



FIFTY @ FIFTY

(Series 3 of 3)

Fifty Living Legends from
Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo States

Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo States at 50



INTRODUCTION

As Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo States celebrate their golden jubilee, we recognize that a state's greatness is not measured merely in infrastructure and institutions, but in the quality of human beings it produces. These fifty living icons—carefully selected from politics, arts, sports, business, traditional leadership, and academia—represent the finest expressions of what these three states have contributed to Nigeria and the world over five decades.

This chronicle presents seventeen icons from Oyo State, seventeen from Ogun State, and sixteen from Ondo State. Each profile comprises exactly three sentences: the first establishes their primary achievement and current status, the second details their contribution to their field and beyond, and the third highlights what makes them uniquely remarkable. Together, these fifty individuals span generations—from nonagenarian Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka to rising stars like Fireboy DML—demonstrating the continuity of excellence across time.

These are not merely successful individuals; they are pathbreakers who shattered barriers, pioneers who created new possibilities, and exemplars who inspire millions. Their stories, told concisely here, illuminate fifty years of human achievement emerging from these three remarkable states.



PART ONE: OYO

SEVENTEEN ICONS OF THE PACE SETTER STATE

From Ibadan's sprawling urban landscape to Ogbomoso's cultural heartland, Oyo State has produced leaders, artists, and innovators who have shaped Nigeria's trajectory. These seventeen individuals represent the state's diversity—from governance to entertainment, from traditional leadership to international stardom, from academia to sports.

Governor Oluseyi Abiodun Makinde

Ibadan, Oyo State | Politics & Business | Born December 25, 1967



Governor Makinde, currently serving his second term as Executive Governor of Oyo State since 2019, represents a new generation of technically skilled political leaders transforming governance in southwestern Nigeria. An MIT-trained engineer and former Shell Petroleum professional, he founded Makon Group Nigeria Limited before entering politics, bringing private sector efficiency to public administration. His unique blend of technical expertise, business acumen, and political leadership has enabled implementation of major infrastructure projects including the Ibadan Circular Road and comprehensive healthcare reforms across Oyo State.

Oba Rashidi Adewolu Ladoja — The Olubadan of Ibadanland

Ibadan, Oyo State | Traditional Leadership, Politics & Business | Born September 25, 1944



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Helen Folasade Adu CBE (Sade Adu)

Born in Ibadan, Oyo State | International Music (Pop/Soul) | Born January 16, 1959



Sade Adu, the first Nigerian-born artist to win a Grammy Award (Best New Artist, 1986), has sold over 110 million albums worldwide, establishing herself as a global music icon whose smooth, sophisticated sound transcends cultural boundaries. A four-time Grammy winner (1986, 1994, 2002, 2011) appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 2017, she created timeless hits including "Smooth Operator" and "No Ordinary Love" that continue influencing generations of artists globally. Her unique ability to blend soul, jazz, and African influences while maintaining commercial appeal demonstrates Oyo State's contribution to global cultural conversation.

Bimbo Akintola

Ibadan, Oyo State | Film & Theatre | Born May 5, 1970



Award-winning Nollywood actress Bimbo Akintola has maintained a nearly 30-year career spanning over 150 films, bringing dramatic depth and professionalism to Nigerian cinema. Trained at the prestigious London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA), she won Best Actress at the 2015 Eko International Film Festival and starred in internationally acclaimed productions including 93 Days (2016) and The Black Book (2023). Her commitment to theatrical training and consistent delivery of nuanced performances makes her one of Nigeria's most respected dramatic actresses, bridging Nollywood's commercial success with artistic excellence.

Senator Monsurat Oluranti Sunmonu

Oyo Town, Oyo State | Politics | Born 1960



Senator Sunmonu, a pioneer in Nigerian women's political leadership, became both the first female Speaker of Oyo State House of Assembly and subsequently the first female Senator from Oyo State (Oyo Central, 2011-2015). Her trailblazing career broke multiple glass ceilings in a traditionally male-dominated political landscape, opening pathways for women's participation in governance. Her legacy extends beyond personal achievement to institutional change, as her tenure inspired a generation of women who now compete for and win political office across Nigeria.

