stimulate peace through collaboration, networking and resource sharing
- Encourage efforts towards the re-evaluation of the heritage of the black race
- Stimulate actions towards the reduction of the digital divide that impacts the black race
- Development of a Youth Agenda for the preservation of a Rich Heritage
- Development of a Women Agenda for Leadership, Governance and Sustainability
- Development of Africa’s Tourism Sector: Attraction of foreign participants for Economic and Infrastructure development and implementation

RESULTS, FOLLOW-UP STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABILITY:

The conference discussed modalities for effecting changes in perception of African culture by associating its positive influence with home grown development. It also inspired a renewed consciousness for Africans and Africans in the Diaspora to seize opportunities in their cultural endowments for development. To arrive at these, the organizers are following up on outcomes by:

- Arranging for sustaining the Conference to continually evoke intellectual discussions and themes around the subject among nations. This would develop Culture-Tourism in Osun State and eventually in Africa and continue to nourish a socio-economic agenda to elevate the Black Race and Africa.
- Partnership and technical assistance are being sought from UNESCO to engage and consult with government on applicability; as well as global Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) towards the sustainability of its contributions to the conference and other activities of CBCIU
- Creation of an interactive web-site (with blog), based on the conference outcomes, to encourage communications amongst alumni.

PROGRAMMES/AGENDA: The Conference agenda was designed to accommodate all deliverables and participants and its key components were as follows:

- Key-Note Addresses were spread and include notable speakers from different backgrounds/nations
- Exhibition of artistes, corporations, countries, NGO, etc.
- Pre-Scheduled/Pre-Registered Tourism to different cultural and heritage attractions in Osun State.
- On-going Cultural Dances/Performances at Receptions, Lunch and Dinner schedules.
- Academic Presentations: Two sessions daily (AM/PM) Plenary Sessions with different panels/moderators.
- Pre-Scheduled Meetings with dignitaries and decision makers (participants and Nigerians.)
- Leadership Forum: Last day of Conference. Focus:
 - Current Status & Gaps in communication, collaboration and understanding
 - Bridging the Gaps
 - Developing an Agenda for the Future

FIRST GLOBAL CONFERENCE OF BLACK NATIONALITIES

COMMUNIQUE

This communiqué emerged from the First Global Conference of Black Nationalities. The four-day Conference, whose theme was “The Black Race: The Past, the Present and the Future of a Rich Heritage”, held at the WOCDIF Centre, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria from 23rd to 26th August, 2010. It was organized by the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding, with support from major partners including UNESCO and the Federal Government of Nigeria. Participants, drawn from all over the world, included renowned scholars, statesmen, traditional and religious leaders, civil society, as well arts and culture enthusiasts.

OBSERVATIONS

The participants at the First Global Conference of Black Nationalities observed as follows:

1. The tendency is still largely to represent the Black race in negativity even in the face of overwhelming evidence of its rich cultural heritage and significant contribution to world civilization.
2. Slavery, which has set the Black race back by many centuries, most regrettably continues to exist today in many forms.
3. Religion has largely been a positive force for strengthening national and global peace and understanding, even as African indigenous religions continue to be relegated to the background compared to other religions.
4. Tourism is a major foreign exchange earner in many parts of the world, including the developed countries, and can be made to play the same role in the developing world if only it is properly packaged to reflect the existing rich cultural heritage, particularly of the black race.
5. Language and culture are inextricably linked. Unfortunately, we find ourselves today in a situation where many of our African languages are endangered. It is disheartening to note that indigenous languages are no longer emphasized in educational institutions while premium is placed on foreign languages such as French, Chinese and Portuguese.
6. Gender inequality, in particular in the area of high-level leadership, remains a challenge in most African nations and the world at large. Even when women are admitted to high-level leadership positions, they quickly discover they are not the real decision makers.
7. Brain drain is a sad reality of the African situation. The pertinent question

should, therefore, be that of finding ways to transform what is obviously the loss of the black race into a gain. The conference noted with sadness that governments had not always done a good job of tapping into the pool of expertise and resources represented by Nigerians and Africans in the Diaspora.

