

Celebrating Nigeria at 55, CU Holds Independence Day Students' Parley



CU Management, with all the speakers at the 55th Nigerian Independence Parley held at the University Chapel

In the Spirit of celebrating the 55th year of Nigerian Independence, Covenant University community held a programme tagged, “Independence Day Students' Parley” at the University campus on October 1, 2015.

The programme which was organised to commemorate the independence of Nigeria from the British Colonialists, provided an avenue for students to voice their opinion and express their stance over the issues affecting the nation, particularly insecurity and terrorism.

There was an exhibition debate between two students groups on the topic, “This House will grant Amnesty to Boko Haram if they Surrender”, which was performed in a British Parliamentary setting. While the first group stood as the government party in favour of amnesty, the second group stood as the opposition party, to rebuff the position of the sitting government.

The government party argued that since the military approach has not stemmed the tide of insurgency in the north, there is need for a more diplomatic approach to combat the crime. They noted that some members of the Boko Haram sect were forced to join the terror group, hence the need for amnesty for them. They further explained that amnesty programme would afford the government the opportunity to re-orientate and provide an empowering education programme to repentant members of the sect through active collaboration with Non-Governmental Organisations. “Indirectly, as the Boko Haram members are being taken care of, the innocent citizens are guaranteed freedom from the terrorists acts perpetuated by the sect,” they reiterated. However, they contended that after granting amnesty, if any member of the sect fails to surrender, the government will then apply full military option to dislodge Boko Haram.

On the other hand, the opposition party argued that amnesty would neither give justice to victims of Boko Haram nor the Nigerian people whose image have been tarnished in the international community. They also argued that Boko Haram should not be compared to the Niger Delta militancy because the Niger Delta agitators had genuine demands while Boko Haram lacks ideological and religious inclinations.

The opposition party contended that amnesty will lead to fraud and self-aggrandizement by both the government functionaries and the leaders of the sect. According to them, such extra budgetary expenditure should be spent more profitably to alleviate poverty in the country. Furthermore, they stated that such political pardon would undermine the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the power of the Judiciary and encourage sectional militancy as well as other crimes against the society.

There was also another special exhibition on public speaking where some students spoke on the topic "I have a Dream" and shared their visions of a transformed, non-tribalistic, united, love-bounded and better Nigeria. In the Vision of a better Nigeria, was also a visual presentation by Irene Obaniyi and Nonye Ozonya showing that regardless of what may be currently happening, Nigeria is still a beautiful country with an abundance of blessings.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Charles K. Ayo, appreciated the organisers and the debaters who showed good mastery of the subject. He complemented the speakers on their dressing, articulation and eloquence which show the trait of true leaders of tomorrow.

Professor Ayo noted that though the programme was a pure academic discuss, it will help in keeping everyone informed and properly educated on national issues.

While making his contribution on the debate topic, the Vice-Chancellor stated that due to the failure on the part of the previous administration to immediately tackle the insurgency, Boko Haram was allowed to spread its operations which has in turn affected Nigeria and given her a bad image internationally, maintaining that there cannot be any meaningful development in an environment that is devoid of peace

Professor Charles Ayo urged the Federal Government to take whatever measure that is required to fight against terrorism. "Truly, the government is doing something, but the earlier we are able to put this behind us, the better," he said.

The Vice-Chancellor also advised the students to develop themselves as it goes a long way in helping them. "One thing you cannot afford not to get while in the university-no matter how good you are- if you are not able to express yourselves, it is a big challenge, regardless of your class of degree." He also promised that the Management will try to make use of subsequent holidays to give room for students to express themselves on a platform as that to discuss, a number of topical issues.

For the result of the Exhibition Debate, first position went to the closing opposition, the second position went to the opening opposition, the third position went to the opening government, while the closing government came fourth.

For the result of the Public Speaking category: Fagbemi Gbemisola came first; Tumininu Akinloye came second; while third position went to Godwin Egbe.

Other participants in the Exhibition Public Speaking were Onome Samuel, Seyi Ogunowo and Rahmon Oluwaseyi.

Also present at the programme were: the Director, Centre for Learning Resources, Dr. Chris Nkiko; Dean, College of Business and Social Sciences, Professor Francis Iyoha; University Chaplain, Pastor Charles Ihekwa as well as faculty, staff and students.

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