



**British Nigeria Law Forum**

c/o Tim Daniel, BNLF Treasurer  
Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge  
One Fetter Lane  
London EC4A 1JB  
Tel: +44 (0)20 7556 4428  
Fax: +44 (0)20 7556 4461  
Email: [info@bnlf.org.uk](mailto:info@bnlf.org.uk)

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2010 CHAIR'S REPORT**

Welcome to the 2010 BNLF Annual General Meeting, held at Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge LLP (EAPD) in the City of London, where Tim Daniel, our treasurer is a partner.

It is almost a year since I took over from Oba Nsugbe as chair. I am pleased that Oba and Tim who are founding members of BNLF continue to play an active role in the life of this organisation.

### **Historical background**

BNLF has been in existence since its formal launch in 2002, following an African Law Conference held in Abuja the previous year. Between 2002 and 2005 the Law Society and Bar Council jointly supported BNLF. However since 2005 it has been an independent professional body run by its members and funded by subscriptions and corporate sponsorship. BNLF is governed by a constitution (available on the website).

Membership is made up of solicitors, barristers, law students, trainee solicitors, pupil barristers, paralegals, etc, both in the UK and Nigeria.

Our patron is Mr Justice Emmanuel Olayinka Ayoola, retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Nigeria and Chairman of the Independent Corrupt Practices & Related Offences Commission (IPRC).

### **Our objectives**

- To promote fellowship and good understanding and improve relations between the legal professions in Nigeria and the UK
- To develop and strengthen legal, business and cultural links between Nigeria and the UK
- To encourage mutual collaboration between lawyers in the UK and Nigeria
- To assist in the training and education of Nigerian lawyers and Nigerian students studying law in the UK and vice versa
- To create a directory for business networking
- To exchange information and ideas in relation to professional training, access to justice and other legal topics on a bilateral basis
- To encourage and support legal or social initiatives aimed at strengthening the democratic process and the rule of law and
- To organise a programme of social events

### **BNLF Officers 2009/10**

Babatunde Akinyanju, Solicitor, Chair  
Tim Daniel, solicitor, Hon. Treasurer  
Tope Ojikutu, Solicitor, Vice Chair  
Jonathan Akinsanya, Barrister, General Secretary  
Nike Sonuga, Solicitor, Membership Secretary

### **BNLF Committee Members 2009**

The committee consists of the officers listed above, plus  
Prof. Oba Nsugbe QC, SAN, Immediate Past Chair  
Seye Aina, Solicitor, Public Relations & Events Officer  
Boma Ozobia, Solicitor, Nigeria & Commonwealth Office  
Anthony Mordi, Solicitor, Legal Surgery  
Wole Olufunwa, Solicitor, City of London Desk  
Omosuyi Fred Omojole, LLM, Student Affairs



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In addition to the committee members mentioned above there have been various members who have contributed their time and energy to BNLF over the past 12 months. They are: Remi Aiyela, Solicitor; Abimbola Badejo, Barrister; Stephen Akinsanya, Barrister; Iquo Amaegbe LLB (Hons) and Yemi Daniel, Solicitor

We hold committee meetings roughly every 2 months, at Jonathan Akinsanya's chambers in Holborn, London. I am grateful to Jonathan for his hospitality, which enables us to meet as often as necessary. Jonathan also chairs the Criminal Law sub-committee, whose members are Babs Akinyanju, Oba Nsugbe, Nike Sonuga and Stephen Akinsanya.

### **2009 in focus**

Rather than outline our achievements over the year in detail I will refer you to my May and December Newsletters, which are available on the website. The highlight for 2009 was the historic visit to the Governor of Lagos State, His Excellency, Babatunde Raji Fashola, and the Hon. Attorney-General, Olasupo Shasore SAN, at their offices in Alausa, Lagos State, in April 2009. This visit was followed by our annual trip to Abuja for the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) Business Law Conference.