Professor Wande Abimbola — Awise Awo Agbaye

Oyo Town, Oyo State | Academia, Traditional Religion & Politics | Born December 24, 1932



At 93 years old, Professor Abimbola remains the world's foremost authority on Ifá divination, holding the title Àwísẹ̀ Awo Àgbàyé (World Spokesperson for Ifá) and serving as the global custodian of this UNESCO-recognized Yoruba intellectual tradition. A former Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ife (now Obafemi Awolowo University) and former Senate Majority Leader of Nigeria, he uniquely combines academic scholarship, traditional religious authority, and political leadership. His scholarly works documenting Ifá oral literature have become essential texts for understanding Yoruba philosophy, cosmology, and cultural practices, ensuring this ancient knowledge system survives into the digital age.

Laolu Ogunniyi

Ibadan, Oyo State | Theatre, Television & Academia | Born 1945



Laolu Ogunniyi is a pioneering Nigerian playwright, producer, director, and academic best known as the creator of Nigeria's first television soap opera, *Winds Against My Soul* (1979). Inspired by early exposure to television in 1959 and shaped by Ibadan's vibrant Mbari Mbayo cultural circle, he developed a passion for drama and broadcasting. Trained in England, including at the BBC, he returned to Nigeria in 1974 to transform television production. Through theatre, television, and cultural advocacy, he preserved Yoruba heritage and helped lay foundations for Nollywood. A respected educator and award recipient, Ogunniyi remains influential in media, culture, and social development.

Chief Lekan Alabi — Maye Olubadan of Ibadanland

Ibadan, Oyo State | Journalism, Media & Culture | Born Early 1950s



Veteran journalist, author, and cultural custodian Chief Lekan Alabi holds the prestigious title of Maye Olubadan of Ibadanland, one of the senior chieftaincy positions in Nigeria's largest indigenous city. A prolific writer and public relations expert, he has dedicated his career to preserving and promoting Ibadan's rich cultural heritage through journalism, documentation, and traditional leadership. His unique position straddling modern media and traditional authority enables him to interpret Ibadan's history and culture for contemporary audiences while maintaining its authentic character.

Dr. Saheed Osupa — King of Fuji

Ibadan, Oyo State | Music (Fuji) | Born 1965



Dr. Saheed Osupa, one of Nigeria's most influential Fuji musicians, has dominated this uniquely Yoruba musical genre for three decades, earning the honorary title "King of Fuji Music" and multiple awards. His innovative style, which incorporates contemporary themes while maintaining Fuji's percussive foundation and Islamic influences, has kept the genre relevant to younger generations. His continued ability to release albums and perform to massive audiences across Nigeria and the diaspora demonstrates Fuji music's enduring appeal and Oyo State's ongoing contribution to Yoruba popular culture.

Afeez Oyetoro (Saka)

Iseyin, Oyo State | Acting, Comedy & Academia | Born 1965



Afeez Oyetoro, a university lecturer in Theatre Arts who became one of Nigeria's most beloved comic actors through his iconic "Saka" character, has served as brand ambassador for MTN and other major corporations. His career uniquely bridges academia and entertainment, bringing scholarly understanding of performance to popular comedy while maintaining his university teaching position. This dual identity—serious academic by day, beloved comedian by night—demonstrates that intellectual depth and popular entertainment need not be mutually exclusive.

Barrister Bolaji Ayorinde SAN

Ibadan, Oyo State | Law | Born 1960s



A distinguished Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN), Barrister Ayorinde serves as Chairman of the Oyo State Advisory Council and is renowned for constitutional law practice and involvement in landmark cases shaping Nigeria's legal landscape. His expertise spans litigation, arbitration, and governance advisory, making him a sought-after counsel for high-stakes constitutional matters and commercial disputes. His role advising state government on legal and constitutional issues demonstrates how senior lawyers contribute to governance beyond courtroom advocacy.

Professor Toyin Falola

Born in Ibadan, Oyo State | Professor of African History | Born January 1, 1953



Professor Toyin Omoyeni Falola is Africa's most prolific historian and a global authority on African studies. Holding the Jacob and Frances Sanger Mossiker Chair in the Humanities at the University of Texas at Austin, he has authored and edited over 100 books spanning African history, culture, politics, and diaspora studies. A Fellow of the Nigerian Academy of Letters and past president of the African Studies Association, Falola is celebrated for reshaping African historiography. His scholarship, teaching, and mentorship have influenced generations, making him a living legend of intellectual leadership.

