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A Phenomenon in the Legal Landscape: A Review of Professor Charles Ilegbune’s Contribution to Law and Society

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Abstract

Truth is self – revealing, gradually too. This is true both in the realm of phenomena and in the abstract regions of principles. Communities, receiving the new forms of the truth as they emerge, become liberated from the bondage of old ignorance. Legal truths are ministered through legal angels, “icons”. These are very rare in every age and as such, when identified, needed to be isolated and celebrated precisely for inspiration of, and imitation by, an upcoming generation. Such heroes as they are, stand out as models for perennial study and practice of law. The doctrines they expound extemporize into a catechism of legal wisdom and constitute remarkable paradigm shifts in the landscape. Professor Charles Ilogbene, has inaugurated a patent revolution in legal research and practice. His epiphany constitutes a symbol of encouragement to desirous seekers of legal truth and at once, a statement of warning to an age that excels in negotiating “shortcuts” even in the sacred plains of learning. What is more, his figure and profile interrogate a university system that employs incompetent lecturers and promotes to professorship persons who have no business with the classrooms. It further queries a legal system that breeds “charm” lawyers and sanctifies obsolete laws. This paper adopts a historico – descriptive and analytic methods in the demonstration of its argument. It finds that genius is 99% perspiration and recommends industry as a panacea to decaying legal systems. All in all, it challenges the cult of mediocrity so much manifest in research and practice of Nigerian law today, by a re- presentation of this audacious “phenomenon in the legal landscape”.

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Introduction

Professor Charles Ilegbune, *PhD., ACI Arb., OON and SAN* who is listed as one of the most intelligent men of the 21st century, is without doubt a monumental phenomenon in the legal landscape. The task of writing his profile imposes on the chronicler an inevitable reflection on the vast array of possibilities open to man and on the reader, a wondering contemplation on the rare quality of heroism.

It is a dominical mandate when after creating man God said “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it”.¹ And in another periscope God said “till the earth and keep it”.² Men of science and of arts, through the ages have tried to appropriately respond to this imperative by practically translating same inspiration to genuine commitments in their various professional endeavours. And so in science, arts, humanities and more so in the laws, it is rare but possible to isolate men who have made outstanding contributions to knowledge and learning and who have in that way kept a memorial of their inventive genius and originality on the plaque of times.

In the Sciences, a litany of such names avail us, namely: *Isaac Newton, Michael Faraday, Galileo Galilei, Archimedes, Heisenberg, Marx Planck, Einstein and Bill Gates* of our computers. Arts, Humanities and Philosophy would reckon with such authorities as *William Shakespeare, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Karl Marx, and Josephat Oguejiofor* of our own. It is left for this work to demonstrate that in the high ranks and hierarchy of legal luminaries who have traversed this earth leaving such permanent impressions on the legal history of nations; and in the Hall of fame of such heroes, like *Lord Dennig (MR) Hart, John Austin, Hans Kelsen, and Von-Savigny* who were far surpassing in the study and practice of the laws, the name *Udenze Ilegbune* rings with such unique sound that further evidence becomes unnecessary in acknowledging its eventful prowess. To read the whole of Ilegbune's contributions in the field of law is simply to make an adventure into the laws and society. *In Constitutional Law, Commercial Law, Family Law, Arbitration law, Torts law, Land law* and others³ his original impetus can always be distilled with differential importance.

¹ Genesis 1:26-29.

² Genesis 2:15.

³ Ilegbune's special teaching and research areas over the years include: African Indigenous land Tenure Systems; African Right of Occupancy System; African Marriage and Divorce Systems; English-type land law; Business law, Unfair Trading and Competition; Agency;

Precisely for his remarkable excellence, he has been called to lecture in various universities world-wide. He has pioneered and headed many academic and non academic offices, and has served as consultant to various typical and atypical human associations. Consequently, he has been honoured by Church and society in such a way that is yet to be common. Indeed, though of a humble background, his works and quick ascent in the ladder of academic and social prominence could be called the *magic of a generation*. Some scholars describe him as a colossus and a mighty revelation of a legacy which far exceeds an ideal but dives headlong into the very architectonics of what can properly be described as a blessing to an age. His legal mission has taken him to England (1972), Chicago (1985), New York (1991), Lesotho (1989), Zimbabwe (1995), Ghana (1975), indeed to all corners of the compass. Professor Ilegbune is a symbol of law; he has measured the universe of legal geography without losing the simplicity of the common touch. Thus, he spends his leisure in staying with and listening to people, walking, religiously singing, religiously working, engaging both in charity, and community development.

This attempt at a brief profile of the eminent professor operates to sing his genius, tell the tale of his distinction for imitation and inspiration; and to collect in a single corpus, important links to the academic and social dimensions of his sway through which he has increased, multiplied and subdued the earth. Such other areas like his family and educational backgrounds, public services and the various honours and awards with which he has been decorated shall be engaged as well. The last part of this work will be a tribute to such an ebullient and recondite scholar of phenomenal proportions. His curriculum vitae will be extemporized in its original richness by way of an appendix.

Backgrounds to the Hero

Family and Parentage

Professor Ilegbune, a native of Igbariam, Anambra East Local Government Area, Anambra State Nigeria, was born on Saturday, 4th of November 1939 to Otuo-Ome (Chief) Ilegbune Oguejiofor (1872 – 1956)⁴ and Iyom

Hire-Purchase law; ADR Mechanism-in-practice; International Humanitarian Law; and Public Law.

⁴ Otuo-Ome (Chief) Ilegbune Oguejiofor, (1872-1956) of Mmanegwe Quarter of Ubaru Village, Igbariam was an indomitable and well-known publicist and a leading farmer too. He

Dakwasi-Enyi Adaeze Caroline Ilegbune, 6th of the nine wives of Chief Ilegbune.⁵ Within the context of a polygamous family, Professor Ilegbune is the ninth (9th) of Chief Ilegbune's nineteen (19) sons and the eighteenth (18th) of his father's thirty six (36) direct children from the nine wives. Professor Charles Ilegbune is happily married to Dr. (Mrs.) Theresa Obiamma, Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, a senior lecturer in Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus. Their marriage is blessed with five (5) children.