8. The summary of Africa's fifty years of independence is, for all practical purposes, dysfunctional statehood, a lack of collective responsibility.
9. Despite numerous conferences in the past dedicated to examining our problems, the conference noted, also with sadness that there has not been much to show for this, principally because the appropriate bodies and authorities have failed to implement recommendations emerging from these gatherings.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Arising from the above considerations, the conference recommended as follows:

1. Our schools, intellectuals and media must resolve to be the ones to tell our story and project a positive image of the Black race.
2. Considering that education is the most potent weapon against the mindset that drives slavery, our educational institutions must design and implement humanistic curricula that place premium on the sanctity of the human person and the equality of all men. All governments and institutions must embark on poverty alleviation programmes given the organic link between poverty and varieties of modern day slavery.
3. African languages should be developed into languages capable of expressing the totality of our reality and, in particular, be actively taught at every level, from our primary schools to our universities as required by existing educational policies on indigenous languages in many of our countries.
4. We must continue to encourage respect for each other's religion, including African indigenous religions, in order that religion may continue to be a force that binds rather than divides us. It is recommended that a particular day of the year be set aside as World day of Traditional Religions.
5. Considering that we cannot offer cultural tourism if we do not have a distinct culture, Black people the world over must deem it their individual and collective responsibility to project positive Black image and identity as well as work to preserve Black cultural heritage. Cultural tourism, heritage tourism,

hospitality management and Aviation development are closely linked. In the interest of the sustainability of the Global Conference of Black Nationalities, in particular, it is, therefore, recommended that a modern and well equipped international airport be constructed in Osun State. It is further recommended that selected hotels in the state be upgraded to international standards.

6. While efforts to sensitize all on gender issues need to be intensified, governments at all levels and also the private sector must resolve to implement (and even improve upon) existing quotas for women in positions of leadership as a temporary measure to address current imbalances.
7. The conference called on government at all levels to take immediate steps to create the right environment to facilitate the participation of Nigerians and Africans in the Diaspora in the development of their countries, to ensure the security of lives and property in their jurisdictions as well as provide basic amenities. It also enjoined Nigerians in the Diaspora and, indeed, all Africans in the Diaspora to network among themselves and come up with ways they can make the home countries benefit from their vast expertise and resources for, when the chips are down, Nigeria—and by extension, other African countries, noting that these are the only places they could truly call home.
8. The conference called on African political leaders and the general populace to recommit themselves to the actualization of functional statehood for our nations and to collective responsibility.
9. The conference also called on governments at all levels in Nigeria, in particular the Federal Government and the Osun State Government, to set up committees to study the recommendations emerging from the conference in order to translate them into actionable proposals that government can implement immediately. In fact, when this conference reconvenes, it will expect a progress report on the implementation of these recommendations.

PROCEEDINGS

PREAMBLE:

The opening ceremonies were specifically designed to coincide with the day set aside by UNESCO to commemorate the International Year for the Abolition of Slavery and Slave Trade on August 23, 2010. It was also strategically designed that the first day of the conference treated largely issues pertaining to slavery and slave trade.

UNESCO had traced the significance of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery and Slave Trade to 23rd August of every year to the 1791 revolt of slaves in Santo Domingo, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. It is viewed as an enduring emblem of emancipation all over the world. While the remembrance brings about painful memories, it is believed in many circles that the black race must be consoled by the significant contributions made by slaves and those being made by their descendants to the development of their new environment, the African continent and the entire world.

This focus partly informed the theme of the conference: The Black Race: The Past, the Present and the Future of a Rich Heritage. It was designed to invite attention to the great prospects available in nations with predominantly black population, keep issues pertaining to the total development of the black race in focus and also promote the feelings of empathy among black people all over the world.

The conference opened on Monday 23rd August 2010 with the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces, His Excellency, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, GCFR, represented by the Minister of State of the Federal Capital Territory, Navy Capt. Caleb Olubolade as the Guest of Honour. The Chairperson was former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR. The Chief Host was Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola, former Governor of Osun State. The occasion was graced by traditional rulers from across the country including the Ooni Ife, Oba Okunade Sijuwade, Olubuse II and the Alafin of Oyo, Oba Lamidi Adeyemi, among other prominent Yoruba traditional rulers and others from different parts of the country and the Republic of Benin.

