

Wole Soyinka: Chronology and Selected Bibliography

by

guest editor

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Chronology

1934

Born Oluwole Akinwande Soyinka on 13 July 13, in Abeokuta, near Ibadan in western Nigeria. Son of Samuel Ayodele and Grace Eniola Soyinka

1946-1950

Attended the prestigious Government College in Ibadan.

1952-1954

Studied Literature and languages (French and Greek) at University College, Ibadan.

1954

Fulfilled preparatory university studies at Government College in Ibadan.

Moved to England to complete studies in drama at Leeds.

Published “Keffi’s Birthday Treat” (Short Story)

1954-1957

Attended the University of Leeds (Northern London)

Graduated with B.A. in English Honors in 1957.

1957

Olaokun (son) born in November.

Wrote “Madame Etienne’s Establishment” (Short Story), and “A Tale of Two Cities” (Short Story)

1958

Married British writer, Barbara Dixon.

1958-1959

Served as dramaturgist at the Royal Court Theater in London 1958-1959.

1960

Nigeria became an independent state.

A Dance of the Forests was first performed as part of the Nigerian Independence Celebrations, in October 1960.

Wrote "Egbe's Sworn Enemy" (Short Story), and "Toward a True Theatre" (Essay)

Received a Rockefeller research grant to study African drama, and Nigerian traditions and culture.

Returned to Nigeria.

Established the theatre group called "The 1960 Masks."

1962

Served as Lecturer in English at the University of Ife.

Resigned from the post in protest of the undemocratic public policies of the Western Nigerian regional government.

1963

Married Nigerian librarian, Olaide Idowu

Moremi (son) is born in February.

1964

Became very active in Nigerian Politics.

Founded the Drama Association of Nigeria.

Created the Orisun Theatre Company.

1965

Became Senior Lecturer at the University of Lagos.

Briefly arrested for political activism.

Published *The Interpreters* (Novel)

1966

Nigerian Civil War begins

1967-1969

Published a controversial article demanding cease-fire during the Nigerian Civil War.

Accused of conspiring with the Biafra rebels.

Held in the Kaduna prison in northern Nigeria for 22 months as a political prisoner.

1967

Published *Idanre and Other Poems* (Collection) (Poetry)

Awarded the John Writing Drama Award

1968

Awarded the Jock Campbell-New Statesman Literary Award for his first novel, *The Interpreters*.

1969

Released from Prison in 1969.

Became Head of the Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Ibadan.

Published *Poems from Prison* (collection) (Poetry), and “The Writer in a Modern African State” (Essay)

1970

Forced into exile.

1971

Resigned from his University Post.

Settled in Accra, Ghana.

Published *A Shuttle in the Crypt* (collection) (Poetry)

Wrote *Before the Blackout* (Play)

1972

Published *The Man Died: The Prison Notes of Wole Soyinka* (Autobiography). (The memoir was banned in Nigeria in 1984.)

Awarded an honorary PhD from University of Leeds.

1973

Served as Visiting Professor at the University of Sheffield and Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge.

The National Theatre in London premiered the play, *The Bacchae of Euripides*.

Wrote *A Dance of the Forests: The Swamp Dwellers; The Strong Breed: The Road; The Bacchae of Euripides (Collected Plays I)* (Play)

Published *Season of Anomy* (Novel)

1974

Cofounded the Union of Writers of the African Peoples and is elected Secretary General.

Wrote *The Lion and the Jewel; Kongi's Harvest; The Trials of Brother Jero; Jero's Metamorphosis; Madmen and Specialists. (Collected Plays II), Before the Blackout and Camwood on the Leaves* (Play), and *Camwood on the Leaves* (Play)

1975

Returned to Nigeria.

Appointed Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Ife.

Wrote “Death and the King's Horseman” (Play)

Published “Neo-Tarzanism: The Poetics of Pseudo-Tradition” (Play), and *Poems of Black Africa* (Poetry)

1976

The French translation of the play, *The Dance of The Forests*, was performed in Dakar, Senegal.