Chief Lere Paimo

Ogbomoso, Oyo State | Theatre & Film (Yoruba/Nollywood) | Born 1939



Chief Lere Paimo, popularly known as “Eda Onile Ola,” is a legendary figure in the Yoruba theatre and film industry. Born in Ogbomoso in 1939, he began as a teacher before joining the renowned theatre troupes of Oyin Adejobi and Duro Ladipo in the 1960s. His iconic role in Eda earned him a lifelong nickname and inspired the founding of his Eda Theatre Company in 1973. A pioneer of Yoruba popular theatre, he blended tradition with innovation, elevating stagecraft and storytelling. Honoured with the national award of Member of the Federal Republic (MFR), Paimo remains a revered cultural ambassador.

Jacob Olabode Amao

Ibadan, Oyo State | Manufacturing, Engineering & Philanthropy | Born 1932



Chief Jacob Olabode “Bode” Amao (1932–) rose from early hardship in Ibadan to become a pioneering Nigerian industrialist and philanthropist. After losing his father young and facing educational setbacks, he trained as an automobile engineer and built a thriving repair business in Kano before expanding into electronics distribution and manufacturing in Lagos. As founder of Achievers Electricals and the JOAS Group, he became a licensed distributor of Sony products and established major factories, including Bodefoam. A community leader and Asiwaju of Ibadanland, he invested heavily in education through the Bode Amao Foundation, supporting hundreds of students and institutions.

9ice (Abolore Adigun Akande)

Ogbomoso, Oyo State | Music (Hip-Hop/Afrobeats) | Born January 17, 1980



Pioneer of the fusion of Yoruba traditional sounds with modern hip-hop, 9ice achieved pan-African success with his 2008 hit "Gongo Aso," which won multiple awards and became an anthem across the continent. A former Special Adviser to the Governor of Oyo State and recent ambassador for the Ogbomoso Cradles Carnival (2024), he combines musical artistry with cultural ambassadorship and public service. His unique sound, incorporating Yoruba proverbs and traditional percussion into contemporary hip-hop, influenced a generation of Nigerian artists seeking to maintain cultural authenticity while achieving commercial success.

Professor Olanike Kudirat Adeyemo

Ibadan, Oyo State | Academia, Veterinary Science & Governance | Born 1960s



Professor Adeyemo, a Professor of Veterinary Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the University of Ibadan, became the first female in Aquatic Veterinary Medicine in Nigeria, pioneering a specialized field critical to Nigeria's aquaculture development. She served as inaugural Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation and Strategic Partnership) at UI and currently serves as Secretary to the State Government (SSG) of Oyo State since July 2023. Her trajectory from academic pioneering through university administration to state governance exemplifies how technical expertise can inform policy-making at the highest levels.

Funmi Iyanda

Father from Ogbomoso, Oyo State | Media & Broadcasting | Born July 27, 1971



Award-winning television presenter and media entrepreneur Funmi Iyanda created "New Dawn with Funmi"—the longest-running independently produced show on NTA (8+ years)—revolutionizing Nigerian talk show format and content. Named among Forbes' "20 Youngest Powerful Women in Africa" (2011), a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader, one of BBC's 100 Women (2014), and UN Women Gender Equality Champion, she has achieved international recognition for media excellence and gender advocacy. She founded OYA Media and continues using media platforms to address social issues, demonstrate investigative journalism, and amplify marginalized voices.

PART TWO:

OGUN STATE SEVENTEEN ICONS OF THE GATEWAY STATE



Ogun State, true to its "Gateway" designation, has produced individuals who opened doors that others walked through. From Nobel Laureates to business titans, from world record holders to entertainment moguls, these seventeen icons demonstrate the state's remarkable human capital development over fifty years.

Chief Olusegun Obasanjo GCFR

Ibogun-Olaogun, Abeokuta North LGA, Ogun State | Politics & Governance | Born March 5, 1937



Former President of Nigeria (1999-2007) and former Military Head of State (1976-1979), Chief Obasanjo became the first African military leader to voluntarily hand over power to a civilian government, setting a precedent for democratic transitions across the continent. A founding member of the Peoples Democratic Party and holder of multiple traditional titles including Balogun of Owu, he remains Africa's most prominent elder statesman at 87 years old, actively engaged in continental diplomacy through the Africa Leadership Forum and agricultural development at his Ota Farm. His unique distinction of leading Nigeria in both military and civilian capacities, combined with his post-presidency role as continental mediator, makes him one of Africa's most consequential leaders in the past half-century.