Education: From Nigeria to the United Kingdom

The promising young Charles attended St. Anthony's Catholic School, Igbariam from 1944-1952 where he accomplished his *primary school education*, emerging first in a class of 26. Thereafter, he attended the *Preliminary Training Centre* (PTC) Nimo in 1953 and also St. Charles College, Onitsha from 1955-1958, where he obtained the *Teachers' Grade II Certificate* with commendation in 1958. In pursuit of higher studies, Charles attended the University of Ife (as it was then called), from 1963-1966 where he obtained the LL.B (Honours) Degree in 1966, with Second Class Upper Division (2¹), having the best result in a graduating class of 21. Interestingly, upon graduation, Charles became the first law graduate in the whole of Igbariam and the third overall university graduate in the town.

From 1970-1974, Charles attended the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) of the University of London and accordingly, obtained the LL.M Degree in 1971 and PhD Degree in 1974. At this, he once again emerged the premier Doctorate Degree holder in the whole of Igbariam town. He attended the Nigeria Law School, Lagos from 1976-1977, where he obtained the *Nigerian Bar Diploma* and got called to the Nigerian Bar as Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria on the 2nd day of July, 1977, thus becoming Igbariam's first Barrister and Solicitor.⁶

was a chief and member of Agbalagidi Native Council and Native Court in Aguleri; an Orator and indefatigable spokesman in Igbariam public affairs.

⁵ Iyom Dakwasi-Enyi Adaeze Caroline Ilegbune, was the first daughter of the marriage between Mazi Okeke Nwawolu of Umu-Iwenili Quarter of Oguguetiti village Igbariam and Iyom Mbanugo Egbo of the First Igbariam Chieftaincy Family of Egbo in Eziafor Village, Igbariam; a convert to the Catholic Church in 1957 after the husband's death in 1956. She was till her death a Life Member of the Catholic Women's Organisation of Onitsha Archdiocese.

⁶ To obtain a full coverage of his educational background, one may need to glance through the appendix to this profile attached at the end of the essay. It will provide the reader with a detailed outline of all schools attended, courses studied, theses written, degrees obtained, at

Services to Humanity

Human work and/or labour have an orientation to service of the other. Wheresoever a good worker is found exacting physical or mental energy to shape or reshape reality of some kind (human or material), he does so not merely for self-indulgence (remuneration) but for some kind of ecstasy realized in the improvement of same reality for others. Wyszynski says in this respect that “through work, a link is forged with other people... Man works so as to renew the good things that are useful to his neighbour”.⁷ This dialogical content of human labour-that is, this tendency to service of the other, is the element that justifies any human commitment. Hence “there is the joy that flows from the feeling of having completed task that will be (or is) useful for one’s neighbours”. Indeed, man is glad that he has made something in his own image and likeness, and that through this, both he and his work are of service and have achieved human usefulness.⁸

No one lives for himself without more in the realm of work, but for others. It is a misnomer to think of a worker for just oneself. Hence the desideratum for work’s fulfilment is not how much the worker has gained for himself but how much he has spared for others. In this way the ancient distinction between “what we are” and “what we have” remains trite. Whereas “what we have” relates to what we have gained for ourselves through work, “what we are” relates to what we have put in and achieved or spared for others through our work. The first is a diminutive sense of work, the second exalting/redemptive. In the field of work there are those who work to “take from” the pool as their general attitude to work (national cake theory) and those who work to “add to” the pool. The first are consumerist selfists and the second patriots. Professor Ilegbune is of the second extraction.

University Service

Suffice it to quickly observe that Prof. Ilegbune is a teacher of consummate stuff who grew from being a primary school teacher (1954) to the highest rank of a university Professor in 1988. His quality, productivity and effectiveness in the teaching career vindicated the value and sanctity of process. Professor Ilegbune effectively started his University teaching career

each threshold of his educational engagement; from the primary school to his post graduate studies.

⁷ Wyszynski, S. *All you who labour: Work and the sanctification of the daily life*; Sophia institute press, Manchester, 1995, pp.180-187.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.185.

at the Faculty of Law of his alma mater, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, in August 1974, when he returned from England on postgraduate studies which were fully sponsored and paid for by the university. In October 1979, he moved over to the University of Nigeria at Enugu campus as senior lecturer and became a full professor of law in October 1988, again becoming the first in that position in his community.

Prof. Ilegbune is a keen researcher in law and has written, spoken and published extensively in that subject area. He has, to his credit, numerous publications, including textbooks, book chapters, journal articles and monographs. Among other important national responsibilities, he was at various times, Dean of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (*UNEC*), (1987-1991); President of the Nigerian Association of Law Teachers (*NALT*) (1988-1989); Head of Department, Commercial and Property Law, (*UNEC*) (1991-1992); Visiting Professor of Business Law, Chicago State University, USA (1984-1985); Adjunct Professor of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe university, Awka (1992-1994); Adjunct Professor of Law, Abia State University (1987-1991); Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (1995-1998); Dean of Law, University of Abuja (1998-2000, and 2004-2009); and was chairman, Committee of Deans, University of Abuja, (2004-2007). Indeed a careful reading of the appendix attached thereof discloses over fifty (50) different platforms through which Prof. Ilegbune rendered his services in the universities from the early 80s till date.

