

CONSOLIDATING NIGERIA-US CULTURAL RELATIONS: A CONSIDERATION OF THE PLACE OF THE FULLBRIGHT PROGRAMME

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The Fulbright Programme aims to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship.

W. J. Fulbright

INTRODUCTION

Peopled by diverse stocks from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America, the United States of America has been able to establish a strong, virile, and enduring democratic tradition which has made her one of the most egalitarian societies in the world today. All over the world, America's democratic tradition which incorporates the following principles: consultation, free debate, free hearing, consensus, tolerance and accommodation, is believed to be one of the best. It is important to mention that the Fulbright Programme which has been a very effective means of directly and indirectly exporting American culture to Nigeria and other nations of the world was a product of America's democratic experience and America's dollar-diplomacy.

More importantly, Senator W. J. Fulbright had a well-defined purpose for education. He viewed education "as a great civic project and an indispensable avenue for the promotion of civic

virtues, such as public service, civility between people, tolerance, decency and equality."¹ Thus, it was not surprising that the Fulbright Programme was developed to fulfil an educational objective of state policy. This confirms the fact that education and educational systems are in reality a basic core of culture and strong instrument of diplomacy. This is so because education is the major instrument for the cultivation of cultural values and ideals. Against this background, it is evident that relations between two nations can be discussed or viewed from different perspectives, such as economic, political and cultural. Thus, this essay seeks to discuss the place of the Fulbright Programme in the consolidation of Nigeria-US cultural relations. Hence, it is only appropriate to begin this essay with a brief explanation of some concepts.

1. THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY: A BRIEF EXPLANATION

Culture can be defined as "the totality of the way of life evolved by a people in their attempt to meet the challenges of living in their environment."² A major characteristic of culture is its ability to uphold two opposite concepts, i.e. uniformity and diversity. This makes it possible for a culture

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¹ Duffy, Joseph, "Commemorating Fulbright: The Senator, the Program, and His Vision for America and the World," being a paper read at the 50th Anniversary Ceremony of the Fulbright Programme in Fayetteville, Arkansas, February 28, 1996, 3 – 4.

² Asiwaju, A. I. "The Evolution of Nigerian Culture," in Osuntokun, A. and Olukoju, A. (eds.), *Nigerian Peoples and Cultures*. Ibadan, Davidson Press, 1997, 22 – 42.

to be inherently related to other cultures either in cooperative or antagonistic terms. Again, it can be argued that certain cultures are more dominant than the others and this leads to uniformity where the dominant culture asserts its superiority. A culture that is not strong stands to be annihilated, but available records on Nigeria-US cultural relations have indicated that both nations have a symbiotic relationship which is mutually beneficial to the citizens and government of both nations.

Imbedded in the above definition of culture is the fact that culture performs several functions which include the following:

1. It helps to provide lenses of perception and cognition. How people view the world is greatly conditioned by one or more cultural paradigms to which they have been exposed.
2. It provides motives for human behaviour. What makes a person respond in a particular manner is partly cultural in origin.
3. Culture provides criteria of evaluation. What is deemed better or worse, ugly or beautiful, moral or immoral, attractive or repulsive, is partly a child of culture. The evaluative function of culture need not always correspond with the behavioural.
4. Culture provides a basis of identity.
5. Culture is a mode of communication. The most elaborate system of communication is language.³

Commenting further, Mazuri argued that “these functions of culture have relevance for the new international cultural order and that, more fundamentally, culture is at the heart of the nature of power in international relations.”⁴

Furthermore, in international politics and cultural relations, the question of influence is fundamental. Most countries are interested in engaging in cultural diplomacy because they want to project their influence politically and economically. Today, cultural relations have become one of the popular medium through which nations achieve their national interests in other nations. It

has been gradually evolved as a strategy for defending national interest. Hence, the programme contents of such relations are aimed towards specific objectives with multiplier effects. This could be the reason why American foreign aid is based on the strategic concept of enlightened self-interest,⁵ which has helped to protect the security interest of the United States in far-flung corners of the world.