Wrote "Ogun Abibiman (collection)" (Poetry)

Published *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Essay)

1977

Served as Administrator of the International Festival of African and Negro Arts and Culture (FESTAC) in Lagos, Nigeria.

1978

Published "Language as Boundary" (Essay)

1981

Became Visiting Professor at Yale University.

Published *Aké: The Years of Childhood* (Autobiography)

Wrote "Opera Wonyosi" (Play)

1982

Released the film *Blues for the Prodigal*.

Published "Cross Currents: The 'New African' After Cultural Encounters" (Essay)

1983

His memoir, *Aké: The Years of Childhood* won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award.

Wrote "Requiem for a Futurologist" (Play)

Published "Shakespeare and the Living Dramatist" (Essay)

1984

Wrote "Sixty-Six," and "A Play of Giants" (Play)

1985

Delivered the, "Climates of Art" for the Herbert Read Memorial Lecture at the Institute of Contemporary Art (London).

Named President of UNESCO's International Theatre Institute.

1986

Soyinka became the first African to win the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Received the Agip Prize for Literature.

Conferred with The Nigerian National honour of Commander of the Federal Republic (CFR)

Became Fellow, Society for the Humanities at Cornell University.

Published "The External Encouter: Ambivalence in African Arts and Literature" (Essay)

1988

Published *Art, Dialogue, and Courage: Essays on Literature and Culture* (Essay)

Wrote "Mandela's Earth and Other Poems" (Poem)

1989

Married AdeFolake Doherty

Published *Isarà, A Voyage Around "Essay"* (Autobiography)

1990

Became the n leader of movement against the military dictatorship in Nigeria.

Received the UK Royal Society of Literature's Benson Medal.

Published *The Blackman and the Veil: A Century on; And, Beyond the Berlin Wall* (Essay)

1991

Broadcast on BBC Radio 4 *A Scourge of Hyacinths*.

1992

Wrote "From Zia with Love" (Play)

1993

Received honorary doctorate from Harvard University.

1994

Fled Nigeria

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) named Wole Soyinka a Goodwill Ambassador for the promotion of African culture, human rights and freedom of expression.

The Nigerian government of General Sani Abacha confiscated his passport.

Published *Ibadan: The Penkelemes Years, A Memoir: 1946-1965* (Autobiography)

1995

Protested against the cancellation by the military regime of the federal elections won by Moshood Abiola.

Launches an international campaign against the Nigerian dictatorship.

1996

Forced into exile from Nigeria.

Appointed as Robert W. Woodruff Professor of the Arts of Emory University.

Published *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis*. The book is named one of the 25 best books by The Village Voice.

Wrote "The Beatification of Area Boy" (Play)

1997

Charged (in March) with treason and sentenced to death in *absentia* by the Nigerian military regime of Sani Abacha.

Published *Early Poems* (Poetry)

1998

Returns to Nigeria.

1999

Published *The Burden of Memory, The Muse of Forgiveness* (Essay)

2000

Published *The Credo of Being and Nothingness* (Essay)

2001

The play *King Baabu* premiered in Lagos.

Conversations with Wole Soyinka edited by Biodun Jeyifo (Essay)

Wrote "King Baabu" (Play)

2004

Wrote *Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World* (Essay)

2005

Conferred with the chieftaincy title of Akinlatun of Egbaland

2006

Published *You Must Set Forth at Dawn: A Memoir* (Autobiography)

2009

Received the Academy of Achievement Golden Plate Award in the United States.

2011

Wrote *Alapata Apata* (Play)

2012

Won Obafemi Awolowo Leadership Award on December 19

2013

Won the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award (for lifetime achievement)

2014

Won the Internationalist Humanist Award from the International Humanist and Ethical Union and the British Humanist Association.