



16TH



RALPH OPARA
MEMORIAL LECTURE

Organised by the National Association of Seadogs

ABOUT

**RALPH
OPARA
MEMORIAL
LECTURE**



**National
Association of
Seadogs**
Pyrates Confraternity

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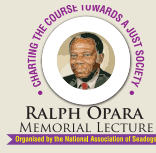


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**RALPH OPARA
MEMORIAL LECTURE**

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ABOUT **RALPH OPARA MEMORIAL LECTURE** SERIES

The Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture is a conception of the National Association of Seadogs (Pyrates' Confraternity) and dedicated to honouring the memory of one of Nigeria's most outstanding and endearing broadcasting icon – Late Ralph Chukwuemeka Opara (MON).

The National Association of Seadogs (Pyrates Confraternity) instituted the Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture series in recognition of Ralph Opara's lifetime of achievement with the aim to keep his faith alive, as well as to continue to provide a medium to give vent to the views for which he stood steadfastly, throughout his life and to provide a platform where topical issues in our national and global development can be explored for the collective good. The lecture series is aimed at continuously charting the course of humanity towards the attainment of an egalitarian and just society.

THE ICON – **RALPH CHUKWUEMEKA OPARA**

Late Ralph Chukwuemeka Opara was born on 29th April 1933, in Umueze Uzoagba, in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. He studied at the premier University College Ibadan (now University of Ibadan) and graduated with honours in English Language in 1958. As

one of Nigeria's most endearing figures, the late Ralph Opara's contribution to the development of radio and TV broadcasting is significant. He worked in the electronic media in various capacities for about 36 years (1958-1995). He was director, Voice of Nigeria (1975-1978); director, Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) Enugu zone (1979-1987). In 1987, Late Ralph Opara was appointed Executive Director, Directorate for Social Mobilization, MAMSER (now National Orientation Agency). He was also Chairman, Imo Newspapers Ltd (1985-1986), Commissioner, National Broadcasting Commission (1992-1994), Chairman, Imo Broadcasting Corporation (1994-1996).

Late Ralph Opara was a prolific writer and producer. He created the radio comedy series Shakey-Shakey and Alao among many others. A consummate actor and master of ceremony. He compered scores of national and international cultural events, conferences, symposia, State banquets and other ceremonies. In November 2000, Late Ralph Opara was honoured with the Nigerian prestigious National Merit Award – Member of the Order of the Niger (MON).



One of Ralph Opara's most enduring contribution to the development of mankind and society at large, was a decision he took as a fledgling youth while at the University College Ibadan, to participate, in 1952/53 academic session, in the formation of the Pyrates Confraternity, with six other young men at the time. His vision was to constructively apply his youthful and journalistic mind, in tandem with his co-travellers to constructively challenge and curtail the negative tendencies of elitism, tribalism, colonialist mentality, etc. He is known within the organisation to have actively led the institutionalisation of the organisation in the 50s, and remained active within the Confraternity until he passed on in 2002.

PAST LECTURES SINCE 2004

Since its inception in 2004, the Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture (ROML) series have held fifteen times in major cities in Nigeria with astute speakers and discussants contributing to topical national development issues in the past nine editions. The 2004 inaugural lecture titled “Re-engineering the Nigerian Democratic Experiment for Stability and Development” was delivered by an astute academician Prof Ukachukwu Awuzie (Former National President, Academic Staff Union of Universities, and later Vice Chancellor of Imo State University, Nigeria). The 2004 lecture was one of engaging and far-reaching interest, especially in the wake of the nascent democratic experiment from 1999 which was expected to provide Nigeria with an opportunity of nation building and a democratic society in which justice, human dignity, political, economic and social development is guaranteed and available to all Nigerians.



