

## **GCI AT 90, LOOKING BACK -LOOKING FORWARD**

At this auspicious moment of the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our great and illustrious alma mata, Government College Ibadan, it is germane and not out of place to take stock of what this nonagenarian citadel of learning, nurture and culture has bequeathed to generations and generations of Nigerians from its own noble birth in 1929 to this day. It is an institution that has seen the good, the bad and the ugly uplifted from inception with an all round well grounded educational system of the British mold by its founding fathers. They strongly believed in bringing up young, bright and brilliant Nigerians to take over the reins of rulership of their country Nigeria in all ramifications of human endeavor.

Unfortunately misunderstood and buffeted by many up and coming jaundiced and myopic individuals who manipulated government and governance, the school struggled, albeit abysmally, to retain its status quo. Meritocracy which was the bedrock of the school was sacrificed on the altar of mediocrity. The building blocks of the Boarding House System which nurtured the growth and development of the young boys was shattered to smithereens. Alas! The prefectural system was thrown to the winds. “Catchment area”, a phrase to allow for unbridled profligacy which killed the long established recruitment of intakes encompassing the then Mid Western State and beyond. High standards of entry, the unshakable foundation for excellent and stand out results in public examinations were whittled down. Teaching which was non pareil was browbeaten and became second rate. In the face of these challenges, GCI is trudging on and emerging with renewed vigor and vitality.

The Government College Ibadan Old Boys Association GCIOBA over the years from its inception in the 1930s has been playing a significant role in helping to sustain and maintain impeccable standards. This Association is giving back to the school what the school gave to its members. It is like the proverbial Yoruba rat which is sucked by its young ones when it grows old and weak. Let’s take a break and look in the mirror to see how the GCI Old Boys have been carrying aloft and fluttering majestically the GCI Flag in all climes beyond borders, across frontiers.

In the area of academics, GCI students had repeatedly scored 100% passes and very high grades in the West African School Certificate and Higher School Certificate Examinations from inception to the 60's and early 80's before the inflow and free flow of intakes that could not be guaranteed as deserving of their entry. Resulting effect of the radiant splendor and brilliance of GCI old Boys in times past are the world renowned writers, playwrights and authors in GCI's catalogue. They litter the Nigerian socio political and economic landscape, nay the world. The very first Nobel Laureate in Literature in Africa, thoroughbred engineers, doctors, professors, scientists, artists, broadcasters, lawyers, judges of high repute and stature, communication gurus, topnotch businessmen making waves all over the world. This is but a tip of the iceberg. The early Presidents of the Nigerian Society of Engineers were GCI Old Boys. The chapter on the first batch of ASPAU Students to study in the USA is a fascinating story. Of the 16 or so students adjudged most qualified to embark on the sponsored programme in the USA in the whole of Nigeria, GCI is reported to have had over 50%. Let's put that aside and now switch our focus on sports and vocational training the GCI way which paved the way to resounding success and recognitions.

Welcome our products in the area of agriculture and agro allied industries; the River Basin Commissions, the Oil Industry and OPEC, GCI ex-students have excelled and left records being chased for their administrative and managerial savvy.

Yes, Indeed, GCI excelled in the Sciences, the Arts and broad based educational pursuits. But that's not all to GCI in nation building. In sports, GCI was not found wanting. On the contrary, it was in the forefront of excellence in athletics and games. The impeccable records show a GCI boy scaling and creating a high jump record in the 50s, the first Nigerian Hockey XI in 1959 had more than 6 GCI boys in the elite group. Times there were in the 1950s through the 60s when GCI fielded 2 Relay teams for invitational relay events in Ibadan and invariably GCI came 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. There is more, GCI also ensured that despite its non participation as a matter of deliberate policy in the popular western region Thermogene Cup and the Lagos Principals Cup of the 60s GCI invited whichever team won those coveted trophies for friendlies and trounced them resoundingly.

Why are there no more nuggets added to the above rich treasure chest and why have the new incoming students not shone and glittered and spangled? Failure to continue to mine these precious metals is squarely in the laps of those who have mistaken the objectives of a model school for which GCI was founded and meant to be, and who have rather than bring up other schools to its standard pulled it down to its lowest ebb. In all of these however GCI OBA take a little knock. GCI Boys realized too late that it's only in having a hand in governance that we can positively influence policies to help our alma mater on.

Luckily we are beginning to be interested in politics and getting actively involved in elective posts. The French say "Petit a petit, l'oiseau fait son nid" Ovid the sage of old Greece said "Little drops of water will wear away hard stone". GCI is moving on to the EL Dorado. The Old Boys are rolling it on the right rollers. At its 90<sup>th</sup> milestone, the façade and ambience are witnessing unprecedented welcome changes. GCI is alive and kicking and GCI OBA's ably piloted by past executives particularly the current one are taking the bull by the horn. The tempo of restoration is at a high pitch. All hands are on deck. The GCI of our collective dream is becoming the GCI of our reality and it is not unrelated to our spartan discipline in the various Houses-2 in the formative years – 2 added on in 1948 and 49 and a fifth in 1973. The Cadet Group plus other societies like the active Literary and Debating Society, the Dramatic Society, Press Club, GCI Sound Incorporated band, Geographical and Photographic Societies taught different skills and developed multifarious talents. Today, some of GCI products excel in musical ensembles and choral groups. The first Nigerian fighter pilot in the Air Force is a proudly GCI old boy and so are numerous others who have distinguished themselves in other fields. Our GCI icons litter the Nigerian space. They are front-runners and frontliners wherever they find themselves. See you all at the 91<sup>st</sup> milepost with cheering news of a new look GCI.