Other guests included representatives of the Director-General of UNESCO, President of the African Union, the Beninois President, Gambian, Senegalese and Brazilian governments; top diplomats from UNESCO including Nigeria's Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, HE Mme Mariam Katagum and Nigeria's Permanent Representative to the African Union. They were among those who delivered goodwill messages. Academics, scholars, culture activists, practitioners and policy formulators from across Africa, Europe, the Americas and Australia as well as Africans at home and the Black Diaspora were among guests and participants at the five-day conference that featured elaborate musical performances, cultural displays, lectures, discussions and guided tours to historical sites, important personalities and places.

OPENING SPEECHES

The Chief Host, Prince Olagunsoye Oyinlola, then Governor of Osun State of Nigeria who doubled as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Centre for Black

Culture and International Understanding, in his welcome speech noted that the 23rd of August was an important day in human annals as it was the day set aside by UNESCO for the commemoration of the abolition of slavery. As a result of this, Prince Oyinlola said, a Colloquium on Slavery sponsored by the Osun State government in collaboration with the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding and UNESCO held concurrently with the Conference of Black Nationalities (henceforth referred to as the Conference) in Iloko-Ijesha in Osun State. Prince Oyinlola said the conference was conceived for the purpose of bringing the black race together on matters of religion, culture and race among others. Prince Oyinlola praised former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, HE. Chief Olusegun Obasanjo for his support in setting up the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding.

In addition to its purely intellectual contents and concerns, he said the Conference would focus on matters of tourism, economy, world peace and understanding. He hoped the Conference would open up avenues for and foster inter-religious dialogue, peace and understanding. While he spoke of the advantages of Osun State as a tourist and business destination, Prince Oyinlola assured the participants, especially those from abroad, of the hospitality and goodwill of the people of Osun State.

The Chairperson, Chief Obasanjo, in his opening address thanked Prince Oyinlola for his efforts in establishing the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding in Osogbo and especially, for his initiative in hosting the Conference. He identified the Black race as the most battered in the world, dehumanised, oppressed and underdeveloped. He commended the resilience of the Black race despite all it had suffered and wondered how Black presence in the New World could be explained but for the history of slavery. He spoke of slavery as the worst indignity ever heaped on any segment of humanity. But in spite of the indignity of slavery, he saw the role of Blacks in the Diaspora, leading to the rise of the likes of Barack Obama, first American President of Black origin, as one of the good sides of Africa's slavery saga. For him, the talk about globalisation does not apply to the Black Race which he considered the most globalised race in the world. While they may forgive, Africans must not forget their history. In this wise, Chief Obasanjo impressed on his audience the importance of teaching African history, especially to the African child. Africans fought against apartheid precisely because of their awareness that they are not inferior to any race, he said.

Chief Obasanjo recalled the contributions of American Jews to the development of Israel and urged Africans in America and other parts of the world to do the same for Africa. All that is necessary for such progress and development of Africa is the will on the part of diasporic Africans, not necessarily their return to Africa. Africans must be willing to apply science and technology to the creation of a progressive world. He further called on Africans to take a more proactive stand on the affairs of Africa and urged them to reject and correct the negative image of Africa that is projected by the international media that he saw as lopsided against Africa. The experience of Lee Kwan Yew and his determined effort to create a new Singaporean society that conformed to the image and standard of the people of Singapore was one model he

thought Africans could emulate. Africans he believed must define their own interests and standard of democracy, as opposed to pandering to foreign interests and standards. Nigeria, he concluded, owes it as a duty to the Black Race to do what is right.

GOODWILL MESSAGES

The Chairperson's address was followed by the presentation of goodwill messages by representatives of governments from within and outside Africa. The messages largely supported the idea of organizing the Conference and commended the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding supported by the Federal Government of Nigeria and the Osun State government for hosting the Conference.

Director-General of UNESCO

The representative of the DG of UNESCO Irina Bokova, Dr Ngwu called on participants to remember the message of UNESCO and to see the slave trade as one of the worst events in human history. He urged the audience not to forget the first slave revolt that led to the founding of Haiti in 1817. He commended the organizers hosts of the conference for their significant contributions to peace and international understanding and assured of UNESCO's continued support for subsequent conferences.

PRESIDENT OF THE AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION

The representative of President of the African Union Commission, Mr. John Kayode Shinkaye stressed the importance of the conference to the fostering of greater understanding among the peoples of the world and hoped that the outcomes of the Conference would contribute to the promotion of the well-being of the Black race.