The emergence of the world as a global village through advancement in science and technology has made most nations, especially the United States and other advanced nations of the world to embark on cultural diplomacy. This is because the development of information technology has made it possible for problems hitherto considered as national or domestic to become international problems. Hence, there is a need for national governments to explain and justify their actions and policies adopted in solving such problems. The argument here is that, if cultural relations are relegated to the background, it becomes difficult to firmly establish international peace and understanding. Therefore, nations may have to resort to the use of force even when not necessary to settle disputes or contain a domestic problem which if not solved may lead to an international problem. Thus, as mentioned above, it can be said that the enhancement of national security is one reason why nations engage in cultural relations.

Another reason why nations embark on cultural diplomacy is that of cultural communication. In doing this, the government of both nations attempt to portray and sell the culture of each other to the citizens of the relating nations. It is argued that the understanding of other people’s culture is necessary for the attainment of peace and mutual respect for one another. In some cases, cultural relations may involve the export of skilled manpower. This serves to promote the literature, arts, values, ideals, and by extension, the products of industry of the exporting country. This eventually helps in pulling down stereotypes. It also assists in facilitating peaceful interactions that ensure the advancement of international peace and understanding.

³ Mazuri, A. A. *Cultural Forces in World Politics*. London, James Currey Ltd., 1990, 7 – 8.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ This concept simply entails the availability of foreign aids based on the expectant returns United States intends to derive from such aid.

The concept of cultural diplomacy simply refers to the “exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspect of culture among nations and their peoples in order to foster mutual understanding.”⁶ It can also be described as a domain of diplomacy “concerned with establishing, developing and sustaining relations with foreign states by way of a proactive process of external projection in which a nation’s institutions, value systems and unique cultural personalities are promoted at a bilateral and multilateral level.”⁷ It must be mentioned at this point that in attempting to nurture a favourable and widely acceptable perception of the United States national ideals and policies with foreign audiences, officials of the United States must not fail to recognise the cultural identity of the target nations or audiences.

The discussion thus far provides some explanations for the development of cultural relations between Nigeria and the United States. Hence, it can be argued that cultural relations serve as an aid for conventional diplomacy. In conclusion cultural relations may lead to mutual respectability, peaceful co-existence, understanding, acculturation or conflict of cultures.

2. THE FULBRIGHT IDEAL: ORIGIN AND ADMINISTRATION

Adjudged as the most prominent and most enduring aspect of United States’ cultural diplomacy is the international educational exchange programme widely known as the Fulbright Programme. Basically, an educational exchange programme, the Fulbright Fellowships Programme, has over the years developed to become a veritable medium which the United States authorities have been using to export American culture to other nations of the world. This medium has become very attractive, effective, and reliable because of its wide and popular acceptance by recipient countries and individuals.

Again, the Fulbright Programme has attracted lesser resentment from people with anti-American sentiments because it does not involve the physical

deployment of American troops, thus, many have accepted it purely as an educational policy thrust. Thus, it can be argued that the foundations and strength of America’s educational experience rest mainly on the ideas imbibed by her citizenry through its dynamic educational system. It, therefore, become evident and incontestable that many who have imbibed American ideas would always want to impart such new found knowledge on every other person around him. This is one of the silent but systematic manner by which American culture is being spread the world over.

Introduced at a time which, in many respect, is replicated in today’s world, the Fulbright Programme was introduced in 1946. The originator, Senator William Fulbright, always claimed that the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the catalyst that focused his thoughts on the creation of an international exchange programme. Senator Fulbright had in mind a programme that would involve the transformation of the way that nations viewed each other, and he believed that the transformation had to take place not in the speculative diplomatic arena where international relations had traditionally unfolded but between the citizens of the many nations of the world. Furthermore, he held the opinion that only the widespread personal exchange of ideas, cultures and history would give some hope for a better world.⁸ This is because relationships between countries are no longer dictated by a few superpowers, but by an innumerable fluid and some complex factors.

Hinging the Fulbright Programme on his personal experiences as a Rhodes Scholar in the 1920s in Europe, Senator William Fulbright became aware of the perspective on one’s own heritage that might be gained through educational exchanges. His experience in Europe had widened his horizons as he was dazzled by the complexities of world histories and cultures. Above all, his contact with a vast variety of people had stretched his sympathies and concerns for other people. He was obsessed with the realisation that America’s future was ultimately bond up with the future of the other

⁶ Cummings, Milton. *Cultural Diplomacy and United States Government: A Survey*. Being a report published by the Centre for Arts and Culture, Washington DC, 2003.

