

MOSHOOD KASHIMAWO OLAWALE ABIOLA

Moshood Kashimawo Olawale Abiola, born on August 24, 1937, in Abeokuta, Ogun State, was a popular Nigerian Yoruba businessman, publisher, politician and aristocrat of the Egba clan. Moshood was his father's twenty-third child but the first of his father's children to survive infancy hence the name "Kashimawo".

MKO showed entrepreneurial talents at a very young age, at the tender age of nine he started his first business selling firewood before going to school, in order to support his old father and his siblings.

He established a band at age fifteen where he performed at different functions in return for food and later got perfected enough to begin requesting money for his exhibitions which he utilized to uphold his family and his secondary education at the Baptist Boys High School, Abeokuta. He was the editor of the school magazine The Trumpeter, Olusegun Obasanjo was his deputy editor.

At the age of 19 he joined the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons ostensibly because of its strange pan Nigerian origin compared with the Obafemi Awolowo-led Action Group.

In 1956, Moshood Abiola started his professional life as bank clerk with Barclays Bank plc in Ibadan, South-West Nigeria. After two years he joined the Western Region Finance Corporation as an executive accounts officer before leaving for Glasgow, Scotland to pursue his higher education. In Glasgow he received 1st class in political economy, commercial law and management accountancy. He also received a distinction from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland. On his return to Nigeria, he worked as a senior accountant at the University of Lagos Teaching Hospital. He later went onto Pfizer, before joining the ITT Corporation, where he rose to the position of Vice President, Africa and Middle-East.

Moshood had investments in Nigeria and West Africa. He set up Abiola Farms, Abiola Bookshops, Radio Communications Nigeria, Wonder bakeries, Concord Press, Concord Airlines, Summit Oil International Ltd, Africa Ocean lines, Habib Bank, Decca W.A. Ltd, and Abiola Football Club. In addition to

these, he also managed to perform his duties as Chairman of the G15 Business Council, President of the Nigerian Stock Exchange, Patron of the Kwame Nkrumah Foundation.

Moshood Abiola sprang to national and global prominence as a consequence of his humanitarian exercises. The Congressional Black Caucus of the United States of America issued the following tribute to Moshood Abiola, *"Because of this man, there is both cause for hope and certainty that the agony and protests of those who suffer injustice shall give way to peace and human dignity. The children of the world shall know the great work of this extraordinary leader and his fervent mission to right wrong, to do justice, and to serve mankind. The enemies which imperil the future of generations to come: poverty, ignorance, disease, hunger, and racism have each seen effects of the valiant work of Chief Abiola. Through him and others like him, never again will freedom rest in the domain of the few. We, the members of the Congressional Black Caucus salute him this day as a hero in the global pursuit to preserve the history and the legacy of the African diaspora"*

From 1972 until his death, Moshood Abiola had been conferred with 197 traditional titles by 68 different communities in Nigeria, in response to the fact that his financial assistance resulted in the construction of 63 secondary schools, 121 mosques and churches, 41 libraries, 21 water projects in 24 states of Nigeria, and was grand patron to 149 societies or associations in Nigeria.

Moshood Abiola was twice voted worldwide businessman of the year, and gained various honorary doctorates from universities all over the world. In 1987 he was given the golden key to the city of Washington D.C., and he was bestowed with an award from the NAACP and the King Center in the USA, and also the International Committee on Education for Teaching in Paris, among others too numerous to mention. In Nigeria, the Oloye MKO Abiola was made the Aare Ona Kakanfo of Yorubaland. It is the most noteworthy chieftaincy title accessible to everyday citizens around the Yoruba, and has just been given by the tribe 14 times in its history. This

basically rendered MKO the ceremonial Viceroy of the greater part of his tribes people. According to the folklore of the tribe as recounted by the Yoruba elders, the Aare Ona Kakanfo is expected to die a warrior in the defense of his nation in order to prove himself in the eyes of both the divine and the mortal as having been worthy of his title.

Chief MKO Abiola contested for President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria along with Amb. Babagana Kingibe as his running mate in the June 12 general election in the year 1993, which was widely adjudged as the most fairest, freest and peaceful in the history of this country but was annulled by the government of that time and this ignited a lot of agitation. June 12, more than any other day, subsequently, symbolized the struggles and sacrifices made by countless Nigerians to establish democracy as our way of national governance. Chief MKO Abiola and others gave their lives that we might have democracy, that the will of the people would be sovereign and not suppressed by the will of the few.

The award of GCFR to Chief Abiola serves as an acknowledgement that he won the 1993 election and should have been allowed to serve as our president after winning that free and fair expression of the popular will.

In recognition of his immense and meritorious contribution to the growth and development of commerce, agriculture, industry, sports, and political sagacity. Chief MKO Abiola, the man whose sacrifice paved the way for our democracy, an outstanding industrialist, a businessman of repute and a philanthropist per excellence is being honoured with the award of Grand Commander of the Federal Republic (GCFR).

AMBASSADOR BABAGANA KINGIBE

Ambassador Babagana Kingibe born on the 25th June, 1945 into the family of Mustafa Shuwa and Ya Kingi Mallam, is a Nigerian politician and political appointee having held many high-level Nigerian governmental positions. He hails from Borno State in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, and is of Kanuri extraction.

Ambassador Babagana Kingibe served from October 2002 to September 2006 as AU Special Envoy to Sudan and subsequently Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and head of the AU Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and Darfur.