Professor Wole Soyinka — Nobel Laureate

Abeokuta (from Aké), Ogun State | Literature, Theatre & Academia | Born July 13, 1934



First African and Black person to win the Nobel Prize in Literature (1986), Professor Soyinka at 91 years old remains a global literary titan, activist, and fearless critic of tyranny whose works have been translated into dozens of languages and performed on stages worldwide. The National Theatre in Lagos was renamed "Wole Soyinka Centre for Culture and Creative Arts" in October 2025 in his honor, recognizing his transformative impact on African literature and theatre. He continues teaching at NYU Abu Dhabi and speaking truth to power—most recently criticizing the Trump administration in November 2025—demonstrating that his commitment to justice and human dignity remains undiminished despite advancing age.

Oba Adedotun Aremu Gbadebo III CFR — Alake of Egbaland

Abeokuta, Ogun State | Traditional Leadership & Business | Born 1943



The 10th Alake of Egbaland since November 2005, celebrating his 20th coronation anniversary in 2025, previously served as Chairman of Oando Plc for 18 years, bringing corporate governance experience to traditional leadership. He is the first and only Alake in history to maintain a monogamous marriage throughout his reign, modernizing aspects of traditional rulership while preserving cultural essence. At 82 years old, he remains a champion of cultural preservation and modern governance in traditional institutions, demonstrating that monarchy and modernity need not conflict.

Dr. Michael Adeniyi Agbolade Ishola Adenuga Jr. GCON

Ijebu-Igbo, Ogun State | Business & Telecommunications | Born April 29, 1953



Africa's second-richest person with a net worth of approximately \$6.9 billion (Forbes 2024), Dr. Adenuga is Founder and Chairman of Globacom (Nigeria's second-largest telecom with 60+ million subscribers) and Conoil Producing—the first Nigerian to strike oil commercially. He built the Glo-1 submarine cable connecting Nigeria to the UK across 6,100 miles, bringing affordable internet connectivity to West Africa and reducing dependence on foreign telecommunications infrastructure. Recipient of France's Commander of the Legion of Honour (2018), his business empire demonstrates that Nigerian entrepreneurs can compete globally while his telecommunications investments have democratized access to mobile and internet services across West Africa.

Tunde Kelani (TK)

Town: Abeokuta | Field: Film & Cinematography | Born: 1948



One of Nigeria's most celebrated film directors, with a 50+ year career documenting Yoruba culture through cinema. His culturally significant films include Saworoide, Thunderbolt (Magun), and Ti Oluwa Nile. At 77 years old, Kelani continues creating films and mentoring the next generation of Nigerian filmmakers from his Abeokuta base.

Chief Segun Odegbami MON, OLY

Wasinmi, Ogun State (born in Abeokuta) | Field: Sports (Football) | Born: 1952



Key player in Nigeria's first Africa Cup of Nations victory (1980) and joint top scorer at that tournament. With 46 caps and 23 goals for Nigeria, "Mathematical" Odegbami founded SOCA (Segun Odegbami International College and Sports Academy). Named First Grand Sports Ambassador of Ogun State, he continues broadcasting on Eagle 7 Sports Radio and writing sports columns.

Pastor Tunde Bakare

Abeokuta | Field: Religion & Civic Leadership | Born: 1954



Founder and Serving Overseer of The Citadel Global Community Church (formerly Latter Rain Assembly) and former Vice-Presidential candidate (2011). Known for his fearless prophetic voice on Nigerian national affairs, Pastor Bakare combines pastoral leadership with political activism, making him one of Nigeria's most influential religious leaders.

Taiwo Hassan (Ogogo)

Ilaro, Ogun State | Field: Acting | Born: 1959



Veteran Nollywood actor, filmmaker, and action star with decades of experience in Nigerian cinema. Known for his physical prowess and versatility, Ogogo has appeared in hundreds of films and helped establish the action genre in Yoruba cinema. He remains active in film production and mentorship of younger actors.

Funke Akindele MFR

Family from Ogun State | Film, Acting & Production | Born August 24, 1977



Nigeria's highest-grossing film director with over ₦2.9 billion in total box office receipts, Funke Akindele's December 2024 release "Everybody Loves Jenifa" grossed ₦1 billion in just 19 days, shattering Nigerian cinema records. An Oscar Academy Member since 2022 and AMVCA record holder for most wins by an actress, she was named among Hollywood Reporter's "Most Influential Women in International Film" (2025). Her Jenifa franchise has become a Nigerian cultural phenomenon spanning film, television, and social commentary, demonstrating how entertainment can address social issues while achieving massive commercial success.