AWUZIE

Over the past years, the Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture series have been graced by eminent personalities and past speakers who include, **Dr Lucky Akaroese** (*Prof of Sociology*), **Dr Sam Amadi** – *former Executive Chairman of Nigeria’s National Electricity Regulation Commission (NERC)*, **Dr Hussaini Abdu** – *former Country Director of ActionAid International in Nigeria* speaking on **“Democracy and the Rule of Law in Nigeria: The Journey so far”** (2011), **“Terrorism, Insecurity and Irredentist Movements: The Challenge for Nation Building in Nigeria”** (2012), **“Taking the Nigerian Child Off the Streets: The impact of corruption on achieving Universal Primary Education”** (2013), respectively. In addition to the 2015 edition of the lecture series, a community cause (water) project was also commissioned in honour of Ralph Opara.



RIBADU



CHUKA

The 2005 edition, **“Democracy and Governance – Rethinking the Nigerian Experience”**, was graced by prominent political and public office holders. The 2005 lecture culminated in a position paper that shaped the political landscape of Imo State at the time.



AMADI

In 2019, the 10th edition of the ROML lecture series held in Salford Quays, Manchester, United Kingdom. The 10th edition was specifically dedicated to opening the frontiers of discussion beyond the immediate environment and society in which Ralph Opara lived and dedicated his life, especially with topical issues across the world now impacting on all societies, no matter how remote.

In 2006 at the third lecture in the Nigeria Institute of International Affairs, Lagos, **Mallam Nuhu Ribadu**, the anticorruption czar and pioneer Executive Chairman of the Nigerian anticorruption agency – *Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC)* delivered a lecture on the theme, **“2007: Integrity and the Challenges of Political Engagement”**.



ABDU

The theme of the 2019 edition and keynote lecture – **“Brexit: Its implication for sub-Saharan Africa”** was delivered by a Pan-Africanist, Development Expert and Socio-Political commentator – **Mr Asari St-Hill**. The 2019 edition attracted participants and discussants from the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) group in the UK, as well as people from all walks of life.

In 2008, **Chuka Obele-Chuka, Esq.**, a fiery lawyer and human rights activists challenged the Nigerian political status quo of relegating the citizens role in governance to only election, in a lecture titled **“Servant Leadership in a Sustainable Democracy”**.



ST-HILL



ALEGEH

The 11th edition of the ROML lecture series in 2020 was hosted at the Orchid Hotel, Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria on Friday, 31st January 2020. The keynote lecture – **“Judiciary and Journalism as Frontiers of Democracy: Anachronistic or Contemporary in Justice and Fairness?”** was



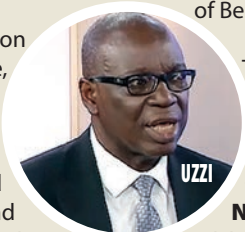
delivered by an astute legal practitioner and former president of the Nigerian Bar Association – **Mr Austin O. Alegeh** (SAN). The 11th edition which was chaired by the highly revered Mr **Asue Ighodalo**, a foremost Nigerian who've continuously contributed to the growth of Nigeria, and was then the Chairman, Board of Directors of the Nigeria Economic Summit Group (NESG) and many other establishment. The 11th edition attracted participants from top government officials, including representatives of the Delta State Government, the judiciary, legal practitioners, journalists, public service, academia, civil society organisations and members of the general public.

Issues and Misconceptions; Contemplating Solutions", hosted at Akin Deko Memorial Lecture Auditorium, University of Benin, Edo State. The 14th edition ROML Lecture series was chaired by a foremost academician, **Prof. Temi Akporhonor** (former Dean of Post-Graduate School, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State) with other special guest discussants including, **Dr. Joan Oviawe** (Honourable Commissioner for Education, Edo State), **Dr. Osagie Obayuwana** (Former Attorney General & Commissioner for Justice, Edo State) and **Prof Samuel Ovenseri Aibueku** (Former Director, Joint Universities Preliminary Examinations Board (JUPEB), University of Benin).



In 2021, the 12th ROML lecture series held on 5 February 2021, focused on the theme, **"Redesigning a Nation Against Impunity"**. The keynote lecture was delivered by the fiery Human Rights Activist and Senior Advocate of Nigeria, **Mr Femi Falana** (SAN), who noted that Ralph Opara was a man of honour, truth and justice, and was delighted to be associated with the ROML lecture series.