Service to Igbariam Town

That charity begins at home is axiomatic in the philosophy of Professor Ilegbune. He was the Headmaster of St. Anthony's Catholic School, Igbariam from 1961-1963 during which time he greatly raised the status and stature of the school which assumed a pre-eminent position among primary schools in the then Aguleri parish in terms of discipline, sports, singing, examination performance and environmental aesthetics. Since 1954, Prof. Ilegbune has been centrally involved in the public affairs of Igbariam as an opinion leader and motivator, and has exhibited exemplary devotion, patriotism and hard work in the affairs of his town union –Igbariam Progressive Union (*IPU*). He variously served his people in the capacities of Executive member, Secretary-General (1959-1963) Secretary, Igbariam Farm Settlement Committee (1961-1963), Chairman, Works Committee (1980-1986), National Legal Adviser (1978-1992) and President-General (1992-1998). His Works Committee during the Presidency of the Late Charles

Ezigbo handled the design and construction of the important access roads to Igbariam from the Community Secondary School to the Onitsha-Adani motorway. In 1995/1996 during his own presidency, he continued his Igbariam Access Road drive by constructing with communal labour a brand new direct motor-road to Igbariam from the Farm Settlement. The new road links Igbariam Inland Town directly and in a straight road, through the Farm Settlement to the Enugu/Onitsha Expressway at the point now officially known as "Igbariam Junction". The Anambra State government has now rehabilitated and tarred all the new roads. Prof. Ilegbune also in 1996 adroitly persuaded the Anambra State government to excise and return 15% (about 360 hectares) of the entire Farm Settlement Land to Igbariam people for reasons of need.

Perhaps one of the best manifestations of Prof. Ilegbune's public spiritedness is the exceeding commitment and unrivalled altruism he has demonstrated over the years as a motivator and promoter of higher education in his town and all the Omambala areas through his direct assistance and ever-lively encouragement, these hitherto educationally backward areas can now boast of many graduates of university and other tertiary institutions in various disciplines, particularly in law.⁹

Religious and Social Services

Prof. Charles Udenze Ilegbune is a devout Catholic; a Knight of the Ancient and Noble Order of the Knights of St. John International (KSJ); a Grand Patron to the Onitsha Catholic Archdiocesan Laity Council of Nigeria and the Catholic Social Forum of FCT, Abuja. He is an *Ozo* title holder of his community with the title of *Nwaezeatuegwu*. Professor Ilegbune is also a High Chief of his community with the traditional title of *Owelle Igbariam*.

Public and Professional Services

Professor Ilegbune has rendered many services to the government, notably in the areas of judicial panels, administrative panels and membership/ chairmanship of Governing Councils of educational institutions. He was chairman, Governing Council of Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe, Anambra State, (1988-1991); Chairman, Anambra State Panel on Land Review & Allocation, (1988-1991); Member, Presidential Committee on Devolution of Powers in Nigeria (1995-1998); National President (Nigeria), International First Aid Society, IFAS (2002-2005); President-

⁹ For material details, read through the appendix.

General, Igbariam Progress Union, IPU (1992-1998); Trustee, National Stroke Association of Nigeria (NSAN), 2007 to date; and National President, Real Estate Lawyers Association of Nigeria, from 2008 to date. Note that it is in the area of professional practice as much as through his intellectual culture that Professor Ilegbune demonstrated *in excelsis* his passion and anxiety to serve humanity.¹⁰

Professor Ilegbune in Noble Professional Practice

Many train as lawyers but are either afraid to practice or hate the practice. Some refrain from practice because of the strain, stress, rigor and commitment it calls for. There are those who nevertheless go into practice and use the profession as a ground for every imaginable ignoble act. They practice the law to indulge in sharp practices; the intent is not to aid justice but to make the money. Such attorneys do not go so far and none has ever been celebrated, the public knows them and can easily spot them out as disreputable.

Professor Ilegbune read law and practices the same with a sense of duty. He has long demonstrated through responsible years of practice that *lawyers are not liars or men of evil* but that law can co-exist with a great moral sense. With Fulton Sheen he believes that over and above the civil law is the moral law which is prior and superior, and binding in the conscience of man.¹¹ Throughout the length and breadth of his practice of law, Ilegbune has shown that law has a great moral responsibility. Thus:

Can we not see that if Law is divorced from morality and religion, then treaties cease to be obligatory and begin to be mere arrangements, binding only so long as they are advantageous? Rob International Justice of its roots in morality and treaties are hypothetical not categorical; convenient tools, not honourable obligations, while law becomes an attorney's cloak woven from the flimsy fabric of legalistic phraseology artfully placed on the shoulders of arbitrary power.¹²

Professor Charles Udenze Ilegbune was called to the Nigerian Bar as a Barrister and Solicitor in the year 1977 and became enrolled in the Supreme

¹⁰ See Appendix.

¹¹ F.J. Sheen, *Way to Inner Peace*, Garden City, New York, Garden City, 1955, p. 105.

¹² ----- *The Divine Verdict.*, New York, Appleton – century – crofts, 1936, p. 70.

Court of Nigeria as a legal practitioner that same year. Between that 1977 and today, Professor Ilegbune has become a 'domain name' in the Nigerian legal landscape, a whiz kid and if one were to borrow the common phrase, a legal luminary. Ordinarily, it would be expected that his academic trajectory would have affected his professional practice but no. His growth in the professional practice is equally meteoric as is his academics. Indeed after his Call to Bar, he became a principal partner in the law firm of *Ilegbune, Okeke and Co. from 1980-1989*, with office situate at 30 Edingburgh Road Enugu. However from 1989-1992, he founded and remained the principal partner of the law firm *Ilegbune and Ilegbune* with office situate at the same 30 Edingburgh Road Enugu. Subsequently he became the founder and principal partner in the law firm of *Professor C. Udenze Ilegbune and Co.* At present, he has founded and is the principal partner in *Prof. Charles Udenze Ilegbune (SAN) and Co.* with head office at AISA House, No. 9 Ndande Crescent, Zone 5, Wuse, Abuja, and with branch offices in Enugu and Lagos. His ascendancy through the rungs of the professional ladder is to say the least phenomenal. Precisely ten (10) years after his Call to Bar., that is, in 1987, he became a *Notary Public*¹³ and *Commissioner for Oaths of Nigeria*. By 2002, he was admitted into, and thus became, an associate member of the UK Chartered Institute of Arbitrators. The year 2007 was for Professor Ilegbune a year of double honours. He was that year admitted as listed Arbitrator by Regional Centre for International Council of Arbitrators and in September that same year was elevated to the highly coveted professional rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN). What is more, Professor Ilegbune has acted and/or still acts as the:

Legal Adviser to: D.N. Akputa & Sons Ltd. Enugu, (1980 – date); Universal Insurance Company Plc Enugu, (1980 – 1983); Garland Enterprises (Nigeria) Ltd, (1981 – 1984); Gold (Nigeria) Ltd. Enugu (1982 – 1984); Agroteck (Nigeria) Limited, based in Edo & Delta States (1982 – 1984); Beman Development Co. Ltd. (1988 – 1992); Oranyeli & Sons Ltd, based in Asaba, Delta State, (1982 – 1984); Croissant Tech (Nigeria) Ltd. Lagos (1988 – 1997); Igbariam Progress Union (1986 – 1992); Society for the Advancement of Business Management (SABM); UNEC (1979 – 1992). He also acted and/or still acts as the:

¹³ A Notary Public is a legal practitioner, usually a solicitor, who attests deeds or other documents or makes certified copies of them in order to render the deeds or copies authentic, especially for use abroad (cf. S. Bone, ed. *Osborn's Concise Law Dictionary*, London, Sweet & Maxwell, 2001, p.267).

Solicitor to: Co-operative & Commerce Bank of Nigeria PLC. (1987 – 1998); Premier Breweries PLC, Onitsha (1988 – 1989); British – American Insurance Co. Plc. Lagos (1988 – 1993); NEPA PLC (1988 – Date); United Bank of Africa Plc. (1990 – Date); Federal Housing Authority (2002 – Date); Federal Housing Authority Homes Ltd. (2002 – Date); Progress Bank Nigeria (PBN) Plc. Owerri (1990 – 1997); Savannah Bank of Nigeria (SBN) Plc. Lagos (1992 – 2001); Bank of the North Ltd, (2000 – 2009); INEC Committee of the Senate of the F.R.N. (2001). What is more, Professor Ilegbune drafted a Commissioned Comprehensive Environmental Protection Legislation for Abia State Government in 1993.

Professor Ilegbune till date engages in active law practice and Arbitration and has used his Legal practice to secure justice for the poor, the marginalized and the oppressed. Through his brilliant advocacy in the courts, he has re-affirmed and justified the truth that the court is the last hope of the common man.

On His Ideological and Intellectual Culture¹⁴

Professor Charles Udenze Ilegbune, vastly efficient in the use of English and Igbo languages, is a sound academic and a social engineer who is widely consulted across jurisdictions. Over the last twenty – five (25) years, he has attended and actively participated in not less than fifty (50) seminars, workshops and conferences on a wide range of academic, professional and general subjects within and outside Nigeria. Significant among these conferences are: 2005 All-Nigerian Judges' Conference (Abuja, Nigeria, 5-9 Dec., 2005); Institute of Peace & Conflict Resolution Workshop on Africa Abuja, June, 2005); International Conference on Development in the Land (London, held at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor Great Park, England); Law and Society Workshop held at the University of Ghana (Ghana, Legon Sept. 7-19,1975); Academic & Professional Conference of Nigeria (Nigeria, Annual Association of Law Teachers (NALT) From 1976 to Date); Academic & Professional Annual Conference of the Bar Association (Nigeria, Annually Held From 1976 to date); Nigerian Bar Association Workshop on the Draft Constitution of Nigeria held at the Institute of

¹⁴ Intellectual culture refers to a mental map of a whole rational behavioural pattern. It relates to the habit of the mind towards research and publications which emphasises not as much structures as it does immaterial presuppositions of social transformation. In a sense, it is a line joining productive academic and intellectual routine to their visible or infrastructural consequences in social reform; a refined way of acting under considered influence of the axioms or principles proceeding from sound intellection.

International Affairs, Ikoyi, Lagos (Lagos, Nigeria 10-11 Aug. 1977); The Super Precon of the African Process (*Nicon Hilton Abuja Nigeria 17-19 June 2002*); National Conference on the Bar and Bench in Nigeria (*Nicon Hilton Abuja 24-25 July 2002*); National Workshop on International Educational Exchange programme, (*Illinois, USA held at Chicago State University August, 1985*); United Nations Centre for Trans-National Corporations (*Lesotho Consultative Meetings on trans-National Corporations 20-24, Feb. 1989*) International Conference on Regulation of trade and Investment in an Era of Structural Adjustment- the Africa Experience (*Lagos, Nigeria 4-7 Sept. 1989*); All-African Law Ministers Conference (*Abuja, Nigeria 27-29 Nov. 1989*); 23rd Biennial Conference of the International Bar Association (*New York, USA 18-22, Mar. 1991*); National Seminar on Insurance, Banking and Corporate Law (*Enugu, Nigeria 22-24 June, 1992*); Konrad Adenauer Foundation/Catholic Institute for Development, Justice and Peace (CIDJAP) International Colloquium on Regionalism, Ethnic and tribal Conflicts and Democracy in Africa (*Enugu, Nigeria 16-19 June, 1992*); Konrad Adenauer Foundation International Seminar on Culture and Democracy in Africa South of the Sahara (*Harare, Zimbabwe 1-3, Sept. 1993*); National Conference on Privatisation of Public Utilities (Abuja, Nigeria 25-26, Mar. 1998); National Workshop on Management and Reform of Prison Service in Nigeria (Abuja, Nigeria 10-12 Nov. 1998); Two-Day Round Table on the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), organized by NIALS (24-2 May, 2007, Abuja); Commonwealth Legal Education Association Conference (Abuja, Nigeria); National Workshop of the Nigerian Consumers Protection Association (Abuja, Nigeria March 2000); IPCR Workshop on African States & The Challenges of Globalisation (Abuja, Nigeria 31, July 2001); Abuja Workshop on Resources Control (Chairman) (May, 2002); 56th Annual DPI/NGO Conference (UN Headquarters 8-10 Sept. 2003); West African Regional Workshop on Constitutional Immunity (Abuja, 3rd-4th July 2008); Stakeholders' Forum on Land Administration Reforms Organised by Fed. Min. of Environment, Housing & Urban Development (6-7 Nov. 2007); 2008 Fellows' Lecture of the NIALS, Abuja held at Ladi Kwali Hall, Sheraton Hotel, Abuja (Abuja 3rd July, 2008); NIALS Roundtable on 2011 Election: Imperatives and Challenges for Credible Elections (Abuja, 27th July 2010); Chairman, NIALS Roundtable on the *Adversary System: A Failed Process* (NIALS Lagos 22 March, 2011); REDAN's Enlightenment Workshop on Estate Development Loan (EDL) Procurement and Management (He delivered a Goodwill Message as President of REDAN (*Abuja, Transcorp Hotel, 23 March 2011*); Discussant in a Two-Day Capacity Building Workshop on Capital Market

