

GENERAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING

THE ROLES OF CHIEF OBAFEMI AWOLOWO IN THE HISTORY OF NIGERIA

Chief Obafemi Awolowo was born in Ikenne, Ogun State on the 6th of March, 1909. The son of a peasant, Chief Awolowo first studied to be a teacher and later worked as a clerk, trader and journalist while organizing trade unions and participating in national politics as a nationalist leader. Chief Awolowo as a nationalist leader agitated for the independence of Nigeria from the British colonial master and called for immediate independence of Nigeria.

In 1951, he founded a political party, the Action Group and became the first party's president. Chief Awolowo was elected the first premier of the Western region. Awolowo worked to improve education by providing free education, creating social services such as good roads (dualized road), pipe-borne water, scholarship opportunities for the people of the Western region, he also, provide good agricultural policies practices which improved the lives of the farmers. He established the first television station in Africa in the Western region. He built Cocoa house which was a twenty-seven storey building.

Chief Awolowo during the Nigerian civil war supported the Federal Government of Nigeria. Between 1967 – 1970, Chief Awolowo was a federal commissioner for finance and vice chairman of the Federal Executive Council. He was Chancellor of the University of Ife now Obafemi Awolowo University and Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. Chief Awolowo established Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and he contested twice for the post of president in 1979 and 1983 and he lost to Alhaji Shehu Shagari. Awolowo was also the leader of the Yoruba race.

Chief Awolowo retired from politics in 1984. He was an important figure in Nigeria history, he was a socialist in practice. His ideas and accomplishments continue to influence Nigerian politics. He was an author and wrote many books such as The Autobiography of Chief Obafemi Awolowo (1960) and thoughts on Nigerian Constitution in 1966. He died on May 9th, 1987 at Ikenne, Ogun State.