

Passing the Torch

have followed the law and its happenings through the media for many years from The London Times Law pages and of course our very own LAWYER. And here I am today the Editor of LAWYER through the inspiration of the Publisher of Thisday Newspaper Prince Nduka Obaigbena.

A 1984 graduate of University of Ife called to the Nigerian Bar in 1985 and subsequently became a Solicitor of England and Wales and thereafter an LLM from the University of London with specialization in international business law with merit in arbitration. Member of the Chartered Institute of Arbitration UK (MCIARB).

I am a member of various legal bodies such as the Nigerian Bar Association, the NBA Section on Business Law, the Law Society of England and Wales, the Chartered Institute of Arbitration Nigeria branch where I am the Assistant Secretary and the London Court of International Arbitration User Council. I am also an Executive Council Member of Women In Management, Business and Public Service (WIMBIZ).

I have the law through and through in me, being the daughter of late Chief Michael Ashikodi Agbamuche SAN, former Attorney General of the Federation, I have 7 siblings who are all lawyers, my daughter is a lawyer, one of my nieces is a lawyer and my husband too is a lawyer.

I recollect with nostalgia the comportment, carriage and substance of senior members of the bar whom I had the good fortune to interact with by reason of having come from a legal family myself. These were times of unquestionable integrity. I look forward to a day of restoration.

Taking over a project that has come to stand the test of time, a level has been achieved that is consistent with THISDAY Newspaper Groups' pre-eminent position in print media in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. It started as a baby in 2001 by my predecessor Funke Aboyade who has carried it a long way. The torch has been passed to me and I owe it to THISDAY LAWYER's readers to carry it further afield. LAWYER will continue its contribution to the finer traditions of the legal profession and to act as a stimulus to advancement and growth. When I say finer traditions I mean those attributes that have been long identified as the abiding characteristics of the profession's founding fathers.

My role as the Editor of LAWYER will include meaningful contributions to this restoration and upliftment. Life as law is a factor of generations. This era of the legal profession has witnessed a generational shift to the bulk of active legal practitioners being 40 years and below. In addition to the usual readers of LAWYER, covering the Bench, Bar

and interested persons, great attention will be reserved for this generational majority, who therefore must ensure their active involvement in this project.

In this dispensation, LAWYER as a legal pullout will reflect the topical issues of the day and hopefully of tomorrow.

I have not in any way come to jettison what you our readers have been enjoying in the LAWYER: you will still see a lot of your favourite columns within the pullout, but we also seek to provide a platform for readers to express their opinions on legal issues they feel passionate about among new and, we believe, equally interesting articles and columnists.

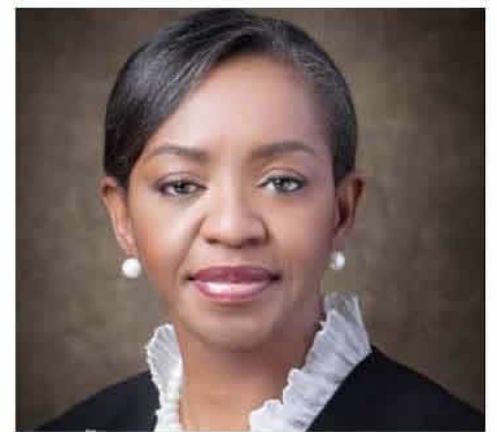
One aspect that many lawyers have over the years complained about is that ethics in the legal profession is slowly dying and in the near future will be totally extinct. The only way to bring a renewal of ethics and many other traditions of the profession is by the old passing it on through written words.

In foreign jurisdictions such as in England, whether you are a city lawyer or a high street lawyer or a country lawyer you are all bound by a set of ethics which are fundamental right across the board.

We will have a column called Law 101, law made simple and to de-mystify many areas of the law for both lawyers and non-lawyers.

I have often thought about the importance of pupillage for lawyers fresh out of law school in addition to Law School attachment. Ideally we should have pupillage but as it is a means of honing skills but unfortunately, the economic pressures in Nigeria makes it a serious burden on parents and those who sponsor their wards to become lawyers. To impose pupillage would impose an additional financial burden, since pupillage implies that you are not earning a real income of a fully fledged lawyer.

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On the home front, Nigeria is going through very interesting times, although somewhat akin to the dark ages.

Rivers State has had its fair share of problems; it has been inundated with one crisis after another, bombing of the High Court, clashes between the police and lawmakers, a complete case of lack of law and order. The Rivers State House of Assembly sat at the Rivers State Government Auditorium to receive the 2014 budget of the State from Governor Rotimi Amaechi and subsequently approved the budget. Does it however mean that State Governors can conduct the business of government anywhere they please?

The clamour for state police has raised its head above the parapet yet again in the light of the Rivers crises. Is it not time to reform the position of the Law where the Chief Security Officer of a State has no control over the principal instrument of maintaining security within the state which is the police? What next for democracy as we approach election year?

With all the many things begging for attention in Nigeria, it is truly disturbing to note that the coming into force of the Anti - Gay Marriage Act is generating so much passionate debate among Nigerians. Same-sex marriage is not the norm in our country and therefore it beggars belief that it was given such priority in place of more important national issues. But nevertheless the banning of same sex marriage may be considered to be in violation of the fundamental human rights of those concerned. Homosexuality is illegal in at least 36 of Africa's 55 countries.

I invite and welcome all meaningful contributions, suggestions and feedback. Feedback is vital as we push forward the frontiers of sustainable progress for the legal profession.