Kingibe grew up in the city of Maiduguri and attended primary schools in the city. In 1958, he was admitted into the Borno Provincial Secondary School, however, in 1960, he traveled to London to complete his O'Level and A-level at Bishop's Stortford College under a Borno Native Authority sponsored scholarship scheme. He took up further studies earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in International Relations at the University of Sussex where he was mates with Thabo Mbeki. He started pursuing a doctorate programme in Switzerland but he left the program before completing his degree.

He returned to Nigeria and started work as a Research and Planning Officer at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria but he soon left the college to become the head of Features and Current Affairs at the Broadcasting Corporation of Northern Nigeria. In 1972, he joined the Nigerian Foreign Service where he started as a Senior Counselor and later became the head of the political desk at the Nigerian High Commission in London. During the Obasanjo administration in the late 1970s, Kingibe worked in the political department as principal secretary and was involved in the government's return to civil rule programme, states creation and boundary adjustment, local government reforms and the constitutional drafting committee. In 1981, at age 36, he was appointed the Nigerian Ambassador to Greece and later the country's representative in Pakistan.

Kingibe entered Nigerian political scene during the beginning of the Third Republic. In 1988, he was made director of organization of the People's Front of Nigeria (PFN) which was then led by late Shehu Musa Yar'Adua. The PFN later joined Social Democratic Party in 1989. During the conduct of elections for national executive positions in the party, Kingibe was sponsored by the People's Front faction of SDP as the party's chairman, a position he went on to clinch. As chairman, Kingibe was involved in the organization of party's gubernatorial and presidential primaries in 1991 and 1992 respectively. However, after the cancellations of presidential elections in 1992 in which late Shehu Musa Yaradua was a candidate, Kingibe put himself forward as a presidential candidate. He made a split from his initial camp, the PFN group and used his relationships with SDP state party chairman to build his campaign.

He lost the keenly contested primary conducted in Jos but after much prodding from SDP governors; he was selected by the primary winner, MKO Abiola as Vice-presidential running mate, creating a Muslim-Muslim ticket which was initially thought to be a deal breaker in the general elections. The pair won the electoral majority although the result was annulled by abdicating President, General Ibrahim Babangida. Babagana later joined General Sani Abacha as the Foreign Minister of Nigeria from 1993 to 1995. Babagana also served as Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Power and Steel, Nigeria's Ambassador to Greece and Pakistan. He also served as the Secretary to the Government of the Federation under the Umaru Musa Yar'Adua's Administration between July 2007 and Sept 2008.

Ambassador Babagana Kingibe was a detribalized Nigerian, a bridge builder and a seasoned technocrat. As the Presidential running mate to the acclaimed winner of the June 12, 1993 elections and also in recognition of his immense contributions to nation building that he is honoured today with the award of the Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON).

CHIEF ABDUL GANIYU (GANI) FAWEHINMI, SAN

Fawehinmi, popularly called Gani, was born on 22 April, 1938, into the Fawehinmi family of Ondo, in Ondo State. He was an author, well respected publisher, philanthropist, social critic, seasoned human and civil rights lawyer, politician and a Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN).

Gani had his early education at Ansar-Ud-Deen Primary School, Iyemaja – Ondo from 1947 to 1953 and his secondary school education at Victory College Ikare, a Christian school from 1954 to 1958, where he sat for and passed his West African School Certificate Examination in 1958. Gani enrolled at the Holborn College of Law- University of London to read law in 1961. While at the university, his father died. He completed his academic degree in London with a measure of difficulty due to lack of funds. This made him do various menial jobs in London.

While in college, he was popularly known as “nation” because of his passionate interest in national, legal and political affairs. He was an avid reader of Daily Times and West African Pilot, the most popular newspapers in Nigeria at that time.

On June 11, 1993 Fawehinmi was awarded the biennial Bruno Kreisky prize. This prize, named in honour of Bruno Kreisky, is awarded to international figures that advance human rights causes. In 1998, he received the International Bar Association’s ‘Bernard Simmons award’ in recognition of his human-rights and pro-democracy work. Gani Fawehinmi was elevated to the rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), the highest legal title in Nigeria in September, 2001. In 1994 he and some other notable Nigerians formed the National Conscience Party of Nigeria which exists till today. He stood for a presidential election in 2003 under the umbrella of the National Conscience Party.

With his boundless energy he tenaciously and uncompromisingly pursued and propagated his beliefs, principles and ideals for the untrammelled rule of law, undiluted democracy, and all embracing and expansive social justice, protection of fundamental human rights and respect for the hopes and aspirations of the masses who are victims of misgovernment.

Gani was beaten up time after time and was deported from one part of the country to another to prevent him from being able to effectively reach out to the masses among whom he was popular. His books were confiscated by the Federal Military Government and his library at Surulere, a suburb of Lagos, were set ablaze. His law chambers at Anthony Village, Lagos State, were invaded by persons suspected to be agents of the Government.

In the process of his crusades for the rule of law, the hopes and aspirations of the poor and the oppressed, he fought many battles against military dictatorship as a result of which he had been arrested several times by the military governments and their numerous security agents. He was dumped in many police cells and detained in several prisons between 1969 and 1996.

His supporters have called him "the scourge of irresponsible governments, the veritable conscience of the nation, the senior advocate of the masses and the champion of the interests and causes of the people" Many Nigerians called him the people's president.

Gani, as he was fondly called, died in the early hours of 5th September 2009 after a prolonged battle with lung cancer at the age of 71. Gani Fawehinmi died a disappointed man, because of the state of his country at the time of his death; he refused the highest honour accorded him by his country on his death bed.

In appreciation of his pioneering role in fighting for the good of the masses and his invaluable contributions to national development, Chief Gani Fawehinmi is today being honoured with the prestigious and second highest award of Grand Commander of the Order of the Niger (GCON).