

Seven Continents: Interview of George Ogurie: FFWPU National Leader of Nigeria

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George Ogurie: FFWPU National Leader of Nigeria



A rare opportunity arose recently when George Ogurie, the Family Federation of World Peace and Unification (FFWPU) national leader of Nigeria and a Doctor of Ministry (DMin) student, was at the Unification Theological Seminary (UTS) in Barrytown, NY attending courses in the DMin program. I sat down with George for a question-and-answer session about his work in Africa and the recent visit to Senegal by Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, co-founder of UTS and the FFWPU.

George Ogurie currently a student in UTS' D.Min. program.

During our conversation George emphasized the value of education and the role UTS could play in bringing educational opportunities to his country, helping to bridge the Islamic and Christian communities. It's straightforward to understand the "providential" value of Nigeria because of its geographical location, its large population - the largest of any African country (190 million, of which 82 million are under 14 years of age) - its standing as the country with the highest GDP in Africa, its relatively high literacy rate (60%) and that English is the official language. Of further significance is the population with almost 50% Muslim, 40% Christian and 10% following indigenous beliefs.

Question: What is the significance (and difference) between being designated a "providential nation" and a "strategic nation by the FFWPU?"

The providential nations are those that have been identified by True Parents (Father and Mother Moon) through our international headquarters as nations that can play significant roles in the providence, either because of their historical antecedents or their strategic position in various regions; their economic importance, their spiritual importance, their history, and so on. In the early part of the 21st century, in the year 2000, there were 43 providential countries. Out of those 43, True Parents chose 23 as "strategic" nations. Nigeria was one of those 43 nations. Strategic nations are those that have a lot of potential to realize Cheon Il Guk (nation of peace and unity) by the year 2020. This would include things like membership, outreach to government, government recognition, and so forth. Also, other factors, such as economic and political. But it has to do mostly with how well the Unification movement is doing in those countries.

Question: So, how well is Nigeria doing?

(Laughing). Well, we've been doing a lot of outreach. Especially, in terms of VIPs. We have about 5,000 ambassadors for peace in Nigeria. These aren't necessarily Unification members but people who support what we are doing and the message of Father and Mother Moon, and are very positive about our organization. Some of them are in the government, even in the highest levels of government. At one time the president of the country, Goodluck Jonathan, proclaimed himself as an ambassador for peace. He even put it in his curriculum vitae (C.V.) when he was the president. It is that level of VIP connection that the movement has in Nigeria. We've been doing a lot of outreach in terms of Tribal Messiah and the Blessing. We've reached out to a lot of communities; we're very involved in doing "grass roots" work and family education.

Question: Did you attend the visit of Mother Moon to Senegal?

Yes, I did. I was part of the organizing team that went ahead.

Question: Why did she go to Senegal?

[Mother Moon] went because of the preparation that had been done in Senegal. The leaders of the country were very happy to receive True Parents in their country. What happened was that there were some VIPs and religious leaders who attended the Foundation Day festivities in 2017 in Korea. They were very impressed with what they saw in Korea; we must especially give credit to the musical production of True Parents life course. Those leaders from Senegal went back home with a message, and, one way or another, that message got back to the president of the country, Macky Sall, and he completely supported Mother Moon's rally.

Question: Senegal is predominantly Muslim and Nigeria more mixed?

Yes, Senegal is 96% Muslim and Nigeria is more mixed - 50% Muslim and 40% Christian.

So, Mother Moon got an invitation from the President?

Yes, she got an invitation directly from the president and he went to the rally as well, as you can see in the video. I think it was a very important factor that she was invited by the president. Also, the brand of Islam in Senegal is of a more spiritual type. The brand of Islam is Sufi. It is more internal and not too much into political radicalism as the Sunni and Shiite types of Islam. So, that brand (Sufi) of Islam is more open to spiritual ideas.

Question: What are you doing your dissertation on?

It will be on the FFWPU [Marriage] Blessing. I want to share about the Blessing and Heavenly Tribal Messiah work in Africa and how that can lead to national restoration.

Question: Is it different when you speak to Muslims about Marriage Blessing? What is it you say to them?

We promote the [Marriage] Blessing in the Muslim community as a community service in terms of education, and helping families to be together, to be viable, to deal with social problems communities are facing. We trace the social issues in the communities to the breakdown of the family which, in most cases, comes from illicit relationships, sexual immorality and other problems among the youth.

Question: You said that many of your strongest Nigerian FFWPU members are Muslim. How do they relate to the Divine Principle, which is based on the Bible and Christianity?

Over the years there have been ways the Divine Principle has been taught that Muslims can relate to. We have been able to bring quotes from the Koran into our Divine Principle reading and Divine Principle lectures.

Question: Do you see a role for UTS in the future for Nigeria?

We have many FFWPU members who would like to attend UTS, but it's not possible because they don't have the funds. I know that UTS is also dealing with financial issues, but if there were something UTS could do, there are a lot of possibilities in Nigeria. Recently, we struck up a relationship with the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), which is the "umbrella" body for all Christians in Nigeria. In fact, their president went to Senegal to meet Mother Moon. He is the leader of 90 million Christians and he said he really believes that we (FFWPU) are "the hope for our country." They are very interested in having our organization train pastors in Nigeria. This is one of the things I need to discuss while I'm here.

About the "Seven Continents" Series

This series explores the global reach of UTS through its remarkable alumni around the globe.

UTS alumni are evangelists for their faith, pastors in established communities, care-givers for the old, and the sick, teachers in schools, colleges and universities, and inter-faith practitioners in dialogue with others around the world. Actually our alumni are present in 65 countries on seven continents. Well, that is hyperbole. There are seven continents, but as far as we know there are no alumni currently working in Antarctica. The other six continents are: Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Europe, and Australia.

Our students become scholars, chaplains, lawyers, journalists, church administrators, youth organizers, NGO leaders, and social or business entrepreneurs. Often students go on to add additional professional qualifications to become social workers, therapists, counselors and nurses. Many complete doctorate degrees to advance their careers; other UTS alumni are in higher education teaching at the school, college and university level.