TY Bello (Toyin Sokefun-Bello)

Born in Ogun State | Field: Music, Photography & Philanthropy | Born: 1978



Award-winning gospel singer, celebrity photographer, and humanitarian. She served as official photographer for former President Goodluck Jonathan Answers Africa and famously discovered and launched supermodel Olajumoke Orisaguna. Director of the Link-a-Child NGO, Alchetron TY Bello continues releasing acclaimed worship albums including *The Spirit of Light* (2024).

Asa (Bukola Elemide)

Itoko, Abeokuta South LGA | Field: Music (Soul/Afro-fusion) | Born: 1982



Nigeria's Queen of Soul, the Nigerian-French singer Manpower won France's prestigious Prix Constantin (2008). Her genre-defying music, fusing soul, jazz, and Afro-fusion, has earned her chart-topping albums across Europe and a devoted global fanbase. She continues performing internationally and recording between Nigeria and France.

Tobi Amusan OON — World Record Holder

Ijebu-Ode, Ogun State | Athletics (Track & Field) | Born April 23, 1997



World Record Holder in 100m hurdles (12.12 seconds) and first Nigerian World Champion in athletics (2022 World Championships), Tobi Amusan achieved what many thought impossible for Nigerian track athletes. A three-time Diamond League Champion (2021-2023), three-time Commonwealth Games Champion, and Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON), she was named Forbes Africa's 2022 Sports Personality of the Year. Her achievements represent the pinnacle of Nigerian athletic excellence and have inspired a generation of young Nigerian athletes, particularly women, to pursue track and field at the highest international levels.

Prince Dapo Abiodun MFR

Iperu-Remo, Ikenne LGA | Field: Politics, Governance & Business | Born: 1960



Current Governor of Ogun State Opera News (since 2019, re-elected in 2023). A recipient of Forbes Award for Best of Africa Governor in Industrial Revolution (2022), Abiodun previously served as Chairman of the Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC) and built successful businesses in oil and gas before entering politics.

Fireboy DML (Adedamola Adefolahan)

Abeokuta | Field: Music (Afrobeats) | Born: February 5, 1996



Multi-platinum Afrobeats star whose "Peru" remix with Ed Sheeran peaked at #2 on UK Charts and charted on the Billboard Hot 100. His song "Scatter" featured on the FIFA 21 soundtrack, and "Coming Back For You" appeared on the Black Panther: Wakanda Forever soundtrack. Wikipedia At 29, Fireboy represents the global breakthrough of Nigerian music.

Kizz Daniel (Oluwatobiloba Daniel Anidugbe)

Abeokuta North LGA | Field: Music (Afrobeats) | Born: May 1, 1994



An Afrobeats superstar who performed "Buga" at the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar, is one of Nigeria's biggest musical moments on the global stage. His hits including "Woju," "Buga," and "Cough" have dominated charts across Africa and internationally. Founder of Flyboy I.N.C record.

Olamide Baddo (Olamide Gbenga Adedeji)

Ijebu, Ogun State | Field: Music & Entertainment Entrepreneurship | Born: March 15, 1989



First Nigerian/African rapper nominated at the Grammy Awards (66th Annual, 2023, for "Amapiano" with Asake). Named a Billboard Global Power Player (2025), Olamide founded YBNL Nation, the label that discovered and launched Fireboy DML, Asake, Adekunle Gold, and Lil Kesh. He has transformed Nigerian hip-hop and built one of Africa's most successful independent record labels.

John Boyega

Family from Ogun State | Field: Acting (Hollywood) | Born: March 17, 1992



First Black protagonist in the Star Wars franchise (Finn), Golden Globe winner for Best Supporting Actor (2021, *Small Axe*), and BAFTA Rising Star Award recipient (2016). Screendollars Based in the UK, Boyega maintains strong Nigerian cultural connections and has partnered with Netflix to produce African content through UpperRoom Productions.



PART THREE: ONDO STATE

SIXTEEN ICONS OF THE SUNSHINE STATE

Ondo State, the "Sunshine State," has produced icons whose achievements illuminate Nigeria and the world. From music legends to wrestling champions, from Hollywood actors to technology pioneers, these sixteen individuals demonstrate the breadth of excellence emerging from Nigeria's southeastern coast.

