



# My Quest for an Internet

In this, the 30th installment of our weekly series at [emeagwali.com](http://emeagwali.com), we present Part 6/6 of Philip Emeagwali's lecture on reversing the brain drain of scientists and technologists from developing nations to the United States. It was delivered in Geneva, Switzerland on April 26, 2010.

My parents, their 35 children and grandchildren joined me in Washington, D.C. and we all became Nigerians in the Diaspora.

How Do We Reverse the Brain Drain from Africa?

by [Philip Emeagwali](http://emeagwali.com)

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Walk with me to British West Africa. The time: 1957. The setting: the bank of the River Niger in Asaba.

We were part of the Igbo Diaspora. My father was on his annual leave from his job as a nurse in Sapele.

# In 50 years, 50 percent of Nigerians will not be born within Nigeria.

We were heading to Onitsha, our ancestral hometown.

My mother, my one-year-old brother, and myself who was then three years old, sat in the front, next to the driver of a "mammy-wagon" or "*gwon gwo ro*."

My father recalled that our *gwon gwo ro* had the inscription:

"All around the world there is no place like home."

The back of our mammy-wagon was crammed with traveling traders, goats, and chickens.

When we arrived at Asaba, a steamer named "Erico" ferried us across the River Niger to Onitsha, in the Eastern region of colonial Nigeria.



In 1957, we a stern-wheeled steamer similar to this one ferried us from Asaba to Onitsha.

Ten years later, in May 1967, we were on the newly constructed bridge at Asaba, not as



vacationers but as refugees fleeing from Agbor. Another *gwon gwo ro*, with the inscription

"No condition is permanent," carried us back across the River Niger.

I claim Onitsha as my root, but I am also a Deltan in Diaspora. In the late 19th century, a young man named "Emeagwali" went to the banks of the River Niger in Onitsha and boarded a dugout canoe to Asaba.

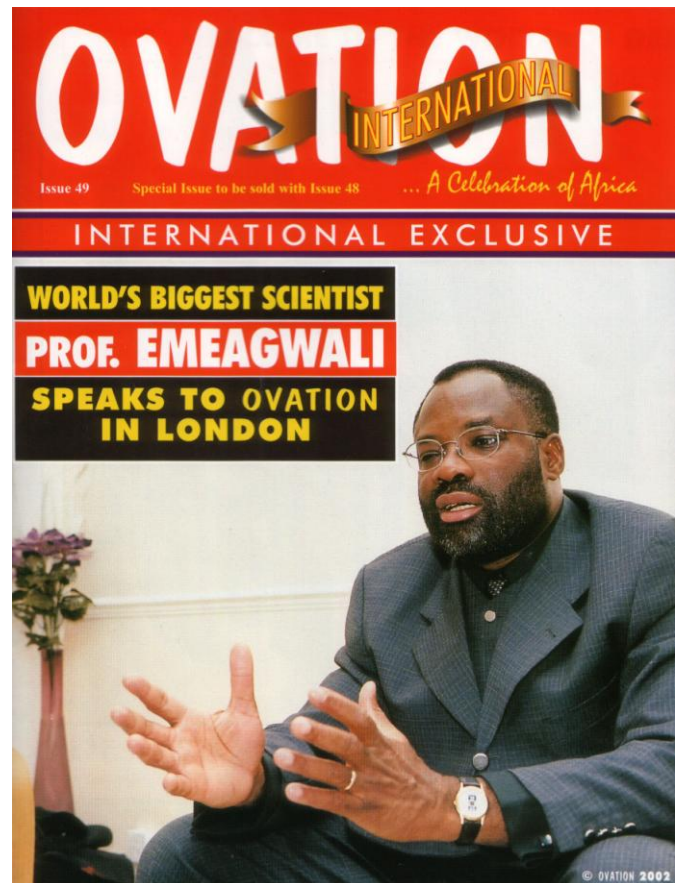
He met and fell in love with one of the daughters of the Okonta family of Asaba. They married, and 70 years later, I became their great-grand-child as well as a great-grand son of the soil of Delta state.

