

More than Cash: The African Diaspora Intellectual Remittance (Posted on Facebook on May 2, 2023)

A few days ago, I was in Abuja, Lagos, and Ibadan to give a lecture and shoot additional scenes of the Fuji documentary.

I spoke in Abuja at the Global African Diaspora Symposium—at the invitation of the Nigerians in Diaspora Commission, a federal government establishment—to a predominantly non-academic audience, including diplomats and ambassadors, development experts and policy-makers, and pan-Africanists, from every nook and cranny of the global Black diaspora. My lecture focused on Intellectual Remittance—the undervalued, underreported, and underappreciated transfer of knowledge and collaboration between Nigerian scholars at home and their diaspora counterparts. I emphasized that the overwhelming concentration on cash remittance has blurred our focus on the unquantifiable wealth in the invisible labor of scholars—Blacks, Whites, among many diverse racial backgrounds and identities—working selflessly behind the scenes with Nigeria-based scholars to build interpersonal relationships that break retrogressive bureaucracy and leverage on technology to provide supplemental, yet valuable, support for research and training in Nigerian higher institutions.

The difficult part of the lecture is not explaining the meaning of intellectual remittance to a highly educated audience—it's connecting global intellectual collaboration, especially in the humanities and social sciences, to real cash remittance that policy-makers understand as the drivers of development on the African continent. It's improper and impossible to put a monetary value on intellectual wealth; yet, explaining the cumulative and reverberatory implications of intellectual remittance over decades and generations establish my position that cash remittance shouldn't be ranked higher than intellectual, simply because we can't value, feel, or see it. Indeed, in numerous cases, intellectual remittance is the foundation on which cash remittance is built. Without it, the millions of cash remittance that attracts public attention and formed the basis of development discourses wouldn't exist in the first place.

In addition to the Abuja lecture, I shot three additional scenes of the Fuji documentary at the following three locations:

- 1) The University of Ibadan Botanical Garden—with Tajudeen Pele, a member of the Sikiru Ayinde Barrister's band who became famous after a lyrical composition about how he went missing in Chicago during a 1986 tour of the United States.
- 2) The iconic Mapo Hall and the epicenter of colonial power in Ibadan --with Fujician Rasheed Ayinde Merenge.
- 3) At Sinatra Night Club in Ikeja (Lagos) with Fujician Sulaimon Adio Atawewe.

Yours Sincerely in History,

Ìṣòlá Ojúràbẹ́màsáá