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Special Release

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OBITUARY

PROFESSOR ISIDORE OKPEWHO (09 November, 1941 – 04 September, 2016)

The Vice-Chancellor, Professor Idowu Olayinka, FAS, announces with deep regret, the passing on of Professor Isidore Okpewho which occurred on 4 September 2016. Professor Isidore Okpewho was born on 09 November, 1941 in Agbor, Delta State, Nigeria. He grew up in Asaba, his maternal hometown, where he attended St Patrick's College.

Late Professor Okpewho proceeded to the University College, Ibadan, for his university education. He graduated with First Class Honours in Classics, and moved on to launch a glorious career: first in publishing at Longman Publishers, and then as an academic after obtaining his Ph.D. from the University of Denver, USA. He crowned his certification with a D.Litt from University of London. He returned to his alma mater to teach in the Department of English till the mid-1990s. He retired from Ibadan to teach at Harvard University USA, and later at the State University of New York in Binghamton, USA.

As a scholar of African oral literature, he published two seminal books - *The Epic in Africa: Toward a Poetics of the Oral Performance* (1979) and *Myth in Africa: A Study of Its Aesthetic and Cultural Relevance* (1983), to critical acclaim. He was a prolific author, co-author and editor of about 14 books, dozens of articles, including the equally influential inaugural lecture, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Scholar". His latest book, published by the University of Rochester Press, is entitled *Blood on the Tides: The Ozidi Saga and Oral Epic Narratology*.

Professor Okpewho was the winner of numerous awards and scholarships at various international institutions including the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars (1982), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (1982), the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford (1988), the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard (1990), National Humanities Center in North Carolina (1997), and the Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (2003). He was also elected Folklore Fellow International by the Finnish Academy of the

Sciences in Helsinki (1993). He was honoured with the Nigerian National Order of Merit (NNOM), in Humanities for the year 2010.

For his creative writing work, Late Professor Okpewho won the 1976 African Arts Prize for Literature and 1993 Commonwealth Writers' Prize Best Book Africa. His four novels, *The Victims*, *The Last Duty*, *Tides*, and *Call me by my Rightful Name* are widely studied in colleges and universities within and outside Africa. He was a one-time Head of the Department of English, University of Ibadan, and the President of the International Society for the Oral Literatures of Africa (ISOLA).

He was Africa's most acknowledged scholar of Oral Literature, an accomplished novelist, editor, and the composer of the University of Ibadan's anthem, "the Fount". Professor Isidore Okpewho, at the time of his death on Sunday, September 4, 2016, was a Distinguished Professor of Literature at State University of New York, Binghamton, USA.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Obiageli Okpewho and four children. Funeral arrangements will be announced by the Okpewho family.

May his soul rest in peace.

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