⁷ Mulcahy, Kevin V. “Cultural Diplomacy and the Exchange Programmes: 1938 – 1978,” in *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, vol. 29, 1 (Spring, 1999), 11.

⁸ Duffy, “Commemorating Fulbright:”, 1.

nations of the world. Consequently, he believed that his programme would serve as an important avenue to mutual understanding between intricate cultures and more than ever could contribute to the cause of international peace by breaking down barriers between nations.

Again, William Fulbright envisioned a programme that would inspire leading personalities of societies to promote peace and understanding between nations. He also viewed the programme as one that would continue to ripple throughout society as its participants related their experiences to an ever widening circle of people. He had no doubt that the lessons learned by contact with other peoples and cultures would create not only a willingness among its participants to share the broader vistas learned from what has come to be known as the 'Fulbright Experience,' but indeed would inspire a driving passion to persuade others of the importance of that experience.⁹

As mentioned earlier, the Fulbright Fellowship is named after the originator of the idea, Senator J. William Fulbright, a democrat who started his national political career as a representative of Arkansas in the US House of Representatives in 1942. During the 1943 seating session, he introduced the 'Fulbright Resolution' which gained an overwhelming support of members of the House, and it was adopted.¹⁰ Three years later, Fulbright became a Senator and was elected chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. As a Senator, he introduced the Fulbright Bill on the floor of the United States Senate; it was later enacted into law when President Harry S. Truman appended his signature to it in August 1946. The enabling law guiding the opera-

tion of the Fulbright Programme has since been updated by the Fulbright-Hays Act of 1961. This Act consolidated the existing provisions of the former law by placing almost every academic programme that attracted United States Government sponsorships under the Fulbright Programme.¹¹

Essentially a United States Government financed project, the Fulbright Programme is aimed at enabling "...the government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries."¹² What is more, the philosophy behind the creation of the scheme was that "...international problems can be solved through the understanding and respect for other cultures, and through sustained interaction and discussion among people of different nationalities."¹³ This made Williams Fulbright to argue that:

"The essence of intercultural education is the acquisition of empathy...the ability to see the world as other see it, and to allow for the possibility that others may see something we have failed to see, or may see it more accurately. The simple purpose of the exchange Programme...is to erode the culturally rooted mistrust that sets nations against one another. The exchange Programme is not a panacea but an avenue of hope..."¹⁴

Such was the hope and aspirations of Senator Williams Fulbright, the most renowned exponent of the use of educational exchanges for the promotion of civility between people, tolerance, decency, and equality. Also, the Fulbright Programme aspires to encourage the American tradition in education that is divorced from strict government control. In other words, each university/depart-

⁹ Ibid, 3.

¹⁰ See Schick, Allen *et al.*, *American Government: Continuity and Change*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975. Also see Wood, G. S. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776 – 1787*. New York, Norton, 1969.

¹¹ See *Guide to US Sponsored Cultural Exchange Programmes in Nigeria*. Lagos, Cultural Affairs Office, USIS, 1985. Also, Cremin, Lawrence A. *Traditions of American Education*. New York, Basic Book Inc., 1977, 13.

¹² See interview with Senator J. Williams Fulbright in Anderson, Jane L. (ed.), *Fulbright Association Newsletter*, XIV, 1 and 2 (Spring and Summer, 1991), 1, 8, and 10.

¹³ Fulbright, W. J., *Old Myths and New Realities and Other Commentaries*. New York: Random House, 1964, 32.

¹⁴ The Lend-Lease Bill was introduced in Congress of January 10, 1941. It authorized the president of the United States to "sell, transfer, exchange, lend, lease or otherwise dispose of arms and other equipment and supplies to any country whose defense the President deems vital to the defense of the United States." The Bill finally became law on March 11, 1941. See Tindal, George B. and David E. Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 2nd ed. London, W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1989, 753. See also Norton, Mary B. *et al*, *A People and A Nation: A History of the United States*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1984, 410 – 411.

ment/unit should be free to introduce courses and other academic Programmes just as it deems fit. The academic content of the Fulbright Programme notwithstanding, it can be argued that the programme also aims at establishing personal and professional links with economic and political leaders of developed and developing nations. This in turn, has helped in opening up new trade links and avenues for other relations for the United States.