The 15th edition of the ROML lecture series was held on 1st February 2024 at the famous Arewa House in Kaduna, Kaduna State. The theme of the 15th ROML lecture series, **"Quality Education for the Girl Child and Children with Disability in Northern Nigeria: Challenges and Way Forward"** was delivered by **Dr Grace Jamila Bila-Jolaosho** (*The Deputy Rector of Kaduna Polytechnic, Kaduna*).



The 13th Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture with the theme, "Impunity & Nigerian Elections: The Continued threat to democratic process" was held on 4th February 2022. The 2022 lecture anchored by **Ms Maupe Ogun-Yusuf** of Channels Television had **Mr Samson Itodo**, Executive Director YIAGA Africa and **Oluwole Osaze-Uzzi**, the former INEC Director of Voter Education and Publicity as guest speakers. The Ralph Opara family had in attendance the matriarch, Mrs Francesca Chinwe Ralph-Opara and Roberta Chizoma Opara who delivered a goodwill message tilted "Speech for Daddy: Celebrating His Clarity, Character and Commitment" on behalf of the Ralph Opara family.

The 2025 edition of the Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture which is 16th in the series, will be holding on Friday, 31st January 2025 at the Transcorp Hotel, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The keynote lecture – **"Sink or Swim? Nigeria's future and the impact of corruption on the Socio-political Economy of Nigeria"** will be delivered by a distinguished legal practitioner and former Chairman of the Special Presidential Investigation Panel for Recovery of Public Property (SPIP) – **Chief Okoi Obono-Obla, Esq.**



This 2025 edition is expected to attract participants from key stakeholders and guests from all walks of life, the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ), the State Public Service, Academia, Civil Society Organisations (CSO), National Orientation Agency (NOA), amongst other invitees and people from the private sector.



On 3rd February 2023, the former President of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU), **Prof Emmanuel Osodeke** delivered an outstanding paper on the theme of the 14th edition of the Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture series, **"State of Tertiary Education in Nigeria: Identifying Historical**

For more information, please visit – <https://www.nas-int.org/ralph-opara-memorial-lecture/>





ABOUT **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SEADOGS**

The National Association of Seadogs (Pyrates' Confraternity) is an international non-governmental social advocacy and humanistic organization founded in the 1952/53 academic session at the then University College Ibadan (now University of Ibadan).

Founded in 1948 as the first university in Nigeria, the University College Ibadan in its early years was a near exclusive preserve of children from wealthy homes. The product of this upbringing, scions of business tycoons and colonial aristocracy, brought

into the University College all their notions of class privilege, and indifference to the social realities of the nation.

The handful of students from poorer backgrounds either stuck doggedly to their books, looking forward to the day when the prize of an academic degree would compensate their present indignities, or strove assiduously to be admitted into the sophisticated circle of their flashier peers. Ashamed of their peasant or worker background, some played on the ignorance of their parents who made prodigious sacrifices to enable their children join the aristocratic sets, in appearance and acquisitions at least. So thor-

oughly did they absorb the habits of the class to which they desperately aspired to that they even out did the “silver-spooned” elite of the university campus.

The 1950s also marked a heightening of the nationalist movement and the sad recourse to tribal alignments in the country. Quick as always to absorb the worst tendencies of many national movements, the University College, Ibadan, itself became a breeding ground for the worst kind of tribal thinking clubs that the Students’ Representative Council and all forms of student activity, including sports, became mere expressions of tribal pettiness.

It was against this background and to combat these negative tendencies that seven students of the University College Ibadan founded the Pyrates Confraternity (PC) in the 1952/53 Academic Session. These men, known as the Original Seven are: Prof Wole Soyinka (Nobel Laureate), Ralph Opara, Pius Oleghe, Ikpehare Aig-Imoukhuede, Nathaniel Oyelola, Olumuyiwa Awe and Sylvanus U. Egbuche.

To forestall tribalism within their ranks, the Original Seven adopted ‘pyratral names’, different from their real names, with no trace to any tribe or origin. At the founding, the Original Seven authored and adopted the Pyrates creed: 3 Watch-words, 4 Compass Points and 7 Rudder Blades.