Chief Sunday Adeniyi Adegeye MFR (King Sunny Adé)

Ondo Town, Ondo State | Music (Juju) | Born September 22, 1946



The King of Juju Music and first Nigerian Grammy Award nominee (1983, 1998), King Sunny Adé pioneered the globalization of African music, becoming the first African pop musician to achieve significant international success decades before Afrobeats conquered global charts. A Member of the Federal Republic (MFR), he transformed traditional Juju music by incorporating pedal steel guitar and synthesizers while maintaining its percussion-driven foundation and Yoruba lyrical content. At 78 years old, he continues performing—most recently confirming in April 2025 that he is "alive and well" and scheduled for performances in Akure—demonstrating the enduring appeal of authentic African sounds.

Oba Aladetoyinbo Ogunlade Aladelusi, Odundun II — Deji of Akure

Akure | Field: Traditional Leadership | Born: 1956



The 47th Deji of Akure Kingdom since 2015 Wikipedia and Chairman of the Ondo State Council of Traditional Rulers (since 2021). Campus Reporter An architect by profession with a Master's degree from Morgan State University, USA, Campus Reporter the Deji celebrated his 10th coronation anniversary in July 2025. Ondostate He represents the integration of modern education with traditional leadership.

Dr. Olusegun Abayomi Rahman Mimiko

Ondo Town, Ondo West LGA | Field: Politics & Medicine | Born: October 3, 1954



First two-term democratically elected Governor of Ondo State (2009–2017) and the first Labour Party Governor in Nigeria. A medical doctor who also served as Federal Minister of Housing and Urban Development, Mimiko is the longest-serving governor in Ondo State history and the only living former democratically elected governor of the state.

Governor Lucky Orimisan Aiyedatiwa

Obe-Nla, Ilaje | Field: Politics & Business | Born: 1965



Current Governor of Ondo State (sworn in December 27, 2023, following Governor Akeredolu's death; re-elected November 2024). A business development professional and former NDDC Federal Commissioner, Ondostate Aiyedatiwa represents the riverine Ilaje people, a historically underrepresented community, in Ondo State's highest office.

Chief Michael Ade. Ojo OON

Ilara-Mokin | Field: Business & Education | Born: June 14, 1938



|| Nigeria's Mr. Toyota" Ovation Magazine and founder of Elizade Group (Nigeria's no.1 Toyota dealer since 1971) and Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin. At 86 years old, Chief Ade-Ojo's conglomerate includes Toyota Nigeria, RT Briscoe Nigeria, Crow Motors, The News Chronicle and Smokin Hills Golf Resort. He invested \$50 million in a vehicle assembly plant and remains active, celebrating his 86th birthday in June 2024 with his famous dancing videos.

Dr. Omotola Jalade Ekeinde MFR

Ondo Town, Ondo State (Parents from Ondo) | Acting, Film & Philanthropy | Born February 7, 1978



Named among TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People in the World (2013)—the first Nollywood actress to receive this honor—Omotola has appeared in over 300 films and was the first African celebrity to reach 1 million Facebook likes. An Oscar Academy voting member since 2018 and Member of the Federal Republic (MFR), she serves as a UN World Food Programme Ambassador, using her platform to address hunger and malnutrition across Africa. Her combination of commercial success, international recognition, and humanitarian work demonstrates how entertainment celebrities can leverage fame for social impact while maintaining artistic productivity.

Mosunmola 'Mo' Abudu

Ondo Town, Ondo State | Media & Entertainment | Born September 11, 1964



First African woman to launch a Pan-African TV channel as Founder and CEO of EbonyLife Media, Mo Abudu has secured groundbreaking Netflix partnerships for original African content, creating pathways for African stories to reach global audiences. Listed among Hollywood Reporter's "25 Most Powerful Women in Global Television," she received the WISCAR Distinguished Award (2024) and holds honorary doctorates from Babcock University and the University of Westminster. Her transformation from talk show host to media mogul pioneering African content on global streaming platforms demonstrates entrepreneurial vision that has created employment for thousands while changing global perceptions of African storytelling.

Ayodeji Richard "AY" Makun

Ifon, Ose LGA | Field: Comedy, Acting & Film Production | Born: August 19, 1971



Most followed African comedian on social media Nigerian Informer (20M+ followers) and UN Peace Ambassador (2009). His film 30 Days in Atlanta entered the Guinness Book of World Records as the highest-grossing Nollywood film at its release. Founder of AY Live, Nigerian Informer Africa's largest comedy show, he continues producing blockbuster films including The Waiter (December 2024).

