

Readers may recall my column of 22 February 2001 "Flying Far, Flying Fear" which highlighted the danger of DVT – Deep Vein Thrombosis. I was pleased to read about the formation last week of the Nigerian Society for the Prevention of Thrombosis. Society's main concern is thrombosis on the ground, not from long hauls in the air, but it may be interesting to learn that currently, 2,300 lawsuits are being collated in Australia against airlines held responsible for victims of DVT, including families of 166 allegedly dead. At a symposium of thrombosis in Lagos organized by May & Baker Nigeria Plc, the participants concluded that DVT was a reality in Nigeria. (This Day 09 March 2001).

Leading the discussion on the subject was Dr J. Ajuluchukwu, a consultant cardiologist at LUTH, who did her specialist training at the University of Melbourne, Australia, and is therefore well experienced in the long-haul hell. Dr Ajuluchukwu is just one of the scores of Nigerians who studied at undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional levels in Australian universities. The first Nigerian to study in Australia was Obi Nwanna who did an M. Ed at Sydney University 1961-1963. Obi ended up as an Emeritus Professor of Education.

During my recent visit to Australia, I met the Nigerian High Commissioner in Canberra, Dr Rufai A.O. Soule, who informed me that there are over three thousand Nigerians registered with the Nigerian High Commission but there are many additional Nigerians resident in Australia who have not registered. Quite some long-term Nigerian residents have become Australian citizens and hold high positions in their various professions.

One of the most remarkable Nigerian-Australians is Jumoke Adebayo Doherty who has lived in Sydney for the last nineteen years. From the late 1960s to the early '80s, Jumoke was very well known in the U.K as a professional broadcast journalist and actor. Her voice was a household one in Nigeria to listeners of the BBC Africa Service and her writing was very familiar to readers of African culture which appeared in the U.K, newspapers and journals. Jumoke Adebayo-Doherty appeared in West End theatre productions in London and on BBC television dramas and comedies. Then suddenly - silence! What happened was that she was invited to the Commonwealth Games in Brisbane, Australia in 1982 as a consultant to organize an exhibition of Commonwealth costume and jewelry as part of a parallel "cultural games". Jumoke travelled all over the Commonwealth selecting the best samples of costume and jewelry. She organized and compared a dramatic fashion show and exhibition, which won accolades from the tens of thousands of visitors to the Games. Jumoke met many people in the antiques, jewelry, and cultural worlds in Australia and she fell in love with the climate (compared to England): the beautiful scenery, the outdoor living, and the open warm hospitality of Australians. So Jumoke Debayo Doherty took the radical decision to relocate to Sydney, Australia.

She first went into the antique business and had a stall in the high-class antique fair in Sydney. Then she decided that was too cramped, so she

## Nina' Mba's Insider / Outsider's Account



### Case For Nigerians Down Under

rented much more spacious accommodation in the up-market Crown Street Surry Hills (on that street there used to be the Crown Street Women's Hospital where I was born some years back). There she opened Jumoke's Art Gallery and a shop containing an extraordinary mix of exciting objects, *d'art*, antiques, Persian carpets (on which Jumoke is an authority) pieces of sculpture cloth, gift items, and an African display of masks, adire and woven cloth, beads, and paintings. It is a real Aladdin's cave treasure.

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From time to time, however, Jumoke re-organizes her gallery to create space for exhibitions. Last year, she organized one on Yoruba Culture which Dr Rufai A.O. Soule, the High Commissioner

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declared open. It displayed some rare exhibits of traditional Yoruba cloth, caps, jewelry, and chieftaincy regalia which Jumoke has collected over many years. Photographs, paintings, books, sculptures, carvings all combined to produce in Sydney, a most authentic and rich exhibition of Yoruba culture. Dr Soule sent a video of the opening of the exhibition to the Nigerian Television Authority, which showed it in December 2000. Dr Soule and Jumoke Debayo told me they had

received many calls from Nigeria in praise of the exhibition and their presentations. African studies academics and students and collectors of African art in Australia often consult Jumoke. Jumoke has not abandoned her gift for acting and love of the theatre. She has appeared in plays in Sydney, and she produced and directed Wole Soyinka's play, *Kongi's Harvest* in a theatre near the famous Bondi Beach. The production received positive reviews.

One of Jumoke's sons is practicing

as a solicitor in Sydney and he also has Australian citizenship. Jumoke maintains constant contact with all her huge extended family in Lagos and visits Nigeria regularly.

So also does another well-known Nigerian-Australian, Professor Bertha Aderinola Johnson, a psychiatrist. She is based in Ballarat, in Victoria, and has been practicing as a psychiatrist for the last thirteen years. One of Professor Johnson's children, Oladipo Lawrence Johnson, also holds Australian as well as Nigerian citizenship.

The Nigerians in Australia, as in other countries in the world, should have the right to vote during Nigerian elections. Australians, Americans, Britons, etc. residents in Nigeria can vote at their diplomatic missions in Nigeria. We all saw how important the overseas postal votes were in the U.S. presidential elections last year. While the Nigerians in Australia may not make a great difference numerically, those in the U.S and Europe definitely could. All overseas resident Nigerians should

be allowed to exercise their democratic right to vote.

I am not being chauvinistic when I assert that the standard of universities in Australia is uniformly high and recognized as such worldwide. All those Nigerians who studied or worked in Australia whom I have met speak very positively of their education and experiences in Australia. From that attachment to their associations with Australia has arisen the Nigeria – Australia and New Zealand Association NANZA. Its patron is the *Olowu of Owu*, Abeokuta, Dr O. A. Adeleye, who obtained his PhD in Architecture from the University of Sydney. Nigerian alumni of Australian universities who would like to join NANZA should either write to this column of c/o P. O. box or 54664 Ikoyi. Young Nigerians who are desirous of Australian university education will be interested to learn about one of Australia's top universities, the University of Wollongong, N.S.W. It has a campus in Dubai, much closer and cheaper for Nigerians. For details, you may also contact me at the Vanguard.

Dear Readers,

*I would be delighted to receive mail from you in response to my column. No writer or journalist wishes to write in a vacuum, feedback is most welcome.*

*Since nursery rhymes and verses have been featured in my column, may I end with this nursery rhyme which cautions readers to be careful of the promises of writers and information propagandists!*

#### A Song

I'll sing you a song

Nine verses long

For a pin

Three and three are six

And three are nine

You are a fool

And the pin is mine.