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CATEGORY: JUSTICE BUILDER



JUSTICE BABATUNDE ADEJUMO, OFR
PRESIDENT, NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL COURT

Hon. Justice Babatunde Adeniran Adejumo, OFR is a native of Ikaramu-Akoko Ondo State, born on October 1, 1954. He attended the prestigious University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) Ile-Ife Osun State and obtained his Bachelor of Laws (LL.B) in 1985.

CAREER

He was called to the Nigerian Bar and subsequently enrolled as a Solicitor and Advocate of the Supreme Court of Nigeria in 1986. Hon. Justice B. A. Adejumo, OFR started his career as a legal practitioner in the Law Firm of J. Osulale Ojo & Co. In January 1992, after a six year stint in legal practice, Hon. Justice Adejumo was elected as a Parliamentarian into the House of Assembly of the Old Ondo State. He was a Lawmaker from January 1992 to November 1993. As a lawmaker however, he was said to be an embodiment of courage and sagacity; while defending the collective interest of the people with exceptional vigour. Consequently, then Honourable Babatunde Adejumo emerged the Chairman of the House Committee on the Judiciary, Human Rights and Public Petitions.

ACHIEVEMENTS

However, on a path to reposition Nigeria's Judiciary for greatness and also in tandem equitable, fair and impactful justices system, Hon. Justice B. A. Adejumo, OFR was appointed the President of the National Industrial Court on the 14th of April, 2003 and sworn in on May 5, 2003. This is the position he occupies till date. The National Industrial Court of Nigeria has witnessed mighty turn around through a combination of dynamic vision, hardwork, foresight, forthrightness, integrity, honesty of purpose and confidence-inspiring leadership style of Hon. Justice Adejumo, OFR.

- From 2003 till date, the legal firmament of the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN) has witnessed amazing evolutionary transformation. The NICN which was initially decided upon by the Supreme Court of Nigeria as an inferior court is NOW successfully

established and included in the Constitution as a superior court of record through his lordship's zeal, passion and determination.

- In 2006, Hon. Justice B. A. Adejumo, OFR did the unprecedented and moved the National Assembly to enact the National Industrial Court Act, 2006 as the enabling law of the National Industrial Court. This was regarded then as an alluring milestone by stakeholders in the labour and industrial relations sector.
- He also saw to the inauguration of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Centre in the National Industrial Court where disputes arising from labour, employment, industrial relations, workplace, etc, between parties can be resolved using the process of mediation and/or conciliation. The Centre uses mediation and/or conciliation technique(s) to assist parties resolve their dispute and arrive at mutually acceptable agreement in less costly, speedy and efficient manner. This is calculated at preserving and engendering industrial peace and harmony, which in effect promotes economic development and cohesive interpersonal rapport and conducive work environment within the dynamics of employer/employee relationships.
- Prior to his resumption as the President of the Court, its staff strength was 123 but today the staff strength has risen astronomically to over 2,000. In 2003, the Court had barely 6 graduates in its employment, but through the visionary and dynamic leadership acumen of Hon. Justice Adejumo, OFR, the National Industrial Court has more than 200 graduates in its staff-fold.
- In 2003, when Hon. Justice B. A. Adejumo, OFR resumed as the President of the National Industrial Court, the Court had its Headquarters in a poorly maintained and hardly habitable twin-duplex at Ojuolobun, Victoria Island, Lagos. The other office in Abuja was also dilapidated and in shambles but today, it is to the credit of Hon. Justice Adejumo, that the NICN now has 14 Judicial Divisions across the country. Eight of these Judicial Divisions have modern, state of the art, aesthetically attractive Court Complexes that meet international standards in terms of infrastructure and facilities. It is also gratifying to note that a huge architecturally imposing Headquarters of the Court in Abuja is under construction and to be commission soon.

Hon. Justice B. A. Adejumo, OFR is one who doesn't believe in making noise but always maintain the mantra of, let the achievements do the talking. He belongs to the school of thought that every positive development is an improvement. Hon. Justice Adejumo, OFR has almost single-handedly turned the National Industrial Court of Nigeria from what was derisively though factually called a "*dead end*" into a living end flowing and basking in the waters of continued reformation.