In September 2009, Anthony Mordi and I had the privilege of paying a courtesy visit to the Nigerian High Commissioner to the UK, His Excellency Dr Dalhatu Sarki Tafida OFR In October 2009. We held our 3<sup>rd</sup> Gala Dinner at the Holiday Inn, Regent's Park, London on Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009. Images of these events are available to view on the website, [www.bnlf.org](http://www.bnlf.org)

### **Legal surgery**

The Legal surgery takes place every 1<sup>st</sup> Thursday of the month at the Nigerian Chaplaincy (run by Rev. Ben Enwuchola), St. Marylebone Church Hall, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LT, from 1930-2030 hours. The committee is exploring a number of options to make this service more accessible to the Nigerian Community. If you are interested in participating please contact Remi Aiyela or Anthony Mordi, via the BNLF Administrator at [info@bnlf.org.uk](mailto:info@bnlf.org.uk)

### **Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII) and the Assigned Risks Pool (ARP)**

I raised this issue in my December 2009 Update. Since then I have had meetings with the Law Society's Head of Equality & Diversity and the Law Society Black & Minority Ethnic Forum (which consists of Chairs of BNLF, Black Solicitors Network, Society of Asian Lawyers, etc) to address the concerns of members who are in this invidious position. BNLF continues to be in dialogue with the Solicitors Regulation Authority over this and other issues. We will be speaking to the SRA again, prior to its consultation deadline on the 12th of February 2010. My thanks to Nwabueze Nwokolo, Law Society Council Member, who has been a great ambassador for Nigerian and minority ethnic lawyers in general. If you wish to be involved in finding a long-term solution to the issue of PII please get in touch with Tope Ojikutu or Yemi Daniel, via [info@bnlf.org.uk](mailto:info@bnlf.org.uk)

### **"Returnees" & the Nigerian Law School**

BNLF has been campaigning for Nigerian Citizens, who qualified in England and Wales and practise as barristers or solicitors in this country (so called "returnees"). We are seeking exemptions from some of requirements for qualification as a legal practitioner in Nigeria. I must commend the efforts of the BNLF sub-committee members, who have been working tirelessly behind the scenes on this matter. They are: Segun Osuntokun (chair), Oba Nsugbe, Olubi Adejobi, Tunde Ogowewo, Tolu Olubajo, Ogbeialu Nkochi-Nwankwo, Benjamin Uduje, William Okoya and Remi Aiyela.

In February 2007, Segun presented a paper to the NBA National Executive Committee in Owerri, Nigeria. In April of that year BNLF hosted a dinner in London for the then president of the NBA, Olisa Agbakoba SAN, who gave his support to our proposals and advised us how we could take matters forward. In July 2007, BNLF prepared and submitted draft proposals to the Council of Legal Education in Nigeria (CLE) and in November 2008, Olubi attended a Nigerian Law School Conference on the Reform of Legal Education in Nigeria. The conference was attended by the Deans of various law faculties and Olubi presented a strong case on our behalf.

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Throughout 2009, Oba, Segun and I discussed our proposals with a number of stakeholders, including the CLE, the Nigerian Law School and the Nigerian Body of Benchers. In September 2009, we heard the good news that the CLE had approved our proposals for the fast tracking of returnees. There is still a lot of work to be done. As the saying goes, 'the devil is in the detail'. We would not have got this far without the support of the NBA President (& BNLF member), Chief Rotimi Akeredolu SAN. We will keep you posted as matters progress.

### 2010

2010 is already proving to be just as eventful as 2009. On 14<sup>th</sup> January I represented BNLF at a press conference, jointly organised by Nigerians in the Diaspora UK (NIDOE) and the Central Association of Nigerians in the UK (CANUK), to alert the British public that Nigerians are not terrorists and that the Nigerian Community in the UK condemned the alleged terrorist atrocity that occurred last Christmas Day in the USA.

### Abuja Conferences

A gentle reminder about the **NBA Business Law Conference (5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> April 2010)** and the **Commonwealth Regional Law Conference (8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> April 2010)**. Details regarding these events are available on the BNLF website, [www.bnlf.org](http://www.bnlf.org) Registration and accommodation discounts have been secured for current BNLF members, but time is of the essence. If you wish to attend please contact Seye Aina or me by emailing [info@bnlf.org.uk](mailto:info@bnlf.org.uk)

### Nigeria Office

Our Nigeria Office is run by Boma Ozobia, c/o Sterling Partnership LLP, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, 109 Awolowo Road, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria. The email address is the same as above.

### Acknowledgements

My thanks to the following: Natalie Pryer; BNLF Administrator, Frances Wachter, trainee solicitor at EAPD; our corporate sponsors and members of BNLF. Please continue to support this venture by maintaining your annual subscriptions, attending as many events as possible and encouraging UK and Nigerian-based lawyers and students to join us.

Best wishes,

Babatunde Akinyanju  
Chair

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