Ralph Opara led the organisation at its embryonic years, and his vision was to constructively apply his youthful, journalistic mind, in tandem with the other founders to constructively challenge and curtail the negative tendencies of elitism, tribalism, colonialist mentality, etc.

In 1980, the Pyrates Confraternity, in its 28th year of existence, was incorporated under the laws of Nigeria as the National Association of Seadogs (NAS). Today, NAS has evolved from a campus confraternity to a community focused, advocacy organisation. It

remains dedicated to social advocacy, humanitarian and charitable endeavours and volunteerism to community service within and outside Nigeria, wherever its members are.

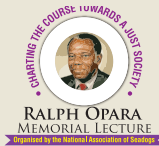
Some of these projects include the NAS Medical Mission, Legal Assistance & Citizens’ Rights Initiative, NAS Street Child Project, #OurVotesCount Initiative, NAS Charity Red Ball, Community Water Projects, etc. NAS initiated and led the Save Bakassi Campaign; and was part of the international coalition that organised the Save Darfur Campaign, Campaign Against Drug



Mules in collaboration with Hibiscus UK and the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The organisations active role in the democratic fight of June 12 against military dictatorship led to many members being hounded, imprisoned, tortured and for safety some went into exile. NAS has 59 chapters across Africa, Europe, North America, Asia and Pacific.

The National Association of Seadogs is an organisation in Special Consultative Status with the United Nation’s Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) since 2021.

For more information visit: www.nas-int.org, www.nasmedicalmission.org, www.ourvotescount.org, www.wolesoyinkalecture.org, www.lacri-ng.org



NAS ROLLOVER PROJECTS

National Association of Seadogs (Pirates Confraternity) is a non profit organisation incorporated in Nigeria and with 63 branches across the world. For more information about us and our projects, please visit our websites. www.nas-int.org • www.wolesoyinkalecture.org • www.nasmedicalmission.org • www.ourvotescount.org.ng

NAS STREET CHILD PROJECT

The significantly high rate of out-of school children in Nigeria was the motivation for the involvement of the association in the Street Child Project.

About 61 million children of primary school age are not in school worldwide.

10.5 million of these are Nigerian children.

40% of Nigerian children aged 6-11 do not attend any primary school.

30% of pupils drop out of primary school.

Only 54% transit to Junior Secondary Schools.

It was the shocking facts and statistics about child education in Nigeria from UNESCO and UNICEF

together that compelled us to get involved in the Street Child project.



We are convinced that Street Children in Nigeria represent a significant part of this statistics. Many of these children are orphaned, underprivileged, abused, abandoned; scrounging & suffering and exposed to criminal gangs on the streets of Nigeria. It has since then through this project been able to contribute its quota towards getting these kids off the streets. Our two-pronged strategy is to support NGOs tackling the issue while also supporting selected orphanages. Reason being that without the orphanages, it is very likely the children will end up on the streets.

NAS MEDICAL MISSION

The relevance of free medical missions in an environment where over 70% of the population who live in poverty pay their medical bills from their pockets cannot be over-emphasized.

The NAS Medical Mission is a quarterly event with a vision to reach a significant population of indigent Nigerians needing medical help in specifically targeted rural communities. The objectives also include health education awareness.

The Medical Mission features medical and dental consultation/ treatment, hypertension and diabetic screening

as well as blood donation and HIV screening. The treatments offered are on the spot and mainly cover non-referral ailments. Patients diagnosed of more serious ailments or that require in-patient care are referred to an appropriate Medical Centre.

Community centres, village halls, hospitals and health

centres are used as venues for the free Medical Mission. This ensures that the services get to the grassroots. Traditional rulers and village councils are also involved.

National Association of Seadogs largely funds the free Medical Mission through the annual subscriptions and donations by its members on the 63 decks spread across the five continents of Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and North America. Members also volunteer their professional services: doctors, nurses, lab technicians, dentists, oculists, etc.