REVEREND FATHER AMBROSE EKEROKU, OCD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CARMELITES PRISONERS' INTEREST ORGANIZATION (CAPIO)

Born into a deeply religious family with humble beginnings, Reverend Father Ambrose Ekeroku excelled in academics as a child, and identified his call to the priesthood very early. His parents, Mr. Joseph and Mrs. Justina Ekeroku of Abakaliki LGA in Ebonyi State did everything within their power to encourage and support their child Ambrose and his five siblings, to fulfill their dreams. With their love and support and against all odds, after his secondary education, Ambrose worked for five years before joining the Discalced Carmelite Order. After his initial formation years, he was admitted to the prestigious Dominican Institute Samonda, Ibadan (Now Dominican University). This was a great accomplishment, as the Institute was then affiliated to the renowned University of Ibadan (UI). His dedication to his vocation propelled him to excel and graduated with a double Major in Philosophy and Theology. His hard work continued during his seminary training, where he finally fulfilled his long-standing goal of becoming a Catholic Priest.

CAREER

Reverend Ekeroku was ordained a Catholic Priest in the Order of Discalced Carmelites in 2011. Two months after his ordination, he was appointed the Executive Director of Carmelites Prisoners' Interest Organization (CAPIO) – a human rights organization of the Discalced Carmelites. His dedication to the work of CAPIO, and ensuring that the basic rights of those incarcerated are protected, consequently led to additional responsibility as the Catholic Chaplain of Maximum Security Prison in Enugu.

Fr. Ambrose Ekeroku, OCD is respected for the outstanding, selfless and impactful contributions he has made as Executive Director of CAPIO. Under his leadership, the 25-years organization has grown in leaps and bounds ever since he took charge in 2011. Fr. Ambrose has maintained a habit of visiting the prisons at least twice every week - for counseling sessions every Tuesdays and also on Sundays, where he administers the sacraments to the prisoners. Fr. Ambrose is intensely passionate about building societal peace through crime prevention interventions among youths. In addition to his work in the Discalced Carmelite community, the Prisons, and his administrative

role at CAPIO, Fr. Ambrose is also a member of the National Committee on Torture, the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of Enugu State Justice Reform Team, the South-East Coordinator of Justice Reform Teams and also sits on various boards of Non-governmental Organizations. Someone without his passion would find this schedule exhausting. He finds it extremely fulfilling.

Today, Fr. Ambrose is a Priest, Counselor, human rights advocate, activist, public speaker, confidant and a cherished Friend to the needy. His long-term goal is to establish a world class rehabilitation center where ex-offenders are empowered to be self-sufficient via provision of marketable skills; equipment for start-ups; disbursement of seed grants and microcredits; as well as provision of social, medical, psychological and spiritual rehabilitation.

With his faith as a compass, the sky is the limit for Fr. Ambrose and CAPIO, as he continues this important work to ensure Human Rights for this oft-neglected segment of society.

ACHIEVEMENTS

- Successfully led the advocacy for the passage of the Administration of Criminal Justice Law of Enugu State 2017 which ensures speedy trial in courts and access to justice. With this law, no accused person will be kept in prison beyond six months (for minor offences) and one year (for capital offences) without trial.
- Instituted a Fundamental Rights Enforcement suit on behalf of 796 prison inmates held between 1 year and 14 years without trial against Enugu State Government. This led to the freedom of 512 inmates and the rest of the cases properly filed in appropriate courts.
- Sensitization of the public through mass media on the provisions of ACJ Law of Enugu State 2017.
- Initiated a crime prevention project to mobilize secondary school students against cultism and criminal activities.
- Facilitated the release of over 1500 prisoners through pro bono services of CAPIO legal team.
- Advocated for state pardon and secured amnesty for over 100 death row inmates.
- Rehabilitated, re-integrated and empowered over 300 ex-offenders.
- Uses education as tool for rehabilitation of prisoners by enrolling over 46 prisoners in National Open University and registering NECO O'Level examination for prisoners.