Laws, Ethics and Judicial Interpretation for Superior Court Judges (Transcorp Hilton 22-23 Feb. 2011); Chattered Institute of Arbitration, Abuja Chapter, FCT Judicial Workshop (*FCT High Court, Maitama, Abuja 4th May, 2011*); CBN Stakeholders' Workshop on Housing/Mortgage Finance in Nigeria (*CBN, Headquarters Abuja, Aug. 11, 2011*); REDAN 2011 AGM Symposium (*Congress Hall, Transcorp Hilton, 20th Sept., 2011*); FCTA Workshop on Freedom of Information Act (FCTA Lecture Hall Sept. 8, 2011); 2011 Annual Business Luncheon of Capital Market Solicitors Association (CMSA) (*Transcorp Hilton Abuja, Oct. 12, 2011*); NYSC One-Day Workshop for Corps Lawyers & Law Officers (NYSC Orientation Camp, Oct, 31, 2011); and A One-Day Colloquium to Mark the 50th Birthday Anniversary of Chief Joe-Kyari Gadzama, MFR, SAN,FCI Arb. (Shehu Musa Yar'Adua Centre, Abuja, Dec, 02, 2011). This is just a tip of the iceberg!

Till date, Professor Ilegbune remains an acclaimed member of over twenty professional and learned societies, through which his rare genius is multiplied and invested for the sole purpose of social engineering and political reconstruction. Without being in any way exhaustive, the most prominent of these society memberships includes but not limited to: Member, Nigerian Bar Association (NBA); Member, African Bar Association (ABA); Member, NBA Section on Business Law (NBA-SBL); Member, Chattered Institute of Arbitrators (UK), (CI Arb.); President, Real Estate Lawyers Association of Nigeria (RELAN); Member, Commonwealth Legal Educ. Assn. (CLEA); Member, International Bar Association (IBA); Member, International Third World Legal Studies Association (INTWORLSA); Member, Nigerian Association of Law Teachers (NALT); Member, Nigerian Constitutional Law Association (NCLA); Member, African Network for the Prevention Against Child Abuse and Neglect (ANPPCAN); Member, Prisoners Legal Education and Assistance Scheme (PLEAS); Member, The African Society of International and Comparative Law (ASICL); and Member/Legal Adviser, African Families in Distress (AFID). Without doubt, his professional status as Senior Advocate of Nigeria, SAN (2007), Notary Public and Commissioner for Oaths of Nigeria (1987), added to being an Arbitrator of international reckoning, has provided him the needed support, connection and empowerment for the many feats he has achieved and continues to achieve, within the context of his ideological and intellectual culture.

In furtherance of his intellectual initiatives, Professor Ilegbune has numerous literary/academic publications to his credit. Without pretending to be exhaustive these include about: three (3) Books, ten (10) Chapters in Books, over forty (40) Articles and Monographs. What is more, he has just edited alone or with others, more than fifteen (15) Journals and Law Reports. There is still a good number of monographs and conference papers that remain yet unpublished. Below is an attempt to chronicle some of the productive efforts of the Professor in the legal domain:

Books include: (1) *Nigerian Business Law (I-ixvix & 531pp.)*; *Main Subjects Covered:* Law of Insurance, Law of Contract, Hire-Purchase Law, Law of Agency, Sale of Goods, Partnership, Company Law, Arbitration & Awards, Economic Torts. *Publishers:* 1st Edition by Sweet and Maxwell, London, 1983; 2nd Edition by Blackstone Press Ltd., London, 1999; (2) *British Concessions Policy and Legislation in Ghana (550 pages)*¹⁵. *Publishers:* Ghana Publishing Corporation, Legon, Ghana (forthcoming). (3) *Nigerian Hire-Purchase Law (I-xxx & 456 pages)*, *Publishers* Vougasen Publishers Ltd., Enugu, Nigeria, 2000.

Book chapters include: (1) “British Jurisdiction in Southern Ghana, 1618-1901: Its Basis, Development and Problems - Lead Chapter in a Book titled *Law, Litigants and the Legal profession* (Ives and Manchester, eds.) (at pages 162-191). *Publishers:* (a) The Royal Historical Society, London, 1983 (b) The Humanities Press Inc., New Jersey, USA, 1983. (2) “The Legitimation of Government in Africa”. - Chapter in *Culture and Democracy in Africa South of the Sahara* (Winfred Jung & Silke Krieger, *Eds.*). *Publishers:* V. Hase & Koehler Veriag Mainz, 1994 - Also Chapter in *Democratization Process in Africa (Multi-Ethnicity and African Nation-States)* – Elochukwu E. Uzuoku, *ed.*, *Publishers:* The Ecumenical Association of Nigerian Theologians, 1993. (3) “Legal Considerations in Contract Negotiation, Drafting and Conflict Resolution” - Chapter in *Negotiating Commercial Contracts* –C. Nwoko, *ed.*, - *Publishers:* Gethsemane Consulting & Publishing Co., Enugu, 1994. (4) “The Effect of the Land Use Act on Land Transfer and Registration in Nigeria” - Chapter 2 in *Land Tenure Reform in Nigeria; Implications and Implementation of the Land Use Act, 1978* (Prof. Adejigbe and Dare, eds.) *Publishers:* University of Ife Press, 1982. (5) “The Nature of Liability of a Tenant at Sufferance” -

¹⁵ This work was first submitted to the London School of Economics & Political Science (LSE) of the University of London as a Thesis written in partial fulfillment for the award of a Doctorate Degree in Law in 1974. It covers the subject areas of Land Law & land Policy.