Representatives of the presidents of Benin, Senegal, Gambia, and Brazil expressed their pleasure in attending the Conference and reported the regrets of their principals who would have liked to be at the Conference but for circumstances beyond them occasioned by pressing state matters.

THE OONI IFE

The Ooni Ife spoke in Yoruba, welcoming the conferees to Osun State in the name of all traditional rulers. He called for the continuation of the Conference in Osun State as Ile-Ife, the Cradle of Humanity is in Osun State. He remarked that the Black Race would rule the world some day.

PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA

Presidential Address was delivered by the Hon. Minister of State for the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Navy Capt. Caleb Olubolade. In his address, he commended the State Government and the Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding as the prime movers of the Conference. He charged the Conference participants to use their deliberations to make a case for the development of Africa. He assured that the Federal Government of Nigeria was doing its best to close the wide information gap between the "haves and have-nots" and further provide the necessary enabling environment for the promotion of culture throughout Nigeria.

PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES TO HONOURARY CITIZENS OF OSUN STATE

A number of the guests were conferred with honorary citizenships of Osun State. The first recipient was the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan. Others were:

- -President of Benin Republic, Dr. Boni Yayi, represented by Ambassador Oyebode Olaleye.
- -President of Brazil, Mr. Lula Dasilva represented by a Brazilian official.
- -Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria
- -UNESCO DG, HE Mme Irina Bokova
- -Prof. Karin Barber from the University of Birmingham.
- The President of Senegal

KEYNOTE ADDRESS: PROFESSOR RUNOKO RASHIDI

Prof. Rashidi's address on 'Africa in the Global Imagination' centred on the phenomenon of Black presence in different regions of the world and the need for Africans to be proud of their African ancestry. Although an African-American, he said he saw himself as an African living in the Untied States of America. He asked rhetorically, What do you think of when you think of Africa? He believed people, including educated African-Americans, see Africa as a place filled with wild animals: a place of diseases and HIV, etc. Educated African-Americans, he claimed, thank God for slavery which they saw as an opportunity to leave the benighted climes of Africa. He believed such notions were caused by ignorance of Africa's achievements. He listed Africa's leading and pioneering role in diverse sectors of human civilisation to include the fact that Africans were the first to wear clothes, practice philosophy and bury the dead among other firsts. As his address focussed on Africans who left or were taken from Africa before and after the Trans-Atlantic Slavery, he made the point that Africans were the first people to settle in Asia, Australia and the Pacific, as they also settled in America before Christopher Columbus. Quoting Marcus Garvey, he said one was an African not because one was born in Africa but because Africa was born in one. Africans had been misinformed to believe they have no history. He, therefore, emphasised the importance of teaching African history and averred that only Africans can tell/teach the history of Africa from an African perspective.

In the following interlude, Conference Musician, King Sunny Ade, took the stage in a pan-Nigerian performance that included children and use of highly percussive indigenous musical instruments. His performance was yet another opportunity for him to instruct the audience on Africa's contribution to music. He said Africans had their indigenous songs and instruments well before the arrival of Europeans who came with their own instruments such as the guitar, electric drums and piano. The Children troupe from Akwa Ibom State next performed 'Things Are Getting Better', 'Omo Pupa' and 'Taxi Driver' among other musical evergreens. A cultural troupe from Benue State performed before this.

Vote of Thanks by the Deputy Governor of Osun State, Erelu Olusola Obada

**PLENARY SESSION 1:
HE, Mme Irina Bokova (DG of UNESCO)**

The lead paper for the first plenary session entitled 'Removing the Digital Divide' was delivered by on behalf of **HE. Mme Irina Bokova**, the DG of UNESCO. The session was **Joseph Ngwu** chaired by **Chief (Ambassador) Segun Olusola**, Nigeria's former ambassador to Ethiopia. The paper examined the wide gulf in Information and Communication Technology Development (ICT) between African countries and their European and American counterparts.

This session was followed by the panel on '**Slavery: It's impact, Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st Century**'.

The discussion was led by **Prof. Biodun Adeniran** who defined slavery and made a distinction between slavery and slave trade, stating that the failure to make this distinction had led to confusion and terminological inexactitude. He also made a distinction between what he called internal slavery - that is slavery perpetrated by Africans against other Africans and the Trans-Atlantic Slavery which was basically a European enterprise. There is, he said, needed to reflect on the full meaning of slavery in order to curtail its manifestation in contemporary times. Slavery has the positive aspect of bringing about greater interaction among people, which is the core of the entire discourse of globalisation. For him, slavery exists where there is unequal relationships among people. But what should be promoted is egalitarianism and equality among all. He congratulated the Osun State government for its effort in organising the Conference.

