



THOMAS ISEKENEGBE:

The Man Behind the Big Chair

By Ify Ezinwa

Thomas A. Isekenegbe is the current President of Bronx Community College (BCC), one of the outstanding colleges within the City University of New York (CUNY). Prior to his appointment by the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York, Dr. Isekenegbe was President of Cumberland County College for six years where he is reported to have made tremendous positive impact as the school's chief administrator.

Thomas Isekenegbe is one African who is doing his continent proud in his chosen field. A proud Nigerian who though, while also a citizen of the United States, has not forgotten his country of birth and does all he can to contribute to the development of

youths in the United States and Africa. With almost 30 years of exceptional administrative, leadership and teaching record in education in the United States, Dr. Isekenegbe is undoubtedly one of the Africa's best and one the continent is proud to refer to as part of its endowments.

Echoes Africa recently had the pleasure of interviewing President Thomas A. Isekenegbe and the session gave us an insight into the workings of the mind of the man behind the 'big chair.'

Echoes: Who is Thomas Isekenegbe?

Isekenegbe: Simply, the adjective I use to qualifying myself is humble, from the southern part of Nigeria

and I see myself as a teacher that happens to be a President of a school.

Echoes: You are the President of Bronx Community College. How did you get to this point?

Isekenegbe: To be honest, it's by the grace of God and I am really being honest. I am not the sharpest knife. I am not the smartest guy but have gotten to the point I am today really by the grace of God. How I got to this point? I am from a very small village in Edo State, Nigeria. The town is Agenebode but it's really a very small village outside Agenebode. I obtained my first degree from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. I really love to teach. That's my passion as I always knew

from when I was a child that I want to work in the education business.

My idea growing up was that I would like to live in the university setting, teach and just take it easy. So, when I came into the United States, I did my Ph.D. and really, my aim was basically to teach but the first job I got was at the Hudson County Community College which is in New Jersey. I worked in administration and I loved it. Again, it's by the grace of God. Somebody opened the door for me and they hired me in 1987 and they filed for all my immigration papers as a matter of fact. I worked with them for one year. I was idealistic... I wanted more so I left them and I went to the University of South Carolina