JUSTICE ZAINAB ADAMU BULKACHUWA
PRESIDENT, NIGERIA COURT OF APPEAL

Born on 6th of March, 1950 in Bauchi, Bauchi State, Justice Bulkachuwa is the daughter of Alhaji Abubakar Gidado El-Nafaty an indigene of Nafada Local Government, Gombe State, an astute educationist and broadcaster and a contemporary of the Late Sir Tafawa Balewa. She had her early

education at Tudun Wada Primary School, Kaduna between 1957 and 1960 before proceeding to Senior Primary School, Maiduguri Road, Kaduna where she obtained her School Leaving Certificate in 1963.

CAREER

In 1996, when Gombe State was created, she had the unique honour of being appointed as Chief Judge of Gombe State Judiciary from January 1997 to December 1998. In 1998, she was elevated to the Federal Judiciary as a Justice of the Court of Appeal. Between 2005 and 2012, she was the Presiding Justice over the Court of Appeal until she became Acting President of the same court in November 2012.

Justice Bulkachuwa was eventually confirmed the President of the Court of Appeal in April, 2014. By that appointment, she became the sixth and first female president of the Court of Appeal, first woman in the legal history of Nigeria to serve as the President of the Court of Appeal. While delivering her post-swearing in speech, she pledged to introduce creativity and dynamic interpretations to demonstrate that the judicial process is “neither cold nor impersonal by working for the continued relevance of the laws to the realities of our times”.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Her Lordship’s contribution to the Nigerian Judiciary is unquantifiable.

- Upon assumption of office in 2012, she constituted a committee to review the Court of Appeal Rules and its alignment with international best practices. In this regard, she made a case with the committee for retention of the Court of Appeal Mediation Program which her predecessor, Justice Salami had commenced the process towards the introduction of Mediation in Court of Appeal. Justice Bulkachuwa saw to the retention and expansion of

the Rule and it is to her credit that mediation was not only retained but its application enlarged within the Court of Appeal. It is the first of such in the Appellate Court in Nigeria.

- She also began the process towards giving life to the Rules by establishing the Centre in three divisions – Lagos, Port Harcourt & Abuja to:

“Promote mediation and such other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms towards enhancing the administration of justice and speedy resolution of disputes;

Promote a just and speedy determination of every civil and criminal appeals, action, cause or matter as the case may be, which has been brought and is pending before the Court;

Assist the parties in reaching an expeditious resolution of their disputes in all good faith in a fair and efficient manner;

Encourage disputing parties and their counsel to strive towards reducing the cost of litigation and associated delays thereby facilitating a fair and just resolution of disputes with limited animosity amongst parties;

Promote mediation and other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms as veritable tools of dispute resolution in the Court and the judiciary as a whole; and

Improve access to justice, user confidence in the court system and afford the Justices ample time for such matters or issues that are best resolved through litigation”.

With plans to have a dedicated structure in place in the three divisions dedicated to the Court of Appeal Mediation Program, she singles herself as a matriarch of change, courage and fresh approach to justice system in Nigeria.

JUSTICE OLUBUNMI OYEWOLE



Justice Olubunmi Oyewole who hails from Ila-Orangun in Osun State is the son of a police inspector who grew up in the police barracks. He graduated in 1985 from the University of Ife, and in 1984, he contested for the presidency of the student's union which he lost narrowly.

CAREER

Justice Oyewole is currently a judge in the Court of Appeal, Makurdi Division. Oyewole was appointed a judge of the Lagos State Judiciary on May 24, 2001 and since that time his judicial career has been characterised with a lot of achievements as well as challenges. In 2006, he was a resource person at a workshop jointly organised by the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) on the practicability of the newly enacted E.F.C.C ACT.

The Osun State Judicial Service Commission recommended him for promotion as the Chief Judge of Osun State. The National Judicial Council (NJC) rejected Oyewole's recommendation on the grounds that he is not a serving judge of Osun State Judiciary and that he is not the most senior judge and could therefore not be the Chief Judge. Again, Oyewole's bid to ascend to the Appellate Court from the Lagos State Judiciary was frustrated on the grounds that as an indigene of Osun State, he should not be allowed to use the slot meant for Lagos State to ascend to the Court of Appeal.