Prof. Peter Okebukola's paper was titled '**The Long Shadow of Slavery over Education in Africa**'. His primary concern here was on education even though he believed that slavery still cast a shadow on educational growth. He defined slavery as a system in which people are turned into mere chattel, the properties of other people, requiring that the question of what constitute slavery be viewed in holistic terms to better appreciate its impact and import. Viewed from this angle, he believed, it would be obvious there are more slaves today than in the Trans-Atlantic era. Slavery has some beneficial effects as western education was the result of the efforts of freed slaves. But the downturn in educational performance, he went on to say, is not all traceable to slavery even though slavery casts its effect on it. He held that racism in education is one of the vestiges of slavery while admonishing that the resilience of blacks should be harnessed in order to overcome the legacy of slavery. In addition to that, the education curriculum must be redesigned to re-orientate the people. Trans-disciplinary research should be embarked upon to examine the impact of slavery on our education, he added. In conclusion, he called for the promotion of harmony, peace and entrepreneurship through education.

Prof. Elysee Soumonni commented on issues relating to the slavehood project by UNESCO which was informed by the impact of the Atlantic Slavery in Africa and the Diaspora. Atlantic Slavery predated the discovery of America by Columbus and for

any analysis of it to be holistic, it must go back in time. He claimed that issues in slavery are now focussed on the legacy of slavery rather than the volume, modus operandi and the people responsible for it. Africans contributed to the rise of America for in the beginning of the 18th century there were more Africans in the Americas than Europeans. Colonialism started as a pretext to abolish slave trade. African abolitionists, unlike their European counterparts such as William Wilberforce, were not recognised. The same way, he said, Africans in Diaspora do not recognise the contribution of Africans to the abolition of slavery. The way out of this quagmire, he submitted, was education.

Dr. Christine-Glover Walton prefaced her comments by reading extracts from Maya Angelo's poem, 'Still I Rise'. The focus of her discussion was plantation slavery, how it has continued in the present and its implication for Africa now. The plantation slave economy was based on the labour of Asians but because they were unused to that kind of labour, the slavers turned to Africa. Slave plantation was a system of authority that severely controlled the lives of the slave under the management of white people and, later, some coloured people. She noted that Africans' concept of beauty has been compromised by foreigners. This point is reflected by the presence of manufactured needs and goods, all of which reflect the socio-psychological aspects of slavery in contemporary times.

Prof. Hakeem Danmole did not think there is any opportunity for the enslaved, for which reason he said slavery should be abolished. Slavery is a universal practice which existed right from the beginning of humanity. There was slavery before the Atlantic Slavery but, he said, it was the latter that depleted Africa. Its impact is beyond comprehension hence the difficulty in going beyond its legacy. For him, slavery has continued after the slave trade, even to present times. Who should assume responsibility for this? He saw no profit in apportioning blame to anyone or group. He felt slavery has been disguised even while it is still very much with us in its modern incarnation. He drew a link between slavery and the modern form of emigration that comes via visa lotteries.

Prof. Capo Hunpati's intervention was on slavery which he believed has had impact on the present configuration of the world, as evident in certain religious practices such as the voodoo cult system in Haiti, which has Langash as its religious language. A lot of the words in Langash came from African languages which constitute the substratum of Langash. He called for the promotion of African languages in school and their use in teaching science. The languages should also be considered for virtual education, he said.

Dr. Koya Ogen held that research agenda for Africa are often set from outside the Continent via the issuance of academic grants and fellowships. This he saw as a form of mental slavery. Globalisation, which started around the 14th century, he identified as a form of contemporary slavery. While globalisation strengthens Europe, its effect on Africa is counterproductive. He spoke on the imperialism of commodity trade in which Africa was compelled to produce things it did not need. This would be

followed by imperialism and finally, neo-colonialism. In submitting finally, he identified human trafficking and child labour as aspects of modern slavery.

