
**CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH
OSUN STATE UNIVERSITY
9TH MARCH, 2016. OSHOGBO, OSUN STATE**

There was once a 7 year old girl who just followed daddy's orders to leave her beloved homeland, siblings and loved ones, and the warm sunshine of her African continent for school education in a snowy cold country where she suddenly had to learn a new culture, wear heavy warm clothing and make new friends. She journeyed into that new land not knowing what the future would hold in what was to be her boarding school for the next four years which commenced in 1958.

Her holidays with an aunt could be likened to the Cinderella years that helped to shape and prepare her life for the future. Having been made ready to face a life of hard work, she discovered her talents, strengths and weaknesses which she applied and learnt even in bringing up her children later on in life.

Though in her teenage years she desired to read law in the university, her father declined her wish and steered her to become a secretary who learnt never to take no for an answer, worked like a workaholic having learnt that it is laziness that kills (Ise ki pani, Ise lo n pani); whose dictionary does not have the word 'can't' but sees and takes every challenge as an opportunity. She was focused and allowed Her Maker to define her destiny and she walked in it.

That 7 year old girl has since grown to be almost 65 and is standing before you here today. She has just received the 5th Honorary Doctorate Award and is now Chancellor of this great institution through the grace of God. I present to you Mrs. Folorunso Alakija.

I ask you to please hold your thoughts for now.

I recognize and appreciate the presence of the important people who deserve an acknowledgement and they are...ALL OF YOU!

Having said that, the protocols would be incomplete if I don't mention the following people:

- The Executive Governor of Osun State, His Excellency, Ogbeni Rauf Aregbesola

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- The Deputy Governor, Her Excellency, Otunba (Mrs.) Grace Titilayo Laoye-Tomori through whose efforts the first contact was made with me, which resulted in all of this.
 - Rt. Hon. Najeem Salaam, the Speaker of the State House of Assembly
 - I also acknowledge the delegation of the Governing Council that paid me a courtesy visit led by: Professor Obafemi Ajibola - Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council.
 - Professor O.J. Alamu – Acting Vice-Chancellor
 - All Legislatures
 - Members of Council
 - Honourable Justice Adepele Ojo – Chief Judge of the State of Osun
 - Hon. Justice Gloria Oladoke – President, Customary Court of Appeal
 - The Judiciary
 - Royal Highnesses
 - Vice Chancellors of other Universities
 - Other Principal Officers of the University
 - Members of Senate, Osun State University
 - Directors of Units/Services
 - Respective Union Leaders
 - All Members of staff, Osun State University
 - Alumni Representatives
 - Graduands
 - Students Representatives in all the Campuses
 - Students of Osun State University
 - All special guests
 - Friends of the University
 - Friends from the Press
 - Ladies and Gentlemen

The founding fathers that planned the University had profound vision for education to be fully embedded in the entirety of Osun State by planting 6 campuses in its cardinal points of exit even as their students go out to impact the world from their geographical zones.

Another obvious impression is that though it commenced operations only in 2007, the facilities that are on ground are more impressive than some established universities that have been around for decades.

Many of the policies, concepts and ideas in the pipeline to move the University forward are proof not only of further progress, but suggest that the University Council has big and dynamic plans for its future.

Undoubtedly, today history has yet again been made.

I congratulate Osun State University for taking such a bold step in being the first Government owned University, whether Federal or State in Nigeria to appoint a female Chancellor.

I feel extremely humbled, proud and excited to be receiving this conferment as Chancellor. I also appreciate the Honorary Doctorate Degree in Business Administration, DBA, Honoris Causa which came in as a surprise.

This is another glass ceiling being broken by womanhood and I thank God for his grace for letting me be a part of it. I also thank my loving, kind and indefatigable husband, a legal luminary whom I fondly call Modu, Mr Modupe Alakija, who concurred to my acceptance of the conferment; otherwise I would not be here today.

This is also my first time in Osogbo and I pray it will not be my last having accepted this five year tenure as Chancellor.

I encourage more women to improve on their education, especially in Nigeria and Africa where the women and the girl child are still very much underrepresented, especially in higher institutions of learning and the economy as a whole. They are making efforts breaking through the glass ceiling daily. They are treading in previously held uncharted territories, where only men were seen.

The UK Home Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities, Theresa May said: "Giving women the opportunity to achieve their full potential must be at the heart of our approach to economic growth". Some home grown ones are:

- The first female PHD holder in Nigeria, Professor Grace Alele Williams, emerged 53 years ago in 1963 and went on to become the first woman to head a University in Nigeria. She became the first female Vice Chancellor in the University of Benin.
- In sports and in every decade, our womenfolk make their mark and even earned Nigeria its very first Olympic gold medal in 1999. Our female football team won the

African Championship more times than any other African team and continues to out-perform all the other male national teams put together.

- In the field of Information Technology, Mrs. Florence Seriki of Omatek Computers Limited, pioneered a computer assembly plant.
- Our first female Rear Admiral, Itunu Hotonu, an Engineer who was rejected by the Army but celebrated by the Navy has emerged not just in Nigeria but Africa as a whole.
- The first Female Radio Station in Africa, WFM 91.7 was launched in December 2015 with Mrs. Toun Okewale-Sonaiya as Managing Director.

In Colonial times, women were relegated to the kitchen, had less formal education – if any at all – and were forcefully married off early. The main education they could get was limited to domestic sciences, dress-making, hair dressing, mat weaving, pottery etc. They had little recognition in politics and only the voices of a few could be heard in palaces and village meetings. My late father was one of those who, despite being a billionaire, initially had the mentality that educating the female gender was a waste of money. So, I was sent to England for a short course as a secretary – for after all, women were just to become housewives bearing another family name. The rest of course, is history.

