

Presentation by DR. Charles Israel Afolabi, JP, President, U3As
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LIFE LONG LEARNING AND U3As in Nigeria.

April 7-8, 2022

New York College

Athens – Greece

Distinguished ladies and gentle men, all protocols duly observed.

I am Dr. Charles Israel Afolabi (JP), President U3As in Nigeria and Member, Association of International Universities of the Third Age – AIUTA.

It is indeed a great pleasure and a privilege to have been invited as a Speaker at this important occasion on the calendar of the 108th meeting and Conference of the Association of International Universities of the Third Age – AIUTA, holding here in Athens Greece.

I bring to this important occasion, the good wishes of U3A Members and Nigerian people.

I also wish to seize this opportunity to appreciate the Leadership of AIUTA Prof. Francos Vellas and his Team, and most importantly, the President of New York College, Athens Prof ELIAS FOUTSIS, PhD. and our amiable hardworking NIKOS Mistriotis and all concerned.

I also greet all my colleagues from U3As around the world especially those that are here.

As we age, most of us come to accept the persistence specter of ageing as an inevitable part of being alive. It is the price we disburse at the closing part of our lives, a price for the gift of life. Though, advances in medical science often do lengthen our

ageing process; however, they cannot promise us eternal youthfulness. In short, we are faced with a simple fact, 'life, thus, ageing'.

To me, these are our most treasonable days on earth; these are days characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, struggles, triumphs, good and bad. These are days composed of period's relative serenity and well-being, depression and anxiety and a range of effective experiences in between. The timing and intensity of these subjective experiences may vary widely according to health status, finances, levels of social support and other variables, nonetheless, we are all faced with one reality- that we are ageing.

This realization of the certainty of ageing should skillfully explain life to us. In this light, life to me should be more about asking question than only finding answers. The act of only seeking answers comes from a wish to make life, which is basically fluid, into something more certain and fixed. This often leads to rigidity, closed mindedness, and intolerance.

On the other hand, asking questions about life put us in touch with the mystery of life. Asking questions accustoms us to the ungraspable nature of life and enable us to understand things from a range of experiences. Thus, we are challenged here today to both ask witty questions and attempt to find

answers to issues that have characterized our present conditions as individuals and as a nation.

LIFE LONG LERARNING/ CONTINUING EDUCATION

Continuing education, which can also be referred to as adult education, is basically defined as an educational programme designed for people regarded as adult. It is designed for people who are mentally matured and socially responsible. Continuing education aims at developing individuals mentally, equipping their communicative, powers as well as their technical and vocational capacities. It offers educative functions to the broader sector of the Society and promotes the formative part which the major economic activities may play.

Nigerian Government has NEVER put into consideration the plight of the Elderly in the Society.

The significant and changing needs and contributions of the Senior Citizens are routinely ignored in development. Whereas, issues such as gender, the Environment, children and Youth's right are routinely considered.

In our fast ageing world, older people will increasingly play a critical role through volunteer work, transmitting experience and knowledge, helping their families with caring responsibilities and increasing their participation in the paid labour force.

There is a need for intergenerational co-operation that will bring together both the elderly and the Youth for productive engagements. This is not so in Nigeria my Country. There is no political will. The situation is so poor to address and this is because of corruption. Discrimination, non-inclusion and others.

I am happy to inform you that the present Administration in Nigeria had signed a Bill to take care of the Elderly.

One of the main goals of U3A's in Nigeria is the promotion of sustainable PEACE through Education, Culture and Languages as part of our efforts to contribute to the United Nations sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to eradicate poverty by 2030.

U3As in Nigeria run their independent curricular based on their vision and perceived needs.

Our philosophy is Long Life Learning (LLL) for all and Pre-Retirement Training. We help the Youth to prosper by empowering them with Vocational Education and skill acquisition. They are encouraged to get Vocational q
Qualification for what they know and can do.

U3As in Nigeria

Governments, both Federal, State and Local never put into consideration the plight of Senior Citizens in the Society. They are ignored in development, and this has been so, for many years. Universities of the Third Age are virtually not known in the Country. Fair enough, the first National Conference of U3A Nigeria, came up in January, 2018 which was a shop window to bring the Organization to the door step of the Federal Government and stakeholders in the Country.

Our thanks go to Prof. Francos Vellas, AIUTA President and Mr. Sidi Camara, President of U3A Senegal and a host of others who participated in the very important Conference.

In recent years, the International Community gave increasing recognition that older people would themselves play the main role in securing their own wellbeing, in proclaiming their worth, in developing their independence while integrated in family and Society.

Passport to lifelong Education lays the Foundation for learning throughout life and the strategies for remaining active, include being optimistic, proactive and continue to learn.

At all stages of life, active and health individuals feel

Connected to others and relevant in the family community. They make positive contributions and are learning

and growing. With energy and good health, people of all ages can continue to grow as individuals.

In Nigeria, many people are living to old age, policy decision are needed if quality of life in old age is to be improved.

Issues affecting the Senior Citizens must raised by the Government and other concerned bodies making policy decisions.

Institution like the Governments, Religious Bodies, Non-Governmental Organizations, Universities and Colleges etc are not making the mark because of lack of socialization due to socio-Economic problems including the gradual breakdown of family system among others.

Many Senior Citizens in Nigeria are experiencing Poverty, isolation, in adequate health and malnutrition. The old people's homes or villages are not even the answer because the Government and other institutions' attention is particularly on the youth who form the larger percentage of Nigeria's population of over 200 Million people.

From my independent survey in many States of Nigeria, Older persons are asking themselves if there is a point of living to old age when they cannot enjoy life, as they will like to be active and healthy and be independent to do what they like

and not depending on others to exist and be part of the communities they find themselves, to appreciate their wisdom and contributions.

In Nigerian, the young had grown, the old must die, let the new breed take over. This is what the youth are clamoring for now.

To address these issues, U3A Nigeria and indeed the Associations of Universities of the Third Age in Nigeria, are sensitizing the Governments, Non-Governmental Organizations, Civil Society Organization, Stakeholders, The Academia and others on issues on ageing in the Country to enable them through Research, Policies, Programmes, Education and Training and services to enhance the well-being of the older persons.

There must be initiative and development of appropriate curricular and Training Programmes on ageing through co-operation with Universities and Research Institutions.

We must also co-operate with U3As around the world for exchange of ideas and information about life long learning and other projects.

Gerontologists, Stakeholders, Care givers, Politicians, Students as well as privileged older persons must be encouraged to attend workshops, Conferences, Seminars and the like around the World if we are to be counted worthy in Nigeria as far as ageing issues are concerned not only in the Country but the World at large.

Older people are cherished in Nigeria. A key task before Nigeria, is to ensure that they continue to be cherished as change sweeps across the Country.

Knowledge is power, it is has been, and will continue to be. This is a phrase meaning that if somebody is empowered with a specific knowledge, and continue to update this, he can conquer the world (Life Long Education).

Learning is something we need to do through-out life, because, it is an investment.

Institutions in Nigeria must wake up from their slumber to a big task before them which must be done by having a major role to play in the development and spreading U3As across the Country as U3A Nigeria stands for Learning, making friends and succeeding together.

Thank you for listening.

Wishing you a successful deliberation.

Dr. Charles Afolabi (JP).
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