Prof. M.B.M. Avoseh in defining the black race identified two criteria: skin colour and kinship/ancestral relationship. The skin colour criterion, he said, has both denotative and connotative meanings, with the former denoting all that is bad. He linked the kinship or ancestral relationship criterion to the *omoluabi* concept which is a product of good character and selfless conduct. Slavery distorted the African's sense of identity and today the *omoluabi* concept is questionable. He wondered how the concept could be recovered 50 years after Africa's independence. In today's world the active citizen is an economic being not the person of character, as was the case. Africans, with the belief in *omoluabi*, must find a way to humanise the world, he said. The way out he saw in the urgency of Africans disconnecting from the negative impact of slavery, reconnecting to the concept of *omoluabi* and having a sense of education that will help to address dangers of contemporary slavery such as child trafficking and prostitution among others. Bridges of harmony should be used to build relationships across the globe, he concluded.

Dr. Obare Bagodo focussed on the African cradle of humanity from the beginning of prehistory to the naissance of Ancient Egypt. He saw globalisation, not as a new phenomenon, but something that has gone on for millennia.

Prof. Olutayo Adesina's paper was entitled '**In the Shadow of Slavery: Interrogating the Slavery Blame Game**' in which he sought to examine the tendency to trade blames for slavery among Africans and others. He wanted to know what westerners think or see when matters turn to Africa? He questioned the way Africans see the issue of slavery and held them responsible for the situation in which the blame for slavery is being put on Africans.

Sra. Dora Lucia Lima Bertulio, Palmares-Brazil believed slavery has the advantage of fostering international relations. This she saw as an aspect of slavery that can be positively harnessed. Former Governor Oyinlola next made his remarks by drawing a link between soldiers captured during war and slavery. He saw this and its philosophy of might being right as the origin of slavery.

DAY 2: PLENARY 2

Dr. Lateef Adegbite's keynote speech entitled, '**Religion and Culture as a Tool for Global Peace and International Understanding**' was delivered by Prof. Ishaq Oloyede. Prof. Oloyede said the views expressed in the paper were partly his and partly those of Dr. Adegbite. He defined religion as a way of life. The proper understanding of true religion transcends worship or personal relationship to God. He believed religion can serve as guide for a truly religious person. A thin line, he said, exists between religion and culture. Religion is more formal and is, in fact, a part of culture. While culture is central to human ways, religion is a source of authentic knowledge. Religion he held is as reliable as science. Ethnicity, on the other hand, he identified as always volatile and central to people's culture in Nigeria. Religion, he saw also, as a factor for national integration and unity where injustice is

rife in the world including the UN. The way forward for him includes the promotion of cultural education. Civic education including knowledge of religion should also be taught to children, he said. He felt global peace is impossible where there is inequality in the world. He called for conscious effort to promote global peace and understanding.

PANEL CHAIR: The panel that followed was chaired by **Prof. Sola Oke (Dept of Modern European Languages, OAU)** He thought religion touches critical aspects of Nigeria even when it has not succeeded in solving human problems.

Shantelle George was the first discussant on this panel. Her paper was titled '**The Legacy of the 19th Century Yoruba in Grenada**' which she identified as an island of a 100,000 people with a prominent Igbo-Nigerian component. She claimed to have met with great grand children of Nigeria's king Jaja of Opobo in Grenada. Her discussion focused on Africans that came to Grenada after the 18 century when slavery had been supposedly abolished. This set of Africans, she said, came as a consequence of the collapse of the Oyo Empire. Freed Yoruba slaves were forced to emigrate to different parts of Grenada. She mentioned the presence of Andy Lomax' CD and Sango ritual dance as evidence of Yoruba presence in Grenada.

Prof. M.A. Bidmos believed culture can be both positive and negative. God is not opposed to people's culture except something detrimental to one's future, he said.

Prof. Chris Manus in his discussion provided a Christian perspective to world peace. Christianity, said he, teaches that God is love. Any Christian belief not in support of peace is not tenable he submitted.

Dr. David Ogunbile in his contribution entitled '**Being Religious, Being Spiritual, Being Human**' said religion and spirituality divide us but humanity unites all. He identified religion as a component of culture and went on to say that both Christianity and Islam affect Nigerians' definition of religion and indeed our view of indigenous religion. He concluded that Islam and Christianity should be cultured.

