

## TRIBUTE TO LATE PROF. VINCENT OLUBUNMI ROTIMI

(SEPTEMBER 27, 1943-JULY 12, 2023)



### PERSONAL LIFE

Prof. Vincent Olubunmi Rotimi (MB:BS; MSc; PhD; FMCPath; FWACP; FRCPATH; DLSHTM; FIDSA; FAMedS) was born on the 27th of September 1943 in Ado Ekiti, Old Western Region of Nigeria, to Pa Nathaniel Adeyemo Alabi Rotimi, a senior education officer and Ma Emily Omololu Olulola Rotimi (nee Ajiniran), a teacher, into the Rotimi Royal dynasty of Ebioun Compound of Ayedun, Oke-Ero Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. He was the fourth of six children. Both Olubunmi's parents were educators. His father was an education supervisor who planted the then "Awolowo Primary Schools" throughout Ekiti towns and villages. His mother was a teacher who later established a fashion designer shop. She was a very industrious woman.

He had his primary education at the Saint Saviour's Primary School, Ado Ekiti, and then proceeded to Offa Grammar School, Offa, Kwara State, for his secondary education, where he became the School Prefect, and completed his study in 1963. He moved on to the Federal School of Science and Technology, Lagos State, for his Advanced Level (A level) educational study. Unfortunately, his father passed on whilst returning from his studies at the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. His mother followed within 8 months, leaving him an orphan at the age of 20.

Upon completion of his A level study, he received the Northern Nigeria Scholarship Award and proceeded to attend the Ahmadu Bello University (ABU), Medical School, Zaria, Kaduna State as one of its pioneering medical students from 1967 to 1973. He obtained distinction grade in Medical Microbiology in 1971, and was engaged as a Student Demonstrator in Medical Microbiology of the University between 1971 and 1972. He obtained the Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (M.B.B.S) degree in 1973, and received the live award of Yelwite-Ahmadu Bello University the same year. It was at ABU, he met Kofoworola Rotimi (nee Ogunsola). They got married in 1973, and together had 4 beautiful children and 6 lovely grandchildren.

Prof Rotimi was an extremely intelligent and well-rounded man. He made friends with ease, enjoyed sports, loved travelling (his daughter often teased him by calling him Prof. Ajala, after the legendary "Ajala the traveller") and loved people. He believed in honest hard work and service to God. He often said that it was only by the Grace of God that he had come this far especially after being orphaned so early in life.

### SOCIAL LIFE

Prof Rotimi was an avid sportsman who played a number of sports but he eventually settled on tennis as his main interest. He participated in the Davis Cup which is the

premier international team event in men's tennis, run by the International Tennis Federation. As a teacher, he had an inherent love for humanity and desire to develop others which showed even in tennis. He coached other tennis players, including the renowned Nduka Odizor, and later became Chairman of the Nigerian Tennis Federation (NTF), formerly the Nigeria Lawn Tennis Association. He held this position from 1988-1990. He was the first Nigeria national tennis coach and in 1988, he took the Nigerian team to the Olympic games in Seoul, Korea. From 1989-1991, he was the first Vice-President of the African Tennis Federation.

## RELIGIOUS LIFE

Prof Vincent Rotimi was committed to his walk with God. When in Nigeria, he attended church unflinchingly every Sunday. He was an active member of St Saviours Church, TBS (now Our Saviours church) and was the first Harvest Committee Chairman. When in Kuwait, he was an active member of St Paul's Church, Ahmadi, Kuwait and when in the United States, he was an active member of All Saints Anglican Church, Hyattsville, Maryland.

## ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL LIFE

Prof Vincent Olubunmi Rotimi knew he wanted to study medicine at the early age of eight because his father had been involved in a motor accident and he was treated so well by the "people in white" that he wanted to be just like them. It turned out that the people that treated his father were actually midwives, but his mind had already been made. Hence, the reason for his studying Medicine at Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, where he obtained his medical degree.