One point that should be mentioned about this programme is that it began as an attempt by the US Government to find a way round the Lend-Lease Agreement¹⁵ by which the United States gave grants and assistance to its allies during the Second World War. Before the end of the war, it was clear that many of the countries indebted to the US under the Agreement would not be able to pay back fully; a part of the debt was now used to send American scholars to these countries. It is to the credit of Senator J. Williams Fulbright who placed the scheme on a more acceptable cultural exchange basis, thereby underplaying the political motives behind the scheme.¹⁶

A variety of organisations monitors and administers the Fulbright Exchange Programme. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, a unit of the United States Information Agency, serves as the programme's administrative and executive arm. The scheme is administered by this body in accordance with the regulations set for it by the Senator J. Williams Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board which was created by Congress to supervise the Fulbright Programme independently and impartially. The board is composed of twelve members appointed by the President from academic, cultural, and public life. Other bodies involved in the implementation of the scheme include the Council for International Exchange of Scholars (C.I.E.S.) and the Institute of International Education (I.I.E.). The C.I.E.S. is responsible for finding suitable institutions for lecturers and researchers on exchange while the I.I.E. is charged with the same responsibility for students under the Fulbright scheme.

Mention must be made of the importance and use of Bi-national Commissions in the administration of the Fulbright Programme. These Commissions are composed of distinguished national educators, cultural leaders, Americans from the United States Embassy, and resident American community. The Commissions ensures that grantees and educational institutions participating in the programme are qualified to do so, plan, and propose exchanges in keeping with the needs and educational resources of each country.¹⁷ However, since Nigeria does not have a Bi-national Commission, and all of the other bodies responsible for the administration of the Fulbright Programme are based in the United States, the Cultural Affairs Office in the defunct United States Information Service (U.S.I.S.) in Nigeria has been coordinating and implementing the programme objectives in Nigeria. Today, in order to achieve a fuller realisation of its aims and objectives, the Fulbright Programme is under the supervision of the Public Affairs Department of the United States Embassy in Nigeria.

As mentioned earlier, the aim and philosophy of the scheme have led to the acceptance of the Fulbright Fellowship Programme on a world-wide basis. Little wonder then that governments of other countries have since been making substantial financial contributions towards the sustenance of the scheme.¹⁸ Against this background, this essay shall now examine how the programme has helped in consolidating Nigeria-US cultural relations.

3. ASSESSING THE FULBRIGHT PROGRAMME AS A FOREIGN POLICY TOOL: INSIGHT INTO THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

Just as it is difficult to measure the success, acceptability, or failure of the Fulbright Programme universally, so it is also an up-hill task to state categorically that the programme has recorded success and acceptability in Nigeria as a means of con-

¹⁵ See Files Nos 811, 42747 Se/3-248, Fulbright with Australia 1948, US National Archives, Washington DC (Courtesy Professor B. A. Agiri).

¹⁶ See Anderson, *Fulbright Association Newsletter*, 8 and 9.

¹⁷ In 1990, 35 foreign government allocated funds totalling approximately over \$ 50 Million to the Programme. See Anderson, *Fulbright Association Newsletter*, 8.

¹⁸ Anderson, *Fulbright Association Newsletter*, 8. Also, United States Information Agency, *Fact Sheet* (Washington DC: The Office of Public Liaison, 1997).

solidating Nigeria-US cultural relations with special emphasis on education. But one point that cannot be disputed in the Nigerian case is that the academia, professionals, and government officials all alike have received the administration of the Fulbright Programme in Nigeria with great zeal and enthusiasm. This is evidenced in the level of awareness the programme has attained in Nigeria's educational and other professional sectors. As a result of the acceptability of the programme, annual competition has become very keen in all categories of the Fulbright Awards. Perhaps, it will not be an understatement to mention that most Nigerian academics and professionals now look forward to receiving a Fulbright Fellowship Award as this will enable them to broaden and up-date their knowledge in their respective disciplines and other cultures, especially American culture and democracy.