Chapter 7 in *Essays on the Nigerian Law of Landlord and Tenant* (edited by Prof. S.A. Ceretuyi, I.O. Smith & A.O. Fagbohun) Published by The Law Centre, LASU, Lagos, 1996, pp. 91-100. (6) "Nigerian Export Promotion Law" - Chapter 16 in *Export Market Management* (Prof. J.O. Onah and M.O. Okereke, eds.) *Publishers*: Fourth Dimension Publishing Company, 1998. (7) "The Impact of the Insurance Decree, 1991 on Basic Principles of Insurance Law in Nigeria". – Chapter 2 in *Insurance, Banking and Corporate Law* (Prof. C.O. Okonkwo, editor) *Publishers*: Faculty of Law, University of Nigeria, 1993. (8) "National Integration and Local Conflicts". - Chapter in *Regionalism, Ethnic and Tribal Conflicts and Democracy in Africa*. (Obiora F. Ike and B. Blanckmeister, eds.). *Publishers*: Konrad Adenauer/CIDJAP, 1993. (10) "The Nigerian Constitution, 1999 and the Law Maker" - Chapter 10 in Nweze C.C. (ed.) *Justice in the judicial Process (Essays in Honour of Hon. Justice Eugene Ubaezonu, JCA)*. Fourth Dimension Pub. Co., Enugu, 2002.

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(27) “Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR): Its Nature, Forms and Advantages”. – Paper presented at a One-Day NYSC Workshop for Corps Lawyers and Law Officers, on Oct. 31, 2011.

Editorship of Journals/Law Reports include: (1) Weekly Judgments of Nigerian Superior Courts: (2006-Date); (2) Member, Editorial Board, *Journal of African & Comparative Commercial Law* (1993-Date); (3) Member, Editorial Board, *Nigeria Juridical Review* (1980-Date); (4) Member, Editorial Advisory Board, *Abia State University Law Journal* (1996-Date); (5) Editorial Consultant, *Supreme Court Reporter* (1991-Date); (6) Assistant Editor, *Nigeria Law Journal* (1981-1994); (7) Member, Editorial Board, *Nigeria Bar Journal* (1976-1882); (8) Member, Editorial Board, *Anambra State Law Report* (1994-Date); (9) Founder & Editor-in-Chief, *University of Abuja Law Journal* (1999-Date); (10) Chairman, Editorial Committee, *The Journal of Private & Property Law, Unilag, Nigeria* (2005-Date); (11) Member, Editorial Advisory Board, *Nigerian Law Reform Journal* (2009-Date); and (12) Consulting Editor, *Nigerian Journal of Legislative Affairs* (2010-Date).

Notice that through the above media and intellectual devices and/or engagements, Ilegbune’s original thoughts have been advanced to the world pool of ideas with the intent of achieving *aggiornamento* in the ideological ordering of world events especially as it relates to law and justice. Professor Ilegbune believes with Fulton Sheen that: It is not bad dictators who made the world bad, it is bad thinking. It is, therefore in the realm of ideas that we will have to restore the world.¹⁶

Interestingly, his *Nigerian Business Law*, written jointly with two other Professors, (1982 and 1999); *Nigerian Hire Purchase Law*, (2000); and *British Concessions Policy and Legislation in Southern Ghana*, to mention but a few have been widely cited with the greatest approval and respect.

Investiture with Honours and Awards

- Celebrating Prof. Ilegbune in the garden of honours (national, traditional, religious and community types)-

In the words of Pazhayampallil in his *Pastoral Guide*, “Good acts are upright, praiseworthy and meritorious” and “merit is that quality of a good work whereby it is rendered worthy of reward”. Merit may also be taken to

¹⁶ F.J. Sheen, *Philosophers At War*, New York, Scribner’s 1943, p. 5.

mean “the right a person has to receive a reward”.¹⁷ Honours and awards are merited but not gratuitous. They comprise what can be called the public response to distinction and usually come in the form of recognition and/or appreciation by beneficiaries of one’s services and by all men of good will. Hence according to St. Thomas Aquinas – the angelic doctor – in his *Summa Theologiae*, “Honour is the external recognition of a person’s excellence (merit). One honours another when one professes outwardly his idea of the excellence of that person”.¹⁸ In a sense, honours and awards are rewards predicated on merit and the recipients have right to them as they are substantially bound up with their good works as necessary qualities. Professor Ilegbune is honourable by all standards and not a few persons and groups have recognized and celebrated his honour by decorating him accordingly. This is timely. At a time in the history of our nation when people are no longer interested to invest for public gains; when dishonour appears to be fashionable and merit gone down the drain; when it is a welcome culture to cite as heroes criminals and ‘predators’ of public funds, and when honorary investitures are but magnets for raising funds, one may perhaps develop apathy to such list of honours as Prof. Ilegbune has. Little wonder a person like Chinua Achebe rejected national honours as a protest against sycophancy and a number of reputable lawyers declined investiture as Senior Advocate of Nigeria etc. Yet when honours/awards are sincerely given, they are directly proportional to the services rendered or distinction achieved. In such a circumstance, the acceptance of such honour flies above mere humble fulfilment in the face of public affirmation to a sense of moral obligation, if one may say. Thus, the acceptance provides the much needed avenue for sanctifying industry, patriotism, sacrifice and excellence. In this way, it appears to be a decent culture predicated upon affirmation of prodigious demonstration of learning, skill, character and/ or service – an ethical culture of accent of acceptable standards. Indeed such awards not only encourage the recipients to do more but more than that, inspire imitation of nobility.

In no particular order of importance but starting with the National Honour received, it is important to observe that in 2005, Professor Charles Udenze Ilegbune was conferred with a National Honour which is a special preserve for very few and most eminent citizens of Nigeria. He was precisely conferred with the Honour in the rank of *Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON)*. The Investiture ceremony was performed by the then President and

¹⁷ T. Pazhayampallil, *Pastoral Guide* Vol. 1. Bangalore, Kristu Jyoti pub., 2004, p. 139.

¹⁸ T. Aquinas, 11 – 11, 103; 103, 2.

