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EDITOR'S NOTE

This special edition is devoted to the 2016 Chinua Achebe annual memorial lecture. Chinua Achebe is an international icon and a literary guru. This year's lecture is special as it highlighted vividly the issue of poor governance in Nigeria which Achebe had in his life time philosophized, theorized, and agonized over and over again. The keynote speaker, Mr Peter Obi, the former Governor of Anambra State, in a treatise interlaced with deep personal experiences, proved that good governance is achievable in Nigeria. Public office is a call to service. It is not a jamboree to exhibit extravagance, waste, pilfering of state treasury but an opportunity to uplift millions of people from excruciating poverty.

Qualities of a good leader must include but are not limited to integrity, prudence, foresight, "tight-fistedness" over state till, self-discipline, accountability, drive, vision, humility, and diligence. Mr Peter Obi delivered on his mandate, leaving imperishable legacies of infrastructure in Anambra State. His stellar performance in office was an honour to the memory of Chinua Achebe who had advocated good governance in his life time. For those aspiring to lead at whatever level, with intent to leave lasting footprints in the sands of time, Mr Peter Obi's homilies would serve as a signpost and a refreshing oasis whenever in doubt.

I must commend the indefatigable Dean of Arts, Professor Pat Uche Okpoko, not only for organizing the lecture but for making this special edition possible.

Thank you.

Dr. Paul Obi-Ani
Editor

In the Service of the Arts: In the Service of Culture and Nation

*Special Issue in Honour of
Chinua Achebe (1930-2013)*

Special Issue

Chinua Achebe

**In the Service of the Arts: In the Service of
Culture and Nation**

Guest Editors

A.N. Akwanya

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University of Nigeria, Nsukka*

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FOREWORD

This special issue of *Nsukka Journal of the Humanities* (NJH) is a product of Chinua Achebe Memorial Lecture, which held on May 24, 2016. The lecture was organized by the Faculty of Arts, University of Nigeria in honour of Chinua Achebe, whose footprints in the Faculty and even in the global arena will ever remain indelible. We thank the Almighty God for bringing this rare literary icon to this mother earth! We thank God for making him a Nigerian, but most importantly, a man of Igbo extraction! We also thank God for bringing him to our dear Faculty.

Tentative steps were first taken by the Faculty in 1990 to mark the passage of Chinua Achebe through the University of Nigeria in a regular and public way with an international conference, whose seminal publication was titled *Eagle on the Iroko*. In 2001, another great event took place, culminating in the publication of another volume entitled *Eagle on Ascent*. This was subsequently followed by a historic conference in 2012 tagged “The Village within the Global Village”. It was at this period, the proceedings of which have been published under the same title, that the decision to make it a biennial event took place. Although there was a lull between that event and now, I firmly believe that we shall henceforth take the bull by the horns by ensuring that the event is held as and when due.

This year’s edition is entitled “In the Service of the Arts: In the Service of Culture and Nation”. It was organized, not as a conference, but as a public lecture and Mr. Peter Obi, CON, former Governor of Anambra State, a man whose humility and desire to turn things around have been widely

acknowledged, a man of honour and a great achiever, delivered the keynote address. He was ably supported by three literary giants who anchored the literary colloquium, which formed an essential part of the lecture. Another significant part of this historic event was the award of excellence bestowed on two great Nigerians, Chief Emmanuel Okonkwo (a.k.a. Bishop) *OFR*, CEO, Ekulo Nigeria Ltd and Chief Ugochukwu Orji, CEO, Romax Properties Nigeria Limited. They were honoured with “Entrepreneurship/Corporate Governance Award, and Entrepreneurship/Building Technology Award, respectively in recognition of their pedigree and sterling qualities in these spheres.

The name Chinua Achebe represents many things to many scholars and persons of different colorations and disciplines. To literary scholars, he is a literary giant, whose works transcend the African milieu, therefore making him a global icon. For cultural specialists, Achebe is an epitome of cultural realism and an ardent ethnographer. Political leaders see him as a rare gem whose constructive criticisms would always put leaders on their toes as they pilot the affairs of their constituencies.

His first work *Things Fall Apart* is not only encyclopaedic, but also represents a rare and holistic exposition on the sudden interplay between an Igbo cultural setting and change brought about by western incursion. What appears much more fascinating is his uncommon use of figures of speech (proverbs, riddles, idioms) interlaced with transliteration and precise descriptive phrases to navigate the African literary canvass and at the same time, appeal to a larger audience. This work also represents a classic

ethnographic masterpiece on Igbo culture. But his *A Man of the People* and to a lesser degree, *The Trouble with Nigeria* directed to the leadership issues in Nigeria, have been seen as a must-read for persons who aspire to lead Nigeria. They preach the gospel of selfless leadership or servant leadership, but chastise the corrupting tendencies, self-aggrandisement and sectionalism associated with Nigerian leaders. It is this man of many parts that we celebrated this year. The lecture focused on leadership questions in Nigeria and literary criticism, while delineating the African cultural perceptions that Albert Chinualumogu Achebe represents in the global arena.

As the Dean of Faculty, I earnestly desire to create a vibrant environment for teaching and research that is not only knowledge-based and sublime in the arts, but also technologically-driven. To accomplish this, I tried to encourage our younger colleagues through effective mentoring and workshops to actualize their innate potentials and ultimately contribute to moving the Faculty beyond the ivory tower, and make handy the time-honoured knowledge and wealth of experience of our senior colleagues in our efforts to operate more effectively within the University system. I believe that together, we can reposition the Faculty.

This special volume contains the much-sought-after speech on leadership by Mr. Peter Obi as well as the masterpieces and encyclopaedic expositions of Achebe's works by Professor Justus Obi Nwachukwu-Agbada (the Lead Paper Presenter) and Professor Lady Esther N. Ugwu (Discussant). It also contains a co-authored paper, which x-rayed Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* from the perspective of African ethnography and communication. The strength of this

work, therefore, lies not only in its literary diagnosis and multidisciplinary nature, but also in the amiable style and lucid language with which it was written. Indeed, it is an invaluable resource to literary scholars, ethnographers and academics of different backgrounds. I strongly recommend it, as I commend Rev. Fr. Professor A.N. Akwanya for his painstaking efforts in ensuring that this publication sees the light of day.

Professor Pat Uche Okpoko
Dean, of Faculty of Arts,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

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