Over the years, the Fulbright Programme has been a reliable and veritable tool for the continuous promotion and sustainability of the concept of educational and cultural exchanges in general and America's educational culture in particular. The Fulbright Programme has also aided the exportation of American democracy and American ways of life. From the very beginning, Americans have looked to their schools to provide panaceas for difficult national problems; this is why the system has emphasised a general approach to education although it also encourages some core courses. From the elementary to the first degree level, students are allowed freedom to choose their courses from a very wide spectrum of disciplines. It is only at the graduate level that students specialise in their area of study.

At this point, it is necessary to recall that Senator W. J. Fulbright placed great hopes on education everywhere but saw it as especially essential in a democracy. It was his conviction that the wisdom necessary to maintain democracy's fibre can only be obtained through a strong system of civic education. Senator W. J. Fulbright support for an international exchange programme was just one facet of this belief. He opined that by making people less strange to one another, one could overcome prejudice and suspicion and encourage in its place a mutual understanding among people. It is an accepted fact that while the potential barriers

between people were daunting in the international arena, Senator W. J. Fulbright viewed as no less challenging the barriers between people in a domestic setting.¹⁹

Furthermore, the educational system in the United States allows for a free spirit of inquiry. Consequently, students are encouraged to discover knowledge by themselves and create new ideas. In the classroom, the competitive and cooperative spirit is kept alive and nurtured through group studies, and each student contributes something to the group assignment thereby learning cooperation and tolerance which are central and fundamental requirements in nation-building. Furthermore, the competitiveness is buttressed as such group vies with the other to produce the best. In this way, sheer individualism for its sake is not given too much significance.

An American Fulbright Fellow is a product of the above processes which he then tries to introduce to students under his instruction. In Nigeria, since the structure of educational system is more or less patterned after the American model with the introduction of the semester, unit course system, and credit hours, etc, it has become easier for the Fulbright Fellow to experiment more with the American ideas. Thus far, all that is being said is that education is the bedrock on which development rests, and since schools exist to fulfil national priorities, and particularly to encourage the growth of a national character and an enlightened citizenry the Fulbright Programme becomes very essential and relevant for the continuous growth of these ideas at the tertiary level of education. The question now is what is the variety of exchange activities under the Fulbright Programme?

There are various types of academic and non-academic exchange that fall under the umbrella of the Fulbright Programme and Nigeria has benefited from them since the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the United States in 1960. Under the Fulbright Senior Research Programme, and the US Lecturer Programme, several American professors in various disciplines such as mass communication, history, anthropology, medicine, agriculture, political science, urban and regional planning, etc have taught and conducted research in Nigerian universities. The

¹⁹ Duffy, "Commemorating Fulbright:", 4.

Academic Specialist Programme makes funds available for a period ranging from two to six weeks to Americans to serve as consultants to Nigerian educational parastatals on specific educational problems, or to teach in workshops, symposia, and seminars. In majority of the cases, the specialists are drawn from areas where Nigeria lacks the manpower.²⁰

Likewise many Nigerian academics have had the opportunity of travelling to the United States for advanced professional and research work under the Fulbright exchanges. The Fulbright African Senior Research Programme, and the scholar-in-Residence Programme, has sponsored established Nigerian specialists to the United States for extended periods of post-doctoral research and teaching in American institutions of higher learning. This is to keep them abreast of developments in their fields.²¹

Another exchange activity that is administered under the Fulbright Programme is the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Programme. This Programme brings accomplished mid-level professionals from developing countries or newly democratised nations to the United States for a year of professional development and academic work at the graduate level. The Humphrey Programme was initiated in 1978 to honour the memory and accomplishments of the late Senator and, later, Vice-President, Hubert H. Humphrey. Since fellows are selected based on their potentials for national leadership, the programme has helped in providing a basis for establishing lasting ties between citizens of the United States and their professional counterparts in Nigeria and other countries, thereby fostering an exchange of knowledge and mutual understanding throughout the world. Since its inception, more than 2,200 fellows from more than one hundred countries have participated in the programme.²²

Under the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Programme, awards are granted competitively to

professional candidates with a commitment to public service in either the public or private sector but more specifically in the fields of public policy analysis, public administration, natural resources and environmental management, human and personnel management, finance and banking, communication and journalism, etc. The programme is not designed to offer a degree, but to provide broad professional enrichment through a combination of academic course work with professional development activities tailored towards the peculiar interest of each recipient.²³ Like the Fulbright Programme that is purely an academic exchange programme, the Hubert Humphrey Programme has assisted in the training of administrators for Nigeria. These administrators have been complementing the efforts of Nigerian academics in ensuring the consolidation of Nigeria-US cultural relations.