Commander – In – Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, on Tuesday, 20th December, 2005 at the International Conference Centre, Abuja. In the citation in the instrument of conferment of the National Honour to Professor Ilegbune, the President stated inter alia, that the award was made: “in recognition of Professor Ilegbune’s outstanding virtues and in appreciation of services to our country, Nigeria”. The instrument enjoined Professor Ilegbune “to have and enjoy the title, dignity and all the privileges of the rank conferred on him”. While congratulating Prof. Ilegbune, Professor Nuhu Yaquub (the then Vice Chancellor of the University of Abuja), in a letter dated 3rd January, 2006 stated as follows:

Indeed, this is a well – deserved National Honour. It is not only in recognition of your sterling qualities, but also due to your antecedents and track – record of selfless, patriotic and meritorious service to the nation and humanity as a whole.¹⁹

Precisely as an outstanding traditional man of culture, Professor Ilegbune has over the years been decorated with traditional titles of sacred importance. In his native town Igbariam and among his people, he was in 1994 initiated into the prestigious Ozo society with the title of *Nwaezeatuegwu*. From 1982 – 1992, His Royal Highness Igwe Michael Umeadi II, the Ogalagidi of Igbariam, appointed and retained him in his Royal Cabinet. At the end of this faithful service and precisely from 1992 – *till date*, he was elevated to the Honour of a High Cabinet Chief in the Royal Cabinet of Igbariam town. Eventually on 4th January, 1993, Professor Ilegbune became elevated to the rank and office of the Traditional High Chief of Igbariam as “Owelle Igbariam”. He is variously designated as *Ogbuagu*, *Okwulora* and *Anunuebe* of various communities in his town.

Note that his traditional and high cultural spirit did never operate to douse or diminish his religious sense and so the Catholic Church has not failed to invest him with the highest honours available to the laity. For instance, in 1984, he was admitted and initiated into the Ancient and Noble Order of Knights of St. John International (KSJ) in the Holy Spirit Commandery 414 Enugu. Subsequently in 1986, he was invested with matching and full dress uniforms of KSJ as a “Sir Knight”. The height of it all was that in the year 2000, His Holiness Pope John Paul II of Blessed Memory bestowed on him

¹⁹ University of Abuja Bulletin, March 2006.

the Papal honour and certificate of Apostolic Blessing on the occasion of his Wedding Anniversary.

Professor Charles Udenze Ilegbune found great importance in the grassroots services towards the empowerment of the local people. Hence, so many of such beneficiary communities have variously honoured him. In the first place, the International First Aid Society (IFAS) appointed him Goodwill Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in the year 2000. His home town Age Grade, the *Okpoke Age Grade* conferred on him the title of *Ogbuagu* in 1996. Before then in 1989, the Kenneth Dike Council of Elders, in recognition of Ilegbune's exceptional services to the council and the students' body, conferred him with the title of Okwuluora. A cursory glance through reputable bulletins and documentaries of many civil society Organizations discloses that Professor Ilegbune has been spotted and variously listed for his eminence and distinction. Some of them are: Newswatch, *Who is Who in Nigeria*, 1990; Marquis *Who is Who in the World*, 2000; IBS Dictionary of International Biography, 2001; The Igbo Ambassadors (*First Pan-Igbo Ambassadors' Who is Who*), 1997; IBC 2000 *Outstanding Intellectuals of the 21st Century*, 1st and 2nd editions; *American Biological Institute*, now International Biography, 2000; NIBC *Now Who is Who in Nigeria*, 2003.

Having put in roughly fifty four (54) years service as a classroom teacher from 1959 till date; and having tutored well over 20, 000 Nigerian youths of both sexes in knowledge and morals; it is not surprising that Prof. Ilegbune received series of Awards, Certificates of Merits, or of Excellence or Recognition from mostly students and other university-based bodies. In no particular order, the Catholic Law Students Association, UNEC, in 1992 and 1994 respectively, honoured him in appreciation of his sterling contributions to the Development of Law in Nigeria; the Students Union Government of UNEC in 1996 did same "in recognition of his prowess as a seasoned and dynamic administrator and in recognition of his role in the espousal of dialogue as a veritable means of resolving crises"; yet the Law Students' Association (LAWSA) of UNEC in the same year, recognized his exceptional achievements as the administrator of the campus. In another development, the University of Nigeria Bar Association in 1998 honoured him as the eminent jurist of the year; and in a similar development, the Rotary International District 9140, Rotary Club of UNEC in 1997 recognized him "for exceptional vocational service to UNEC Community and mankind". More so, the Rotary Club of UNTH in the same 1997 honoured Professor

Ilegbune “for selfless services to humanity, community development and general upliftment of the living standard of the less privileged”. Earlier in 1990, the society for the Advancement of Business (SABM), UNEC, honoured the indefatigable Prof. in recognition of meritorious services rendered to SABM as legal Adviser. And in the year 2007, the National Alumni Association of Obafemi Awolowo University dressed him with the title “Officer of Great Ife (OGI)”. Many did honour him and others continue to do so till date. But it might be proper to observe that in 1997 and 1998 respectively, the Nigerian Greece Friendship and Cultural Association and the Rotary International District 9140, Akpakpa Enugu officially recognized and honoured him for selfless community service. That Professor Ilegbune has been able to attract the immensity of these honours at the twilight of his career is not surprising because, at the dawn of his genius, precisely from 1964 to 1967, he was and sustained the title of *Federal Government of Nigerian Scholar* and from 1970 to 1971, he received the British Overseas Students Fees Award.