RALPH OPARA MEMORIAL LECTURE

The Ralph Opara Memorial Lecture is a conception of the National Association of Seadogs (Pirates' Confraternity) and dedicated to honouring the memory of one of Nigeria's most outstanding and endearing broadcasting icon who happens to be one of the founding fathers of the organisation – Late Ralph Chukwuemeka Opara (MON).

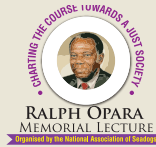
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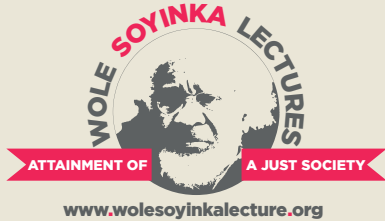
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and just society. He passed on in 2002. Late Ralph Opara and the spirit of moral courage and vision, which he exemplified

PROF. WOLE SOYINKA LECTURE

Wole Soyinka Lecture Series is another conception of the National Association of Seadogs (Pyrates Confraternity). It is dedicated to honouring one of Nigeria and Africa's most



outstanding and enduring literary icons: Professor Wole Soyinka (Nobel Laureate) and a founding father of the organisation. The Lecture Series, which

is an annual event, usually holds in the month of July (the birth month of Professor Soyinka). It is aimed at promoting good governance, social justice and the advancement of democratic ideals in Nigeria and beyond. Since its inception, the lectures have been held in three continents around the world (Africa, Europe and North America). While the Wole Soyinka Annual Lecture Series is symptomatic of the intellectual bent of the organisation, it is equally indicative of the charismatic leadership that Soyinka has provided for years. Having a role model like the Nobel Laureate, with his peculiar sense of humanistic involvement, is a unique opportunity for members of the confraternity. Organisation of fora where solutions and answers are proffered to critical problems facing the humanity of our age, using a global figure as a rallying point, speaks loudly of the direction of the group's community causes and the adoption of a multi-tactical approach to the realization of our dreams for the world.

CITIZENS' SUMMIT

Citizens Summit is an annual forum, which seeks to facilitate dialogue among Nigerians, elicit discussion through brainstorming sessions, and galvanize varied views at home and in the diaspora. Its primary objective is the synthesizing



of these views to enhance the involvement of the citizenry in the political and electoral processes and procedures of the Nigerian nation. The Citizens' Summit furthers our organisation's commitment towards the attainment of a Nigeria for and by Nigerians.

The National Association of Seadogs (NAS) is committed to a knowledgeable electorate, ready, willing and able to participate fully in general elections and subsequent processes. To achieve this, voter education is key in ensuring that voters are adequately informed and galvanized to effectively and responsibly exercise their powers, thereby



expressing their political will through the ballot. It is also imperative that in the exercise of this civic right and power there is respect for the electoral preferences of others.

WS DIGITAL TOWN HALL

The Wole Soyinka Digital Town Hall provides a fully branded and digitised

intellectual platform through which the National Association of Seadogs and its chapters across the world can articulate and host virtual events to meet the advocacy and activists objectives of our dear confraternity, while leveraging on the increasing popularity of digital webinar events.

OUR VOTES COUNT

Our Votes Count initiative, sets out to facilitate mass enlightenment and multimedia campaigns on voter education and promote citizen awareness in order to increase voter turnout during elections. It is a mass enlightenment programme that employs Ushahidi's "crowdmapping" technology to report on general



elections across Nigeria. The technology makes it possible for Nigerians to report unfolding events and activities at different election centres and polling units in real time. The programme is targeted at the electorate, as a means of reversing generalised

apathy to the electioneering and electoral process in Nigeria. One of its key objectives is to facilitate increased turnout and participation in the elections of younger voters –Nigerians who, by virtue of their age have just become eligible to participate in elections.

Through this initiative, the National Association of Seadogs have been accredited twice by Nigeria's electoral bodies as independent Electoral Monitors. First by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), and in 2011 by Lagos State Government under its electoral umpire, Lagos State Independent Electoral Commission, (LASIEC), to monitor its local government elections in the state.



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