Other schemes that operate under the Fulbright Programme include the Travel Only Grant, which makes it possible for Nigerians employed temporarily by American educational institutions as lecturers and researchers to receive funding to defray their travel cost. The Occasional Lecturing Programme gives Nigerian academics already in the United States on a Fulbright grant the opportunity to visit American educational institutions other than their host institutions. The Junior Staff Development Programme funds junior faculty members in Nigerian universities to undertake research works for their Doctoral degree programme in the United States. Furthermore, the United States Department of Education (USED) Centre for International Education directly administers a portion of the Fulbright Programme with funds provided by Congress. These funds are disposed to either individual Americans or "United States Institutions to support research and training efforts abroad focussing on non-western foreign languages and world area studies."²⁴

A major feature of the Fulbright Programme that has made many keen observers to argue that it

²⁰ A request was made to the defunct USIS Lagos to provide the names of Nigerians and US Fulbright grantees, year of award and institution of service. Unfortunately, the USIS Lagos could not provide this, instead I was advised to request for this list from USIA Washington DC. A reply is still being expected.

²¹ USIA Fact Sheet (October 1997).

²² The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Programme Brochure, Washington DC, USIA (November 1988).

²³ USIA Fact Sheet (October 1997).

²⁴ See Asiwaju, A. I. "The Cultural Content of Neo-colonialism in Africa with Particular reference to Nigeria," being a paper delivered at a seminar by the University of Lagos Centre for Cultural Studies, February 29, 1980.

is loaded with political undertones is the fact that it is aimed at an audience that will soon assume leadership positions in the benefitting countries. Thus, it is no surprise that in Nigeria, for example, the programme is aimed at imparting American education, ideas, and culture on the youths; especially graduate students, senior and junior faculty members, and mid-level career professionals. Furthermore, Nigerians who undertake teaching and research activities in the United States return home to impart newly acquired ideas on students; this has made a renowned Nigerian historian,²⁵ to argue that these exchanges are being used to propagate cultural imperialism by the American government. However, the fact remains indisputable that as a developing country in search of socio-economic and political advancement, Nigeria needs to be assisted by the developed world. It is therefore recommended that Nigeria should continue to accept unconditional aid, such as the Fulbright Fellowships and others too numerous to mention here from donor countries.

As mentioned earlier, one of the long-term objectives of the Fulbright Programme is the production of people who would occupy leadership and sensitive position in the socio-political, economic and educational sectors of the benefitting country and international organisations. The list of prominent participants in the Fulbright Programme is too long to be reproduced in this paper, but among them are university vice-chancellors, professors, Nobel Prize winners, authors, musicians and politicians. Drawing from a global perspective, some examples are: Federico Mayor, a former Director-General of UNESCO, Yasushi Akashi, ex-Under-Secretary General, United Nations Department for Disarmament Affairs, and Alexander Yakovlev, the adviser of ex-Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev. The argument is that because of the exposure which Alexander Yakovlev got as a Fulbright exchange visitor to the United States, he was able to influence President Mikhail Gorbachev to introduce radical and transformative policies that have made the defunct USSR what it is today. Another alumnus is the former United Nations Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

However, back home in Nigeria, successive administrations have had to depend on the services

of some Nigerian academics and administrators who have benefited from United States sponsored training programmes in the area of policy formulation and implementation. Some Nigerian Fulbright alumni include: Professor Chinua Achebe, Jelili Omotola, and Wande Abimbola. Others are Mr. Gray Longe, E. N. Gadzama, Dr. Bassey Atte, Dr. Olu Onagoruwa, and many others. On the whole, one would not be wrong to argue that the Fulbright Fellowships have helped in no small measure in the growth and consolidation of Nigeria-US cultural relations because since Ernest M. Lander, A Professor of History and a Fulbright scholar in Nigeria, taught at the Department of History, University of Lagos, during the 1970/71 academic year, the number of American scholars and Nigerian academics participating in the exchanges have continued to be on the increase.²⁶

