



PRESS RELEASE

IROKO Theatre Company launches Heritage Fund supported 'Home from Home' project at the Old Town Hall in Stratford.

IROKO Theatre company celebrated the launch of The National Lottery Heritage Fund supported project 'Home from Home' on Wednesday 29th March at the Old Town Hall in Stratford. The project highlights the achievements of British Nigerians in the UK.

The launch was graced by His Excellency, Ambassador Adamu O Shuaibu, who represented the Nigeria High Commission to the UK. The Ambassador gave a brief speech to a packed hall, commencing reflections on the theme of 'Home from Home' when he noted; *"There is this conclusion that those who are living in Europe have forgotten our culture – but it's not true. We're here promoting the culture of our people even outside our shores."*



Other distinguished speakers included Professor Kene Igweonu, the Pro Vice-Chancellor & Head of College at London College of Communication, University of the Arts London. Professor Igweonu touched on the work of the British Nigerian dramatist, Oladipo Agboluaje when he spoke on the *"Undying Echoes of Home in*

Oladipo Agboluaje's Here to Stay.” He underlined that, “*current generations of British Nigerians and other Africans are taking their place at the heart of British social, cultural, economic livestreams to proclaim that this [Britain] is home.*”

The topic was explored further by Hassan Aliyu FRSA, The President of the Nigerian Arts Society UK (NASUK) in his summary of ‘*Nigerian Arts in Britain.*’ Aliyu pointed out that “*Nigerian artists are household names in the anthology of British arts,*” and acknowledged the works of the artists like Yinka Shonibare CBE.

Juwon Ogungbe FRSA, The Founder and Music Director of Juwon Ogungbe Ensemble examined how, “*British Nigerians have made their presence felt in all music genres including jazz, classical, soul and grime,*” to name but a few. It is hoped that both Ogungbe FRSA and Aliyu FRSA will reprise these topics in full at a Conference on ‘*The Legacy of People of Nigerian Descent in Britain,*’ scheduled for later this year.

Many aspects of the British Nigerian experience were explored. Dr Isaac Akande, Clinical Psychologist and Lead for Community Inclusion, at Newham Secondary Care Psychological Services raised questions on Nigerian identity in Britain in his talk, ‘*Sticks, Stones and Stories.*’ He remarked that the ‘*Home from Home*’ project might be the answer to ‘*avoid the hazards of a single story*’ by presenting many narratives of the British Nigerian heritage and culture.

Nathaniel Thomas, a town planner and music lover reflected on ‘*What it means to be a British Nigerian.*’ He asserted that he felt equally at home in the traditions of Nigeria and Jamaica, affirming the dual heritage of his parents. Thomas grew up attending IROKO Theatre workshops which influenced his love of Nigerian music and culture.



Interspersed with light entertainment in the form of an interactive quiz, led by the MC Lookman Sanusi on prominent British Nigerians, such as theatre arts pioneer, Peter Badejo OBE; together with performances from Afrobeat dancers, The Rhythm Masters and the IROKO traditional performers, the launch of 'Home from Home,' turned out to be a lively and engaging event, providing the perfect start to a full and varied 18-month programme.

IROKO Theatre Artistic Director and CEO, Alex Oma-Pius said, *"He was pleased to see so many members of the community come to celebrate the launch of 'Home from Home'. The programme will continue to shed light on the stories of Nigerians who have excelled in British society, through public engagements such as the Conference on 'The Legacy of People of Nigerian Descent in Britain,' workshops offering research, heritage, video recording and editing skills and tours to visit Nigerian artefacts and heritage at the British Museum, Horniman Museum and the Museum of London Docklands."*

In his closing remarks, IROKO Chairperson, Paul Adesanya thanked the speakers and invited guests, in particular Cllr Charlene McLean, representing Newham Council and Dimitra Kislari from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, without whose support, the project launch and 18 month 'Home from Home' programme would not be possible.



END

Upcoming Events on the 'Home from Home' programme:

- Volunteering Opportunities (for ages 18 – 35 yrs.)

Training workshops on research, documentation, oral history video recording and editing. For more information go to [The IROKO Home Page](#).

- A Conference on 'The Legacy of People of Nigerian Descent in Britain.'

More About the 'Home from Home' Project:

The 'Home from Home' project aims to explore the legacies of pioneering British Nigerians in the UK and their impact on society. The project will highlight British Nigerian contributions to the cultural, political, educational, artistic, spiritual, and sporting life of Britain and London, in particular. The project will celebrate the community's strength, struggle, commitments, perseverance, achievements and ingenuity as they navigate their existence in the UK.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Using Money raised by the National Lottery, we inspire, lead and resource the UK's heritage to create positive and lasting change for people and communities, now and in the future. www.heritagefund.org.uk

IROKO Theatre Company

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