Simisola "Simi" Ogunleye Kosoko

Ondo State (born in Lagos) | Field: Music & Sound Engineering | Born: April 19, 1988



Multiple Headies Award winner including Album of the Year and Best Vocal Performance. Simi charted on the Billboard World Albums chart and is the first female sound engineer to produce a major Nigerian album. Founder of Studio Brat record label and a Nigerian Idol judge, she represents the new generation of multifaceted Nigerian artists. Married to Afrobeats star Adekunle Gold.

Yemi Eberechi Alade

Ikun Akoko, Ondo State | Field: Music (Afropop) | Born: March 13, 1989



First Nigerian female artist to reach 1 million YouTube subscribers (2019) and the first Afrobeats artist with a Latin Grammy nomination (2022). Multiple MTV Africa Music Awards winner, the first female to win consecutively, with over 158 million views on "Johnny." She earned a 2022 Grammy nomination with Angelique Kidjo and a 2025 Grammy nomination for Best African Music Performance. She performed the AFCON 2023 theme song naijabeats and serves as a UN Development Programme Ambassador.

Odunayo Folasade Adekuoroye

Ilutitun, Okitipupa LGA, Ondo State | Freestyle Wrestling | Born December 10, 1993



Three-time Commonwealth Games gold medalist (2014, 2018, 2022), three-time World Wrestling Championships medalist, and the first African woman to reach World Wrestling Championship finals, Adekuoroye has won multiple African Championships and competed at the 2024 Paris Olympics. She overcame childhood poverty as a hawker in Akure to achieve sporting excellence, becoming Nigeria's most decorated wrestler—male or female—and demonstrating that talent exists everywhere regardless of socioeconomic background. Her story of rising from street hawking to global wrestling podiums inspires disadvantaged youth across Nigeria, proving that with proper support and personal determination, even the poorest children can reach the highest levels of international competition.

Olufunke Olayemi Opeke OON

Ile-Oluji, Ile-Oluji/Okeigbo LGA, Ondo State | Technology & Telecommunications | Born 1961



Pioneer of Nigeria's broadband infrastructure who built West Africa's first privately owned submarine cable—7,000km connecting Lagos to Portugal—Funke Opeke founded and led MainOne (acquired by Equinix for \$320 million in 2022), transforming African internet connectivity. Named among Forbes' World's Top 50 Women in Tech (2018) and honored as Officer of the Order of the Niger (OON, 2022), she formerly served as MTN Nigeria Chief Technology Officer. Her submarine cable broke foreign monopolies on African internet infrastructure, dramatically reducing connectivity costs and enabling the technology boom that has made Nigeria Africa's largest tech economy.

Iretiola Olusola "Ireti" Doyle

Akure (born in Ondo State, raised in Boston, USA) | Field: Acting & Media | Born: 1967



Veteran Nollywood actress with a career spanning since 1995. Winner of the GIAMA Award for Best Actress (2013) and multiple AMVCA nominee, Doyle has starred in major productions including *The Wedding Party*, *Tinsel*, and *Fifty*. Also a TV presenter and producer, she bridges Nigerian and diaspora entertainment.

Olubowale Victor "Wale" Akintimehin

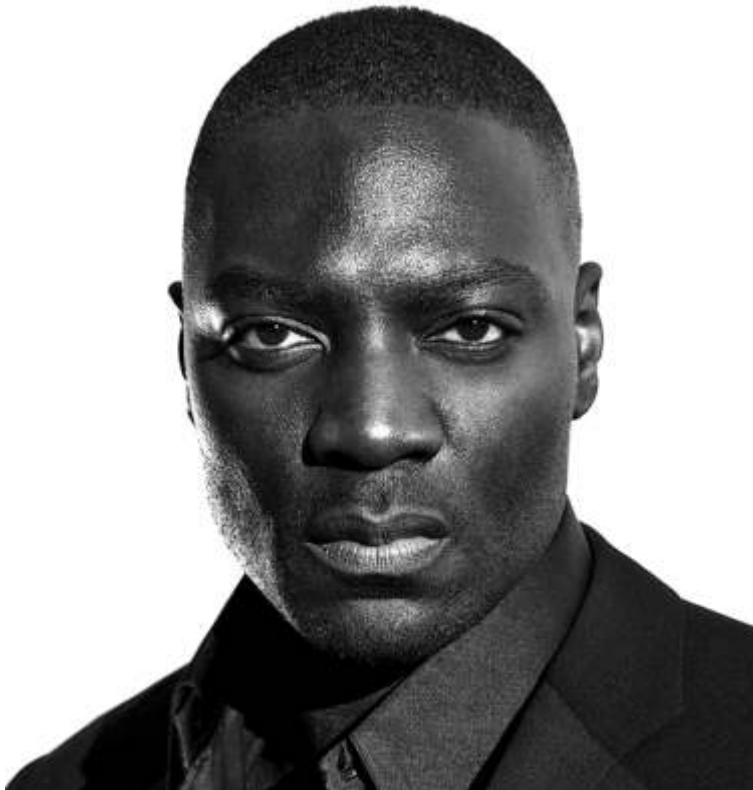
Parents from Ondo State | Field: Music (Hip-Hop) — Diaspora | Born: September 21, 1984



