



DOYIN ABIOLA , 1986 NIGERIA

Former Chair, Intregrated Microfinance Bank, Plc

“In my younger days and before my Eisenhower Fellowship experience, I was simply in awe of America and Americans. Needless to say, familiarity has dulled that awesomeness! However, my induction as an Eisenhower Fellow marked a turning point in my leadership concept which was then based on what I saw around me in my country: Nigeria.” For 1986 Eisenhower Fellow Doyin Abiola, leadership was “self-serving, arrogant and uninspiring,” becoming “a global problem in different guises” with societies whose leaders “do not inspire unlike the inspirational General Dwight Eisenhower”.



Apart from the dedicated men and women working at the EF headquarters in Philadelphia and the band of Fellows all over the world who form a unique source of personal inspiration, Abiola also remained inspired by General Eisenhower. She believed he “stood out shoulder high as one of my inspirational sources for leadership. As the Supreme Commander, he led the Allied Forces of 160,000 men in the Battle of Normandy to bring World War II to an end. He did not rest on this but became head of the American Occupation Zone in Germany, Chief of Staff, President of Columbia University, Supreme Commander of NATO, and President of the United States of America. He had his share of successes and setbacks but his remarkable attribute was that no matter the situation in which he found himself, he did not shirk his responsibilities of leadership. He led, no matter the circumstances.”

How did he do it? Abiola notes Eisenhower’s trustworthiness, empathy with those he led; and his humility with sincerity of purpose. Stories of his simplicity and refusal to be taken over by the grandeur of his office abound, but one stood out as a lesson for her. Abiola notes, “Reportedly, on a cruise around the Isle of Capri, he was shown some villas meant for him and other generals. Rather than accept the privilege of his status, he angrily refused the offer for himself and assured that no general under his command will take the offer. He led by example; simple, with no excuses.”

Abiola’s Eisenhower Fellowship brought General Eisenhower in her purview for good, and with this inspiration she has become an advocate for democratic rule in Nigeria with a group of professionals known as the Patito Gang. Despite her husband's mysterious death after the 1993 Nigerian Presidential election (which he won), Abiola continued to speak out on current (and sometimes controversial) political issues affecting the Nigerian populace. As a leading journalist, she utilized television/radio broadcasts, advertorials and interactions with political leaders to spread her message. Abiola also continues to mentor young and upcoming Nigerians and offers her professional services to those in need of them. When asked about her success, Abiola offers that “self-assessment is often self-serving, the best yardstick is the impact on the society as a whole. We are keeping hope alive for Nigerian inspirational servant leader(s) like General Eisenhower, whose badge of fellowship I wear with great pride. It is an honor and privilege to be associated with his memorial fellowship. Happy 60th anniversary and many more years to celebrate!”

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