As it often happens, merit has a way of standing out no matter the obstacles, Oyewole was among the 25 new justices appointed to the Court of Appeal by President Goodluck Jonathan on the recommendation of the NJC on March 17, 2014 and he has continued to blaze his trail as a courageous, fearless and enterprising judge of the Appellate Court.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Justice Oyewole's visibility stemmed from serendipitous handling of majority of sensational cases in recent years while he was at the Criminal Division of the Lagos State Judiciary. He is reputable to be principled, cerebral, brave and incorruptible. Some of the cases he handled:

- The famous case of Emmanuel Nwude and his two cohorts, Mrs. Amaka Anajemba and Mr. Nzeribe Okoli who defrauded a Brazilian Banker, Mr. Nelson Sakaguchi, and his bank, Banquo Noreste, Sau Paulo, Brazil, to the tune of approximately US\$242 million. He not only jailed Nwude, but also ordered him to forfeit the property he acquired from the 419 act.
- He was also the judge who jailed the Nollywood actress, Hassanat Akinwande alias Wunmi, for being in possession of hard drugs
- Justice Oyewole also convicted the General Overseer of the Christian Praying Assembly (CPA), Emeka Ezeugo, also known as Rev. (Dr) King, for murder, to death by hanging.
- Oyewole also handled the case of former Chairman of the Nigerian Port Authority, Chief Olabode George who was found guilty in the 68-count charge preferred against him by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).



5. BARRISTER OLU OMOTAYO

FOUNDER, CIVIL RIGHTS REALISATION AND ADVANCEMENT NETWORK (CRRAN)

Barr. Omotayo is a legal practitioner with over 17 years' experience. He started his career with the Carmelite Prisoners' Interest Organisation (CAPIO) where he served as a youth Corper and was later retained as legal officer. He later became a senior legal officer before he left in 2005. He joined the Civil Liberties Organisation in 2006 as the Ag Zonal Director (Southeast) and later became the substantive Zonal Director, a position he held till 2015, when he left to found the Civil Rights Realisation and Advancement Network (CRRAN) an NGO, which is dedicated to defending the rights of the most vulnerable in Society.

Based in Enugu away from his Ogun state, Omotayo has fought tirelessly in defence of the rights of the marginalised. He has won many cases in pursuit of justice for the poor including the first decision by the court in the Southeast on the applicability of Freedom of Information Act (FOI) in states of Nigeria, which case encourages accountability and good governance in government.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Barrister Olu Omotayo has handled many public interest litigation cases. Examples are:

- Miss Nma Ukonu, an Enugu State citizen who was tortured, humiliated, dehumanized and unlawfully detained by the Enugu State Waste Management Authority (ESWAMA). The Federal High Court, Enugu, presided over by Justice D.V. Agishi ordered ESWAMA to pay five hundred thousand naira (N500, 000) compensation.
- The United Nations Office in Nigeria adopted and re-presented a petition he earlier sent to the National Human Rights Commission, on the continuous deterioration of human rights situation in Enugu by the activities of ESWAMA.
- Release of 6 Year Old Chibuike Oramalu from 6 Weeks detention at the State CID Enugu who mistakenly pulled the trigger, shattered the glass window of the room, pierced the wall of the next building passed out on the other side and hit a 12 year old boy named Oluebube Boniface on the chest.
- The protracted legal battle between Civil Rights Realisation and Advancement Network (CRRAN) and the Attorney General of Enugu State over the initial refusal of the State

government to commence trial of the 5 suspects arrested and paraded on May 25, 2016 by the Police High Command Abuja, in connection with the Nimbo massacre finally came to an end on Tuesday the 21st day of March 2017, as the State government finally arraigned the 5 suspects before an Enugu Chief Magistrates' Court presided over by Anthony Eze Esq. of Enugu South Magisterial District.

- Case of the three students union leaders against the University of Nigeria and Professor Bartholomew Okolo, The Vice Chancellor of the University at the Federal High Court on the 2nd day of July 2010. The Federal High Court 2, Enugu presided over by Honorable Justice D.V. Aghisi, ordered the immediate reinstatement of three student union leaders.