

## CELEBRATING A HISTORICAL FIGURE

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I deplore hackneyed terms otherwise the title of this article should have read “Celebrating a true icon.” But the word icon has been so trivialised and abused that its true worth has been diminished or lost in the classical sense.

Chief Eleazar Chukwuemeka Anyaoku is simply speaking a historical figure, a moral beacon, an outstanding international Civil Servant, a community leader, a patriot par excellence; Pan-Africanist (unrepentant); a traditionalist; a fantastic family man; polished, urbane, sartorially elegant, orator, apolitical; a connoisseur of fine wines, a sportsman, a philanthropist and a mentor.

Let me tell his story from the well known which can be googled by anyone.

Emeka Anyaoku, was born in Obosi Anambra State on January 18, 1933. He is an alumnus of Merchant of Light School, Oba, Anambra State and a college scholar of the University of Ibadan. He obtained an honours degree in classics from the University of London. He later attended specialist courses in the United Kingdom and France.

He was elected Secretary General by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kuala Lumpur in 1989. In that remarkable election, he upset every permutation as he defeated a former Prime Minister with a landslide margin.

Chief Eleazar Chukwuemeka (Emeka) Anyaoku became the third Secretary-General of the Commonwealth in 1990, a post he held until 2000.

Before becoming Commonwealth Secretary General, Chief Anyaoku worked with the Commonwealth Development Corporation from 1959 to 1962, in the Nigerian Diplomatic Service from 1962 to 1966 including three years as a member of Nigeria's Permanent delegation to the United Nations in New York, and from 1966 to 1989 in the Commonwealth Secretariat, London, where he had been elected Deputy Secretary-General in 1978. In 1983 he served briefly as Nigeria's Foreign Minister before the military coup d'etat in the country at the end of that year.

His current roles include Chairman of the Presidential Advisory Council on International Affairs in Nigeria; President of the Royal Commonwealth Society; President of the Royal Africa Society; International President of the World Wide Fund for Nature 2001-2010; Member of the Governing Board of the Geneva based South Centre, think-tank of developing countries on global strategic and development issues.

In 2003, the University of London established a Professorial Chair in his name: the Emeka Anyaoku Professor of Commonwealth Studies at its Institute of Commonwealth Studies. Very few Africans or indeed world figures have received the Honoris Causa degree of prominent institutions like the venerable Chief Emeka Anyaoku.

His publications include *The Missing Headlines*, his memoirs: *The Inside Story of the Modern Commonwealth* and *The Racial Factor in International Politics*.

Emeka Anyaoku is a traditional Ndichie Chief in Obosi (Ichie Adazie Obosi and Ugwumba Idemili). He is married to Ugoma and they have one daughter and three sons.

Chief Emeka Anyaoku was appointed to the British Museum Board in June 2005 and reappointed for a second four year term in June 2009.

All these and more can be gleaned from any biographical data bank about prominent world figures.

To the Adazie I know and admire, a highly sensitive and sensible man, a wise man who tries his best to avoid causing any unease or hurt to anyone yet he is a redoubtable fighter when he believes in a cause.

His commitment to the African cause and human race saw him deploy all his diplomatic arsenal for the liberation of Rhodesia and the death of Apartheid. The Legacy Nations, Zimbabwe and South African have since recognized his leadership role in their emancipation by awarding him the respective highest National honours that can be conferred on anyone.

There is no doubt about it The Anyaoku Years as Secretary General of the Commonwealth were the halcyon years of that organization, he fought and defeated apartheid, he fought Abacha's Nigeria that executed Saro-Wiwa he led a virile and effective Commonwealth Organization that was respected and even "feared" by errant member nations. He led negotiations that were intricate, complicated, sensitive, challenging, and fiercely emotional like the Rhodesian land deals. He managed and midwived transitional power arrangements which permitted peaceful nascent democracies particularly in the Frontier States where very powerful figures in some nascent states like Zimbabwe's Joshua Nkomo; Robert Mugabe et al would have fought themselves to a standstill but for the deft diplomatic skills of Chief Anyaoku in consensus building.

It was at the National Political Reform Conference in 2005 that Chief Anyaoku taught all of us the true meaning of consensus at one raucous meeting of the South-East delegates. He said consensus meant a resolution or decision that is not exactly what you desire, but you are prepared and willing to live with it, since it is also not exactly what the other side desires and he is also prepared to live with it.

For example, at that conference, Dr. Gamaliel Onosode and the late Ambassador Dr. M. T. Mbu had counselled the South South delegation to accept the offered 25% derivation as a consensus agreement, but Chief E.K. Clark led a walk out that demanded "resources control", or 50% or walk out.

Today even the 13% derivation is being challenged yet a consensus of 25% was offered by that conference. The lesson in this; in a negotiation, when you get a "favourable" consensus, grab it and run !!

As the drums come out to celebrate this octogenarian, typical Adazie is not thinking of dancing, popping Champagne and sundry festivities; he knows there will be some or all of these; but his mind is on Iyi Enu Hospital where he was born on that January 18<sup>th</sup> 1933 day. Iyi Enu hospital needs diagnostic equipments, the hospital does not have dialysis Machines and so many other equipments it should have. So Chief Anyaoku is imploring his friends and well-wishers to spare some cheques written in favour of Iyi Enu hospital or better still donate these equipments and medicaments.

Chief Anyaoku has always managed to get us to engage in his philanthropies, for example, the Lagos State Grassroot Soccer Development which is named after him has awarded medals to some of us who supported them with Chief Anyaoku's encouragement. Lagos State has also celebrated him some years ago as a role model citizen in civic obligation via Tax Compliance.

Chief Anyaoku since after his retirement has led a life of total service, undertaking only Pro Bono assignments of mentorship and National/International Service. He rejects every Board Appointment and only agreed to serve as the Chairman of Orient Petroleum Refinery in Anambra State because of his conviction about the importance of that project to his Anambra people in particular and Nigeria in general.

His role as chairman of the Presidential Advisory Council on International Affairs has guided the sterling quality of our foreign Relations in recent years.

In his hometown Obosi, Ichie Adazie is a rallying point and peace maker.

Ichie Adazie is a fulfilled and accomplished man, who worships his God with fervour, an Anglican Communicant, he is smitten by his wife Ugoma, he has a great sense of humor and he is a loyal friend and mentor to his protégés. As spry and nimble as he is, we await him to breast the tape at 120 years as promised by God in Genesis 6:3.

Happy Birthday Adazie. You are a very good man and jolly fellow.

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