An Ifa priest, Chief Yemi Elebuibon spoke on '**Higher Task for the Liberation of the Nigerian Nation**'. Opening his submission with an Ifa verse, he observed that a nation without honest people is empty. Still relying on Ifa scripture, he said truth will always remain the truth; does not change. Without truth progress is impossible, he said and called attention to honest ways of life prescribed in pre-Abrahamic religions in Yoruba society. Quoting from Ifa he spoke on the Karmic essence of human act. Conclusively, he called on all to be God-fearing.

Dr. Dan-Oye-Laguda focussed on religion and culture as means for national integration. Yoruba religion suffered as a consequence of the view that African religions are bad. Employing Esu as a point of intervention, he observed that this deity that is misunderstood in orthodox religious circles, in the Yoruba imaginary, has to be worshipped before prayers can be accepted. Many pantheons of Esu have

been replicated in the Diaspora. Yoruba religious beliefs, he urged, should be studied in schools.

Descoredes Maximilidnos Dossentos (Mestre Didi): The major point of this speaker's submission is that tradition is central to identity. This, for her, is preached in music. Identity, she concluded, has to be taken from the origin.

Prof Yahaya Oyewole identified a 9-point agenda which he said are the challenges before the world. Although manipulable, he thought religion is basically a unifying factor whose values are universal.

PLENARY 3: DAY 2

PROF. KARIN BARBER's keynote address focussed on the issue of tourism and language preservation. She saw tourism as a great revenue earner. Culture, she noted, is inseparable from language and averred that everything is mediated through language. When language is lost a whole culture is lost. Learning another language is a source of immense pleasure, she said, and concluded that technology can be employed in language retrieval.

Ambassador Nkoyo-Toyo who chaired the session observed that the Conference theme is in line with her job at the African Union. She underlined the necessity of defining what is meant by Black Nationalities in the light of the changing identity of who is an African as evidenced in South Africa.

ROYAL REMARKS OF THE ALAFIN OF OYO, OBA LAMIDI ADEYEMI II:

His Highness noted that there are certain universal principles common to all cultures such as respect for elders. He saw the Yoruba language as relevant to modern mathematical studies and advocated its preservation through constant use in everyday activities as well as in intellectual matters.

Prof. Akinwumi Isola was the first discussant in this panel. He opened on an angry note because of what he said was the failure of Africans to align their talk with action. He felt discussions at a forum like this Conference should have gone beyond the definition of culture, a time-wasting act, in the light of UNESCO's comprehensive unpacking of the term. While Africa lags behind culturally, he said the West has a solid blueprint for cultural imperialism. Educated Nigerians he believed are most guilty of cultural neglect given their indifference to the use of indigenous languages. Indigenous costume, mode of dressing and lifestyle should be promoted if Africa is to move forward.

Alagba Adebayo Faleti saw culture as a mark of identity that distinguishes one people from another. The destruction of language, for him, constitutes the bedrock of the destruction of a people. He called for the domestication of received cultures.

Eliana Borges da Silva-Palmares' (Brazil) contribution was on the economic dimension of preserving language and culture.

Prof. Francis Egbokhare began his discussion with a poem that pictures Africans' cultural alienation. He did not think Africa's problem was that of linguistic diversity but reluctance to teach the indigenous languages. Mother tongue education should be encouraged while students should be made to take courses in local languages, he said. He concluded that local languages should be employed in science and technology

Dr. Phoebe Fletcher, like others before her, saw cultural tourism as a great revenue earner. She saw opportunities in this area following the relegation of western culture and the emergence of new powers.

Mrs. Nike Okundaye-Davies briefly submitted through her representative that culture is a mark of identity.

Prof. Dele Layiwola believed language is a mark of culture and identity and advocated the creation of orthographies for our indigenous languages.

Prof. Dipo Salami submitted that culture and language have to be preserved

Prof Niyi Akinnaso defined culture as anything that is needed to function as a member of the human race. Language is also a means of production apart from being a means of communication. Language, he held, should be taught to children as they can pick as many as they can. Following this, use of indigenous languages should be encouraged while the English language should be studied more for reasons of its instrumental purposes. Other means of cultural preservation aside language, like performance, mode of dressing etc, he submitted, should be encouraged. He called for the preservation and retrieval of Yoruba language through Ifa.

Dr. Tayo Ajayi saw cultural tourism as a great revenue earner.