Nevertheless, some shortcomings can be identified in the administration of the Fulbright Programme. For instance, while the American scholars have a chance to choose his university of affiliation; African scholars are not given such opportunity by the administrators of the Fulbright Programme. This has resulted in a situation where most African Fulbright Scholars are attached to highly rated universities such as Yale, Harvard, and Howard in the United States. This obviously is to the disadvantage of the small universities, especially the black ones. Another noticeable shortcoming of the Fulbright Programme is the quality of people, especially Americans who are sent to Nigeria on Fulbright Fellowship in recent times. In many cases, it is those who have just finished or about to finish their Doctoral degree that are sent to Nigeria thereby denying us the opportunity to tap from the experience of highly rated American academics.

As at now, there is excessive bureaucratisation in the existing selection process in Nigeria and even in the United States. This discourages good and open competition. The selective process in Nigeria should be thrown open to all who consider themselves qualified. They would then be screened by a National Committee of Scholars and administrators including representatives of the United States Embassy. After this, the successful candidates

²⁵ Agiri, B. A. "Era of Consolidation and Growth, 1975 – 1987," in Aderibigbe, A. B. and Gbadamosi, T. G. O. (eds.), *A History of the University of Lagos, 1962 – 1987*. Lagos, University of Lagos Press, 1987, 62.

²⁶ Duffy, "Commemorating Fulbright:", 3.

would be required to obtain the consent and support of their institutions. The preponderant influence of Vice-Chancellors and university administrative officers who have hijacked the initial selection process in Nigeria should be reduced and the academic competition re-emphasised.

Furthermore, the establishment of a Fulbright Bi-national Commission in Nigeria will make it possible for the needs and expectations of Nigerians from the Fulbright Programme to be fully identified and realised, this in turn will lead to an increase in the number of grantees both ways. Consequently not only will the sustenance of Nigeria-US cultural relations become a dream come true, the central features of the Fulbright Programme, i.e. "the discovery of cultural difference, fundamental human likeness, and the agonising yet heady realisation that one's own basic assumptions about morality, politics and meaning do not comprise all the myriad possibilities of human life..."²⁷ would also have been achieved.

Of immense advantage to Nigeria and those who have been participating in the Fulbright Programme is that they normally return home with greater and better understanding of the latest developments in their disciplines and some aspects of American culture. This is so because of the existence and access to enormous library facilities, and personal contact with their colleagues in the same or related disciplines. This has made a renowned historian to argue that most American policies "...represent a veritable measure of the virility, inventiveness and flexibility of America's experience."²⁸ The Fulbright Programme is thus no exception; its universal acceptability has made it to be imbibed by a greater generality of the people in most countries of the world, including Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to discuss the relevance of the Fulbright ideal as a medium for consolidating Nigeria-US cultural relations. On a more specific note, the programme has been well received by the academia, government officials and business men in Nigeria. The Fulbright Programme has been a cornerstone of the growth and consolidation of educational exchanges between Nigeria and the United States since 1960 when it was introduced in Nigeria. The question now is: what benefits did the United States of America expect in return for her sacrifices over the years? The answer to this question cannot be definite. This is because it can be argued that the United States over the years has been striving to remain the most powerful nation in the world economically, politically, and militarily. In her desire to achieve this aim, the country has had to make sacrifices through its cultural diplomacy programmes as enumerated and discussed in this paper. The acceptance of American policies, ideas and values by other nations of the world has been a direct result of these sacrifices. Again, the establishment of trade relations with many countries of the world, and the outright emergence of the United States as the most powerful country in the world are direct results of the cultural diplomacy programmes of the United States.

From the argument thus far, it can be safely said that cultural diplomacy is a potent force in international relations. Hence, Nigeria should learn from the United States experience that neither the wealthy nor the elite nor the learned carry the hopes for increasing international peace but rather the people of all nations. Conclusively, it can be said that the Fulbright Programme, though a modest programme, it has an immodest aim of achieving a regime that is more civilised, rational and humane in the international system. The case of Nigeria-US cultural relations has not been an exception.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See Olaniyan, R. A. "The Future of the American Past: A Cross-Cultural Perspective," in Agiri, B. A. and Akere, Funso (eds.), *American Studies in Nigeria*. Lagos, USIS, 1990, 40 – 44.