The importance of education cannot be over-emphasized:

In this audience are leaders, trail blazers, visionaries, students, supporters, lecturers, administrators, guests, game changers and even sticklers for progress especially in education, otherwise you would not be here!

Whatever role you are playing here today, it is obvious we all have a common goal, one that borders on Academic Empowerment for Economic Growth amongst our people for the benefit of Nigeria, Africa and the rest of the world. We all have a role to play to articulate our own agenda for change; to change the world.

The late President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela once said: "Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world."

Also, because of our belief in education, and of course, higher education, my family and I, through the Rose of Sharon Foundation, have been giving scholarships to widows' children and orphans up to university level. Our children are in various universities across the country, two of whom are in this university; Adebayo Ayomide Ekundayo, a 100 level Accountancy student and Olaniyan Tolulope John who has just finished his pre-degree in Computer Science. 105 students have graduated so far, 6 of them recently from the

University of Lagos on the 1st of March 2016. In the Foundation, we have 668 Widows, their children a total of 1016 as well as 81 Orphans. A total of 1,765 persons have benefitted till date.

I have personally derived a lot of pleasure in helping them achieve their academic dreams even though I was denied the opportunity at that level.

As our graduands pass out today, remember that you form part of the threads with which the story of this great university is woven and you are its ambassadors.

I believe this centre of academic excellence has enshrined values of innovation and integrity, opportunities and creativity in the minds of all students, especially the outgoing ones. Therefore, as you go out into the world, you must not focus on the issues plaguing our country today but rather be Change Agents this country so desperately needs.

- Have you ever checked what your divine purpose in life is meant to be?
- Have you thought of your goals in life?
- Have you drawn up your S.M.A.R.T analysis of how you intend to pursue these goals? That is; they should be Specific. Measurable. Achievable. Realistic. Timely
- Have you read the biographies or even autobiographies of those who have excelled in that sector?
- When you walk out of this university through one of those gateways out of Osun State into the arms of the world that awaits you, how will you positively impact our world; have your name embedded in the sands of time or your footsteps enshrined in the path of game changers?

Some of life's wisdom pills that have helped me over the years are:

- Do not accept 'No' for an answer – Many doors were shut in my face but I refused to give up and kept going back like a rubber ball and it paid off; see where I am today. Be determined to succeed as there is always a way where there seems to be no way. Only the persistent and diligent find it.
- Time is money, use it wisely.
- Say no to corruption
- Find mentors for practical guidance in your chosen career.
- Find out God's purpose for your life and embark on it.

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- Exercise patience and have courage. Courage is fear that has said its prayers.
 - Always remember, that anything worth doing at all is worth doing well.

Don't sit on the fence but come to Nigeria's defence. Proffer solutions and follow through. You can now release the thoughts I told you to hold as I introduce you to my God who has brought me this far:

- Only God could have brought me from a Moslem family background to become a Born again Christian
- Only God could have singled me out from 52 children for His divine assignment
- Only God could have given me a husband for almost forty years in a marriage that is still growing strong
- Only God could have given me four strong polite male executives in their own right and wonderful grandchildren
- Only God could have blessed me **first** before putting me in charge of a Christian ministry
- Only God could have brought an Executive Secretary to the Oil Industry to break glass ceilings....all of which have brought me here today.

If you put God first in all your endeavours you will find that the God
Who has promised to direct your footsteps,
Who opens doors of blessings through his grace,
Who favours and provides for you,
Will enlarge your coast and make a way for you where there seems to be no way.

Asiwaju Senator Ahmed Tinubu recently, referring to what he told Alhaji Lai Mohammed when he was looking for a Chief of Staff said:

"You cannot use yesterday's idea for today's challenge and tomorrow's reform."

My personal ethics have been formed through family influence, religious beliefs, life experiences, my internal reflection and the culture in which I was raised. My Family instilled a strong work ethic in me as a child and they hardly ever missed a day of work.

Ethics is a word I live by, because it is conducted, in a work environment and an individual daily life. I always try to do the right things and this will be my guiding principle throughout my 5 year tenure at Osun State University

Once again, I congratulate the University, the entire Teaching Staff, parents and guardians on this 4th Convocation Ceremony.

I thank the University Senate and Governing Council for awarding me this honorary degree.

I thank my husband Mr Modupe Alakija and my family. The RoSGMI Intercessors, RoSF Trustees, widows and orphans and all those who have come from far and wide to attend this ceremony to lend their support.

Most importantly, I glorify God Almighty without whose approval, I would not have been appointed as Chancellor of this most unique University.

Some say the sky is their limit, but I say let it be your stepping stone.....

In Conclusion

As I accept this award and conferment, I accept them in honour of my late parents who brought me into this world.

I accept them on behalf of my husband who has never stopped loving me and has always supported me since the day he set eyes on me in December 1972, (that is 43 years ago).

I accept them on behalf of our children, their wives and our grandchildren in whose lives I continuously play my role and fondly called Mummy and Grandma.

I accept them on behalf of every widow or orphan who has ever had to shed a tear, especially those in the Rose of Sharon Foundation.

I accept them on behalf of every Intercessor in the Rose of Sharon Glorious Ministries who has not stopped praying for and with me, and the body of Christ.

I accept them on behalf of all my relations and friends who have travelled from far and wide for several hours to lend their support as I climb this ladder today.

AND

What could I have done without the grace and favour of the Almighty God who has made me and all those around me to witness this epoch making, history marking and record breaking, game changing ceremony with you as living witnesses on this very special day? Nothing!

I hope I have planted a seed in the youth, invested in the middle-aged and helped to strengthen the old. May God perfect all that concerns each and every one of us IJN, Amen.