PLENARY 4: DAY 2

AMBASSADOR MIRIAM KATAGUM, NIGERIA'S PERMANENT DELEGATE TO UNESCO delivered her plenary address on '**Social Justice and Gender Equality**' and observed that there are more educated women than men. Gender inequality, she thought, represents a challenge to society. There are relatively few women in positions of political leadership. In Nigeria, she noted that there are fewer women in political positions than the recommended benchmark of 30%. Women, she held, have far less role to play in decisions that shape their life. She concluded that gender mainstreaming should be encouraged as a strategy for gender equality.

Prof. Stella Odebunmi was the chair of Panel. **Dr. Yinka Egbokhare** in her discussion saw gender equality as a human right issue. Despite their contribution to political independence, she said women's role has gone unrecognised. She blamed past

military regimes as unsympathetic to gender equality and central to the marginalisation of women. While seeing female participation in politics as low she urged leaders to stress the strength of women and to avoid sexist statements that degrade women. She also stood against the stereotyping of women.

Prof. Mariama Toure Ihiam identified women as major players in the political sphere. There is a lot to be learned from our past in terms of the role of women, she said. African women have a lot to be proud of in spite of every attempt to reduce their worth. She called for parity in the education of men and women rather than the present gender-based division that is weighted against women. She urged women to make use of their numerical superiority in the political sector.

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Eliana Borges da Silva-Palmares, (Brazil) called on women to unite and translate their numerical strength to political advantage.

Dr. Adeola A. Faleye zeroed in on social and cultural practices that downgrade women. She started by chanting a poem that celebrates the importance of womanhood. She observed that among the Yoruba there have always been spaces for women within a culture that recognises the role of women.

Dr. Dipo Salami made the observation that women are not well represented in leadership positions. Stereotypes and prejudice on gender roles, she viewed, as unhelpful to women's cause. She saw a need in the domestication of international treaties and advocated the implementation of national gender policies. She called for the documentation of the reality of women leadership.

Ms. Marili Gallardo traced the role of women in the various struggles of people of African descent for independence, from slavery through abolition to independence, saying this should serve as pointers to how women should be treated. Dance, as an artistic medium, she believed, plays a role in the emancipation of women. The use of the body is useful guide for the way women should be treated, she concluded.

Dr. Adenike Akinjobi posed a challenge to women in positions of leadership to work for the womenfolk. She observed that the role of women in the economy is central to society. She believed more support is needed for women in domestic situations than is presently the case. She urged that men and women be encouraged to moderate cultural beliefs that affect the role of women in society. On their part, she advised, women should speak up and not be silent in the face of their own marginalisation.

PLENARY 5 DAY 4

Prof. Ayodeji Olukoju: Panel Chair

In this special panel on **'50 Years of Africa's Independence: The Way Forward'** eight speakers, including **Prof. Femi Osofisan, Drs. Niyi Okunoye, Abubakar Momoh, Rotimi Fasan, E.T.O. Babalola and N.O. Ezeliora**, led in discussion by the panel chair,

reflected on the achievement or non-achievement of African countries that attained independence right about the 1960s. While the speakers variously saw the independence of Africa as a positive development they, however, concluded that there has been very little to cheer in terms of infrastructural development and leadership quality. Their hope, expressed in their group and individual comments, was that the next 50 years would bridge the gap between Africa and her more technologically advanced, democratic and developed nations in the West.

PLENARY 6 DAY 4

Prof. C.N. Nwoke

This panel was more or less a follow-up on the preceding panel on **50 years of Africa's independence. With such discussants as Mayor Heather Hudson of Greenville, Mississippi, Profs. Kofi Anyidoho, Prof.A.O.K Noah, A.G. Adebayo and Mr. Clement Mamudu** , the panel examined the question of brain drain and how the Diaspora can be engaged in the process of strengthening Africa's human development potentials. Speakers particularly looked at the modalities of halting and, subsequently, reversing the flight of manpower from the already poor regions of Africa to the more technologically endowed parts of the West. They saw the need to involve Africans in the Diaspora in the effort at improving Africa's manpower base.

Former Governor Olagunsoye Oyinlola, in closing the session and thus the Conference, spoke on the marginal status of women by recalling the story of his growing years in the palace in Okuku where his mother was just one of thirty two wives who had the task of caring and protecting sixty four children (among whom he ranked forty third) over whom they were accountable to the king, their father. He concluded by calling for better recognition of the role of women in the society.