Grammy-nominated American rapper of Nigerian descent with multiple Billboard Hot 100 charting singles. His album *The Album About Nothing* reached #1 on Billboard 200. A BET Award winner and longtime Def Jam Recordings artist, Wale maintains strong Ondo State connections; his grandfather, whom he described as "a true Ondo State legend," was buried there in 2023.

Adewale Akinnuoye-Agbaje

Ondo Town | Field: Acting (Hollywood) — Diaspora | Born: August 22, 1967



Hollywood actor Wikipedia known for roles in *Suicide Squad* (DC), *Thor: The Dark World*, and *Game of Thrones*, as well as playing Mr. Eko in ABC's *Lost*. A former international fashion model, Akinnuoye-Agbaje directed *Farming* (2018), an autobiographical film exploring his unique experience as a Yoruba child fostered by a white family in England. Fluent in Yoruba, he represents Nigerian excellence in Hollywood.

Olusola Oke SAN

Ondo State | Field: Law & Politics | Born: 1960s



Distinguished Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN) Naija News and prominent constitutional lawyer. Former National Legal Adviser of the PDP and former member of the National Assembly, Oke has been involved in significant legal cases shaping Nigerian jurisprudence. He contested the 2024 APC governorship primary in Ondo State, Naija News demonstrating continued engagement in state politics.

CONCLUSION: THE HUMAN LEGACY

These fifty living icons represent the finest expression of what Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo States have produced over five decades. They span generations—from nonagenarians like Professor Wole Soyinka and Professor Wande Abimbola whose careers bridge pre-independence Nigeria to the present, to rising stars like Fireboy DML and Tobi Amusan who represent the future. They traverse fields—from Nobel Prize winners to Grammy nominees, from presidents to traditional monarchs, from business billionaires to social entrepreneurs, from Olympic athletes to Hollywood actors.

What unites them is not merely origin but excellence—the relentless pursuit of mastery in chosen fields, the courage to break barriers, and the commitment to contribute beyond personal achievement. Many have used their platforms for social good: Mo Abudu creating employment through media empire building, Omotola serving as UN ambassador addressing hunger, Funke Opeke democratizing internet access, Pastor Ashimolowo establishing global ministry, Dr. Mimiko pioneering healthcare models that saved thousands of lives.

Their achievements validate fifty years of investment in education, culture, and infrastructure documented in the companion chronicle of landmark events. The universities established produced many of these icons. The cultural preservation efforts enabled artists to draw from authentic traditions. The democratic governance created space for diverse talents to flourish. The infrastructure built connected talented individuals to opportunities.

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Fifty Living Legends from
Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo States

As Oyo, Ogun, and Ondo States celebrate their golden jubilee, these fifty icons remind us that a state's greatness ultimately resides in its people. Buildings decay, roads require maintenance, even institutions need periodic renewal. But human excellence endures—in Nobel Prize citations that will be read centuries hence, in films that will entertain future generations, in world records that establish benchmarks for human achievement, in businesses that create multi-generational wealth, in medical advances that save lives, in artistic works that preserve culture.

To the next generation reading this chronicle decades hence: these are the giants upon whose shoulders you stand. Their achievements set standards you must meet and exceed. Their contributions created opportunities you must expand. Their excellence established reputations you must uphold and enhance. Honor them not through nostalgia but through your own pursuit of mastery, your own commitment to contribution, your own demonstration that the Southwest continues producing individuals who shape Nigeria and the world. The foundation has been laid by these fifty and countless others. The challenge now passes to you.