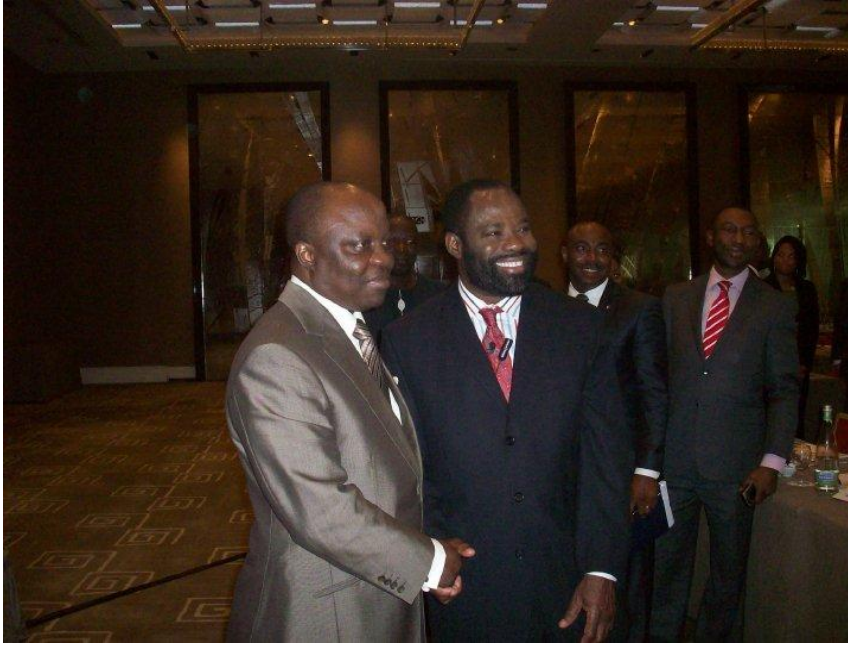
On September 21, 1973, I received a letter sent to me in Asaba. It said I had won a scholarship to America.

Six months later, I boarded Governor Samuel Ogbemudia's Midwest Line to Ikeja airport. And 48 hours later, I was in a small American town in Oregon, named "Monmouth."

Another ten years, my parents, their 35 children and grandchildren joined me in Washington, D.C. and we all became Nigerians in the Diaspora.

Nigeria is 50 years old. In 50 more years, it will be the world's third-most-populous nation, behind only China and India.





Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan [left] and I after my lecture of April 26, 2010 at the Intercontinental Geneva, Switzerland.

In 50 years, 50 percent of Nigerians will not be born within Nigeria. They will be Nigerians in the Diaspora.

You're no longer a Nigerian.

You're a Nigerian-Swiss, a Nigerian-American, or a Nigerian-Diasporan.

You are one in five Diasporan Africans that left Africa for the Americas as a result of five centuries of slave trade, colonization, and globalization.

You helped the United States flourish from the brain gain of 300 million Diasporans from Europe and Africa.

Below are lecture companion photos taken on April 26, 2010 at Intercontinental Geneva, Switzerland. The captions were as provided by the conference planner.



Gov. Uduaghan watches as Prof. Emeagwali displays a memorabilia on Delta State presented to him after his captivating address in Geneva, Switzerland.



Gov. Uduaghan and lead speaker, Prof. Philip Emeagwali, Nigerian-born world acclaimed-computer programmer and inventor of the internet.



Mrs. Moremi Soyinka-Onijala, Special Assistant to the President on Migration at the launching of the European hub of the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) programme in Geneva, Switzerland.



A cross-section of Delta Diasporans at the launching of the European hub of the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) programme in Geneva, Switzerland.



A cross-section of diplomats and guests listen to a presentation with rapt attention during the launching of the European hub of the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) programme in Geneva, Switzerland.



Mr. Gordon Bristol, Nigeria Ambassador to France in a warm handshake with Prof. Emeagwali during the launching of the European hub of the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) programme in Geneva, Switzerland.



Mr. Bernard Okumagba, Commissioner for Economic Planning with Dr. Lucky Akaruese of the University of Port Harcourt listening to a presentation with rapt attention during the launching of the European hub of the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) programme in Geneva, Switzerland.



Emeagwali captures the attention of the audience with his riveting presentation during the launching of the European hub of the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) programme in Geneva, Switzerland.



Prof. Emeagwali (right) displays a souvenir of the True Face of Delta presented to him by Gov. Uduaghan at the Delta Diaspora Direct (D3) summit held in Geneva, Switzerland



Amb. Torn York Chor, Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations, Geneva, Gov. Uduaghan, and Dr. Martins Uhomoibhi, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria Ambassador to Switzerland and Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Geneva, who was chairman of the event.



Mr. Simon Ighofose, a Deltan Diasporan in the UK, Mr. Sam Omatseye, Chairman, Editorial Board of The Nation Newspaper, Mr. Okumagba, Prof. Emeagwali, Mr. Oma Djebah, Mr. Eddy Odivwri, Member, Editorial Board of Thisday Newspaper, and Dr. Akaruese.

