

We are Moving, Again...!

After living in a rental house for four months, we bought our own house in the Miami-Homestead area. I retired my shortest-lived home office (August 1 to December 21). Among several memories, I will remember this brief home office for starting life with me at FIU and in Miami, for where I wrote and submitted the formal book proposal of the Fuji project to a university press, completed the chapter on “Political Fuji,” and for where I laid the bedrock of the 7th Annual Lagos Studies Association Conference.

Located about 30 minutes from the Florida International University campus, our new house offers more than the most spacious home office I have ever had. The prospect of hosting friends on a long- and short-time basis is another big advantage. Our previous home in North Carolina, which also had five bedrooms, served this purpose. We owned the house for 10 years until we sold it because we relocated to Florida. This short note about the people who visited us in the North Carolina home between 2012 and 2022 is about family and homemaking as much as about community building and scholarship.

My mother was our first visitor. She came in April 2012, about a month after we bought the house, and spent 6 months. She entered the house, recited some Quranic verses, and sang my favorite mumu button song—the one that made me give her whatever she wanted! My mother-in-law came in 2013 and spent four months. Bukola, wife of the late Dr. Paul Osifodunrin of the University of Lagos spent 6 months in our house to have her baby twins in 2016. Childhood friend, physician Dr. Omoleke and his wife, Kano native Dr. Mariya Ibrahim, spent 3 months for the same purpose a year earlier.

In December of 2016 when the Osifodunrin had their twins, my brother, Oluniyi Adebajji came on vacation with his full squad! His family of 5 from Lagos joined the Osifodunrin of 4 and the Aderinto of 4. A total of 13 humans lived through the December winter of 2016 under one roof and consumed \$600 worth of electricity! I stared at the electric bill, and my demons warned me: Saedo, Mafo fun owo ina yi. Mafo. Aaje, Mofoo, eventually! When XXX and XXX of Ibadan won the American Visa lottery/Green Card in 2014, they lived in our house with their son for 4 months. A month after they left in June 2014, XXX and XXX of Lagos and their toddler child, also recipients of US Visa Lottery, arrived and spent 3 months. Again in September 2019, Oluniyi Adebajji returned with his family and spent a month.

Academic visitors also found a home in our home. Dr. Sheyi Kehny, a Unilag Music lecturer and Dr. Olusegun Onakoya of the University of Ibadan’s Faculty of Law spent several months in 2014, 2015, and 2016 writing their doctoral dissertations in our house. In May 2012, Professor Akin Akinwale of the University of Lagos spent a couple of days. Dr. Felix Ajiola, also of Unilag, came for a conference in Atlanta and branched to see me in North Carolina in October 2015. Graduate student mentee Theophilus Okunlola spent December 2018 and 2019 with us. Others like Emmanuel Osayande came for a few days. This is just a partial list of visitors who spent at least a night with us between 2012 and 2022.

Hosting visitors is a lot of work. I wrote my books in between taking friends’ wives to doctors’ appointments, driving Green Card recipients around looking for jobs and support services, caring

for friends who came to write their doctoral dissertations in the comforts of our home, and living through incessant cries from young children of visitors. I remember that I wrote the introduction of my book, “Guns and Society in Colonial Nigeria,” in December 2016 because Oluniyi Adebajji’s son spent the entire month banging down all the doors in the house and simultaneously streaming “Open the Door.”

Yet, productivity is not measured solely by how long we sit behind the computer desk to read, research, and write—what we do when we are not actively working could make the biggest difference. For me, the best prose that give value to meaning, transition phrases that tightly hold sentences and paragraphs together, titles/subtitles that invite the most reluctant reader, and terminologies/vocabularies that codify or synchronize redundant writing to enhance precision and readability, rarely come while actively writing, but for instance, while driving visiting friends around, or not being able to work because of the deafening noise from my kids and their visiting friends from Nigeria. In other words, there is order in disorder. There is tranquility in chaos. The creativity that breeds superfluous productivity is not a linear progression.

No one paid a dime to live in our house. Having the right people around and being in the position to render uncommon help, altruistically, increase the joys of living. As humans, the real value of our possessions—intellectual, material, energy—is not what they do for us, but what they help us do for others. Living for others is one way to live one’s life to the fullest.

Come visit us, soon. And bring your own food!

Yours Sincerely in History,
Isola Atoko waa gbowo nle