

Nigeria: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Friday 15th October, 18:00 @ The Africa Centre

The Africa Centre brings together a diverse panel of speakers to reflect on five decades of Nigerian independence.

From the ancient Hausa, Bini, Nri and Yoruba Kingdoms of Ife and Oyo to the wealth of internationally acclaimed artists, authors, musicians and filmmakers produced by its lands, Nigeria is a country with a diverse and rich cultural history. It is also a country with vast mineral resources and was, at one point, the world's largest exporter of palm oil, cocoa and groundnuts.

However, in her short post-colonial independent history, Africa's most populous country has lived through more than three decades of turbulent military rule and faced many obstacles to her development. This 'giant of Africa' returned to civilian rule in 1999, yet there remains violence in the Niger Delta over oil production, religious conflict between the north and south, poor infrastructure, and continued claims of corruption. As recently as July 2009, the BBC held a debate entitled "*Is Nigeria a failed state?*"

Despite this, Nigerians have a sense of pride in being Nigerian and are still optimistic that their country will be a good place for their children in the future. Such optimism is not unfounded. In 2010, Nigeria's economy is one of the fastest growing in the world. And a General Election is due to take place next year. With the thought-provoking statement: "**So many hopes and ideals 50 years ago... So much still to be realised**", we ask our panellists to share their views on *their Nigeria* of today while reflecting on the past and shedding light on the future.

The panel of speakers will include:

Alice Ukoko – Founder /CEO of Women Of Africa. WoA is a grass-roots charity that mediates cultural understanding and supports African families to engage positively with the UK educational system to reduce the rate of exclusion and raise academic standards. As an activist, Alice works to raise the profile of Africa women and their role in Africa's reform. She has also campaigned to raise awareness on the human rights abuses taking place in Nigeria, and in the Niger Delta in particular, where she was born.

Branwen Okpako – filmmaker. Born in Lagos, of Nigerian and Welsh heritage, Branwen lives and works in Berlin, Germany. Her films include shorts and full-length features and documentaries. Her last film, *The Pilot and the Passanger* (2007) was about the poet Christopher Okigbo who died in 1967 fighting for Biafra during the Nigerian civil war. Branwen is currently completing a new feature on the life and times of Auma Obama, senior sister to President Obama, to be released in 2011.

Dipo Salimonu – journalist at Africa Confidential. Dipo has also written for the Paris-based Africa Report magazine and worked briefly at the Financial Times newspaper. In early 2010 he co-founded Ateriba Ltd - an oil and gas trading, logistics and financial advisory company, which has offices in London and Lagos. Ateriba markets crude oil for some Nigerian producers and has quickly become a leading provider of financing and M&A solutions to indigenous owners of oil block (upstream) assets.

Inua Ellams – poet, writer and graphic artist. Born in Nigeria, Inua now lives and works in London. His debut full-length play, *The 14th Tale*, won a Fringe First Award at the Edinburgh Festival 2009 and had a sell-out run at the National Theatre in spring 2010. Inua will be performing an excerpt from his latest play, *Untitled*.

Peter Cunliffe-Jones – London-based senior editor of AFP news agency. Peter has had over 20 years experience as a foreign correspondent working for AFP and regularly freelancing for The Economist and The Independent. His book, *My Nigeria: Five Decades of Independence*, was recently published in the UK by Palgrave MacMillan and will be on sale at the Africa Centre on the day.

Dr Patrick Wilmot (chair) – Africa Centre Trustee. Dr Patrick taught for 18 years at Ahmadu Bello University, Nigeria, until he was kidnapped and expelled by the then military ruler General Babangida. Patrick is the author of several books, including *Sociology: A New Introduction* and *Seeing Double*, a novel. Dr Patrick also does commentary for BBC, Al-Jazeera, VOA TV, and radio.

Dr Titi Banjoko – managing director of AfricaRecruit. AfricaRecruit is a programme designed to build capacity in Africa using human capital as the main driver. Dr Titi also serves on the Migrant Advisory Board of The European Commission-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative, the selection panel of the International Health Links Funding Scheme run by the Tropical Health and Education Trust (THET), and is a Fellow of the Nigerian Leadership Initiative, a member of the Aspen Global Leadership Network.

This event will also showcase the work of a selection of Nigerian designers, including:

Calum Robertson, The African Waistcoat Company - www.africanwaistcoatcompany.com
Africa meets Savile Row - Calum Robertson tailors stunning waistcoats from Nigerian hand woven aso oke cloth. Aso oke means high status or "up country" cloth among the Yoruba peoples of South-Western Nigeria.

Christina Oshunniyi, Yorubatik - www.yorubatik.com
'You can take the girl out of Africa but not Africa out of the girl' - Yorubatik aims to create garments canvassing colourful Africa.

Emamoke Ukeleghe, Textile Designer - www.emamoke.com
Emamoke is a London-based artist and printed textile designer. Emamoke was part of the Steering Committee of the first ever African & African-Caribbean Design Diaspora Festival, part of the London Design Festival 2010.

Music on the night will be **courtesy of Zak Akhimien of Shakara** - www.shakara.be
Shakara is an online platform that supports the increasing presence of African music and artists globally through a range of services including digital promotion, retail and marketing.

Event programme:

18:00: Arrival, welcome & reception

18:30: Panel Discussion

19:00: Audience participation

20:00: Drinks and music

22:30: END

Address: The Africa Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden, London WC2E 8JT.

This event is FREE, but space is limited. To reserve your place, please RSVP to sheila@businessofculture.com stating your full name and job title/company.

Best regards,

Sheila Ruiz

Programming & Communications – The Africa Centre