After completing his housemanship training at the Lagos University Teaching Hospital (LUTH), Idi-Araba, Lagos (July 1973 - July 1974), he worked briefly as a Senior House Officer (SHO) at the Specialist Hospital, Benin-City, Nigeria (July 1974-June 1975) and later enrolled into the residency training program in Surgery Department at LUTH where he had a brief stint (June 1975 - July 1976), before transferring to Medical Microbiology Department, where he was a junior resident from July 1976 to September 1977.

Thereafter, he attended the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine/ Hammersmith Hospital, London, UK, for his postgraduate Master's (MSc) program in Medical Microbiology (1977-1978) with the Nigerian Federal Government Scholarship support. He commenced his doctoral (PhD) program at the University of

Sheffield, UK in 1978 during which he lectured at the Department of Medical Microbiology, Academic Division of Pathology, and later obtained his PhD degree in 1980, completing the PhD program incredibly in just 2 years. During the period of his doctoral program, he also joined the professional trainee program of the Royal College of Pathologists, UK, as Honorary Senior Registrar at the Children Hospital, Sheffield, England (Jan 1979 - Sept 1980) and the Public Health Laboratory, Northern General Hospital, Sheffield (Sept 1980 - June 1981), where he obtained the Membership degree of the Royal College of Pathologists (MRCPATH) by examination in 1983. He also obtained the Fellowships of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in Pathology (FMCPATH) and the West African College of Physicians (FWACP Lab Medicine) in 1982.

In 1981, Prof Rotimi returned from UK to Nigeria and was offered appointment as a Senior Lecturer at the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan. However, he quit after 3 days due to the internal politics at the University, to join the Department of Medical Microbiology and Parasitology of the College of Medicine, University of Lagos as a Lecturer I, and LUTH Idi-Araba as a Consultant Medical Microbiologist. He rose to the position of a Professor of Medical Microbiology in 1987, and was head of department from 1988 to 1990. He initiated the Residency (Fellowship) training program and Anaerobic Bacteriology in Medical Microbiology at LUTH, and integrated the MSc degree into their training schedule, a residency program unique to LUTH at that time in the country. He was a Visiting International Research Fellow at the Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, USA between December 1986 and January 1988. He had extensive teaching experience at both the undergraduate and graduate (MSc & PhD) levels while in University of Lagos and served as a great teacher and mentor to several great achievers today both in Nigeria and abroad, including the current Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos, Professor Folasade Ogunsola. Between 1981 and 1991, Prof Rotimi supervised a total of the 14 BSc (Hon) projects, 18 MSc dissertations, 2 MPhil theses, and 4 PhD theses.

In July 1990, Prof Rotimi joined the Security Forces Hospital, Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) as a Consultant Clinical Microbiologist and Head of Division of Clinical Microbiology (July 1990 - Sept 1991). He became Consultant/Head, Division of Clinical Microbiology, King Fahd Armed Forces Hospital, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (Oct 1991 - Feb 1996), Acting Chief of Pathology (Aug 1993 Jan 1994), and Substantive Chief of Pathology (May 1995-Feb 1996). He later joined the Kuwait University as a Professor of Clinical Micro-

biology, Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, and Consultant/Head of Microbiology Department at the Mubarak Al-Kabeer Teaching Hospital, Kuwait, in March 1996 and was there till his retirement in March 2020. During his early period in KSA and Kuwait, Prof Rotimi obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Pathologists UK (FRCPath) in 1995 and the Professional Diploma of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (DLSHTM), London, UK in 1996. He was also a Wellcome Trust (UK) and Fogarty (NIH, Bethesda, USA) scholar at the Division of Infectious Diseases, Department of Medicine, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, Maryland, USA, which paved way for him to receive the award of Fellow of the Infectious Diseases Society of America (FIDSA) in 2014.

In Kuwait, he worked to advance Microbiology and Pathology in the country, establishing the practice of Clinical Microbiology, and was the Chairman and Chief Examiner of the Faculty of Clinical Microbiology, Kuwait Institute of Medical Specialisation (KIMS). He was often referred to as the Father of Microbiology in Kuwait. He was Director and Coordinator of Residency Training Programme in Kuwait from 1996-2020. In this position, he successfully supervised 6 MSc Students, 4 PhD students, 8 MRCPPath residents and 21 FCM KIMS residents. He was responsible for the training of postgraduate candidates for the Royal College of Pathologists membership and successfully trained 11 Fellows of the Royal College of Pathologists.