A Tour through the Main Positions Held by Professor Charles Ilegbune in the Last Sixty (60) Years

Fulton Sheen did observe and rightly too that “the idol of our country is not the saint, but the man who has won through to “the top”.²⁰ Any honest engagement with Professor Charles Udenze Ilegbune’s social pedigree through his peculiar existential chart of ascendancy cannot but share a feeling of inferiority and an awesome sentiment of being before an ‘idol’ of social and academic type. A tour through the hierarchy of the offices he has held and a reflection on the mode of transition from one to another discloses a prodigy. In what appears like an order of descending hierarchy Professor Ilegbune has been: Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON), 2005; Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), 2007; Dean of Law, University of Abuja, 1998 – 2000 and 2004 – 2009; Dean of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC), 1987 – 1991; Deputy Vice – Chancellor (DVC), University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus, 1995 – 1998; Professor of Law, University of Abuja, Nigeria, with Specialization in all aspects of Property Law, Commercial Law, and Public Law, 1998 – Date; Professor of Law, University of Nigeria, Enugu Campus (UNEC), 1988 – 1998; Adjunct Professor of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria, 1992 – 1994; Adjunct Professor of Law, Abia State University, Uturu, Nigeria, 1987 – 1991; Chairman Committee of Deans, University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria, 2005 – 2008;

²⁰ F.J. Sheen, *Way to Happiness*, Garden City, N.Y. 1955, p. 109.

Visiting Associate Professor of Law, Chicago State University Illinois, USA, 1984 – 1985; Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of Nigeria, 1977 to Date; Notary Public and Commissioner for Oaths of Nigeria, 1987 to Date; Officer of Great Ife (OGI), Conferred by Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU) National Alumni Association, Nigeria, 2007; Membership of 13 National and International Professional and Learned Societies, 1977 to Date; Head, Department of Commercial and Property Law, UNN, Enugu Campus, 1986 – 1987 and 1991 – 1992; Associate Member of UK Chartered Institute of Arbitrators, from 2002 to Date; University Teaching Service, with Extensive Administrative Experience, since 1974 to Date; Extensive Service in Professional Law Practice as Barrister, Solicitor, Adviser and Consultant, since 1980 to Date; National President (Nigeria Chapter), International First Aid Society (IFAS), 2002 – 2007; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the International First Aid Society (IFAS), 2000 to Date; Extensive Public/University/Community Service Experience, since 1980, including: Undergraduate Teaching and Supervision at several universities since 1974; Postgraduate Teaching and Supervision and Examiner at Masters (LLM) and PhD levels, since 1978; External Postgraduate and Undergraduate Examiner to several Universities, since 1980; Member, Governing Council, Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (NIALS), 1987 – 1991; President, Nigerian Association of Law Teachers, 1988 – 1989; Member, Presidential Committee on Devolution of Power in Nigeria, 1995 – 1998; Member, Presidential Committee on University Autonomy in Nigeria, 2001; Member, Senate of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, UNN, 1980 – 1998; Member, Senate of University of Abuja, 1998 to date; Member, Appointments and Promotions (A & P) Committee, UNN, 1987 – 1998; Member, Council of Legal Education, Nigeria, 1987 – 1991, 1998 – 2000 & 2004 – 2009; Membership of Governing Council, Anambra State College of Education, Awka (now Nwafor Orizu College of Education), Nigeria, 1981 – 1983; Chairman, Governing Council, Anambra State College of Education (now re-named, Nwafor Orizu College of Education) Nsugbe, Nigeria, 1988 – 1991; Chairman, Anambra State Panel on Land Review and Allocation, Nigeria, 1994; Member, Anambra State Advisory Group on Development (A Think – Tank on Development of Anambra State), Nigeria, 1992 – 1993; Member, Advisory Council for Human Rights Education Enugu, Nigeria, 2001 to date; Member, Governing Council, International Human Rights Institute, Enugu, Nigeria, 2001 to date; Member, Judicial Board of Enquiry into AVOP, Enugu, Nigeria, 1982; Member, Anambra East LGA Peace Committee, Anambra State, Nigeria, 1997 – 1998; Chairman, A&P, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), UNN, Nigeria, 1995 – 1998; Member,

Governing Council of Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu, Enugu, Nigeria, 2001 to date; Catholic Knights of St. John International (KSJ), 1984 to Date; High Chief, Owelle Igbariam (1992) & Nwaezeatuegwu Igbariam (1994).

Conclusion

A Tribute to a Professor par Excellence

By and large, Professor Ilegbune is a legacy, a paradigm and I will dare to say an 'event' impressively remarkable as to be celebrated not only in the legal field but by humanity across the nations and empires. His bouquet of achievements humbles the proud and inspires the scholar. The finesse of his intellect, soundness of his thoughts are rather a prodigy. Yet he moves around, a simple wayfarer neither misguided by fame nor puffed up by the magnitude of his outputs but contributing his bits for the development of minds and the law.

Professor Ilegbune's records comprise a judgement and a challenge to modern circumstances – especially to lecturers and lawyers. His records pass judgement on the tacit moratorium on original, reflective and productive works. They pass judgement on a culture that reduces professorship to a political affair far from merit. They pass judgement on papers written which lack depth and perhaps copied from discrete and obscure sources. They pass judgement on a generation of lawyers that lack integrity and transparency but seized of ineptitude and indolence. They challenge our system to repair and recommend a remedy thereof. This skeletal profile of Prof. Ilegbune herein provided is a paradigm for all lawyers and law Professors and by extension, all University Professors. It is a prolegomenon to any future appraisal of Professors worthy of that rank. It joins together such ancient traditions of masters of laws like Hugo Grotius and Lord Dennig (MR) to provide an ingenious amalgam of a unique legal tradition.

All in all, Professor Ilegbune is an object of great admiration by lawyers and Professors alike. This unparalleled legal work is as well a standard of diligence and a reference point for proper professional adjustment. His spread of success is particularly striking and shoots him far above his contemporaries. With the mighty exploits he did in law and having midwived a rare transformation in society, he reserves a graphic illuminating record of excellence. Professor Ilegbune's legal acumen is really inexhaustible, little wonder he became an accomplished and renowned legal authority whose works reflect a harness of experience and rare scholarship and stand out as

products of exquisite and penetrating erudition. His impressive and resilient drive for positive change distinguished him as a social reformer. Professor Ilegbune is a man of many parts, skilful motivator, excellent example, strategic thinker, critical analyst, pragmatic planner, human resource manager, talent galvanizer, full of gusto, enthusiasm and energy and indeed a model for the upcoming generation of lawyers and Professors. He is an icon in the legal landscape.