After his retirement in Kuwait, he returned to Nigeria and was employed as a Contract Professor of Medical Microbiology at the Lagos State University College of Medicine (LASUCOM), Ikeja from 2021 to 2022. In 2021, he was appointed to a rapid-response initiative by the Academy of Medicine Specialties (AMedS) to provide recommendations to the Nigerian Government on preparedness for COVID-19 and new pandemics. He dedicated his life to education and philanthropy and was a member of the Board of Governors of Downen College, Lekki, Lagos State, from inception, and in 2022, conceived the “Professor Vincent Olubunmi Rotimi Foundation” to support gifted students from impoverished backgrounds. He left LASUCOM to become a Researcher and Trainer at the Center for Infection Control and Patient Safety (CICAPS) of the University of Lagos College of Medicine from 2022 till his passing on to glory on July 12, 2023 at the age of 79 years. During this period, Prof Rotimi trained/supervised additional 2 MPhil students (Jeddah), 1 PhD student (Lagos), 8 FMCPPath residents (Lagos), and 4 MRCPPath residents (Jeddah).

Prof. Rotimi was a Clinical Microbiologist per excellence and an Infectious Disease Physician with research interest in anaerobic infections, antimicrobial resistance

mechanisms and hospital infections. His extensive experience and unique way of teaching clinical microbiology at the College of Medicine of the University of Lagos University, Kuwait University and Lagos State University College of Medicine at the undergraduate and postgraduate (MSc, PhD, Fellowship) levels endeared him so much to the hearts of his numerous students and mentees scattered across the globe, many of whom are now distinguished academics and professionals in their own rights. He was a prolific researcher, being a principal or co-investigator of 22 major funded and completed research projects. His research outputs are outstanding, with over 240 published articles in peer-reviewed learned academic journals, and over 4,000 citations and 8,000 reads. He published numerous books/chapters in books (some of which are in still in press) and attended 216 international and national scientific conferences, presenting over 200 papers.

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND SERVICE LIFE

Prof Rotimi had extensive administrative experience in both the university and hospital systems, having served in various capacities as coordinator, head of department, chair of numerous committees in the Universities/hospitals in Lagos Nigeria, Kuwait, and Riyadh and Jeddah in KSA. Outside the University/hospital systems, Prof Rotimi served as the Secretary, Faculty of Pathology, National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria (1988-1989), and as regular examiner at the NPMCN Fellowship examinations before and after his return from Kuwait. He was a member of 21 local and international professional associations/bodies including the Nigerian Medical Association (NMA), Medical and Dental Consultants Association of Nigeria (MDCAN), Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Society of Nigeria (CLIMIDSON), Academy of Medicine Specialties (AMedS) in Nigeria, College of Nigerian Pathologists (CNP), Infection Control African Networks (ICAN), European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID), Infectious Diseases Society of America (IDSA), American Society for Microbiologists (ASM), amongst others.

In addition, Prof Rotimi served the scientific and academic community as a regular reviewer for over 20 local, national and international journals. He was a member of international advisory editorial board of many journals (including Reviews in Medical Microbiology UK and Journal of Infection in the Developing Countries), Associate Editor of Anaerobe USA, past

Editor of Journal of Medical Microbiology UK, and the pioneer Editor of the African Journal of Clinical Microbiology (AJCM), now renamed African Journal of Clinical and Experimental Microbiology (AJCEM). Prof Vincent Rotimi lived a full and well accomplished life. He was an intelligent, well-travelled and enlightened man; loved by most who he came in contact with, no doubt in response to the love he showed them. He was a great teacher, mentor, leader, well known for his humility and openness, and highly revered and esteemed by all. He was a role model worthy of emulation for the young and upcoming clinical microbiologists. He left a good legacy. Rest in Peace, Adieu Prof Vincent Olubunmi Rotimi. You live on in us!

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