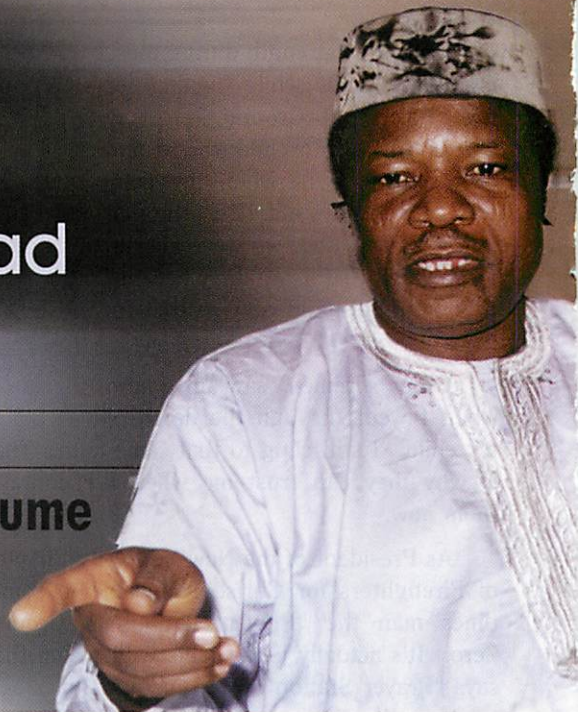


# I thought I had connections

## Senator Fred A. Brume Nigeria



**W**hat in the world was going on? I thought I had connections. I had advanced degrees, one from the University of Maine and another from M.I.T.'s famous Sloan School of Management. After all I had accomplished, why should they lock me up in prison? Why me, Lord, why?

After 26 months in prison detention, I understood the ultimate purposes of God for whatever happens to someone. As a political prisoner, my life flashed before me...

I grew up in the Warri area of Delta State, Nigeria. My family practiced a more traditional religion. My schooling was in a Christian atmosphere, however it was more of a social Christianity, as distinct from the knowledge I now have of the Holy Spirit.

Raised in the middle class, I've always had the competitive attitude to life. The political leaders of my country, who led Nigeria to independence, motivated us by making us believe that in order for us to progress, we would have to study science and engineering; as well as work hard. I was at the top of my class in secondary school and I graduated summa laude in college.

Both in the United States and in Nigeria,

I was attuned to a lukewarm Christianity. In fact, I practiced Christianity more as a social engagement for many years.

I came to Washington, D.C. and joined the World Bank Group. When I returned home to Nigeria in 1969, I rose up rapidly in career life, working mostly with the government. I became the founding Chief Executive of the first Integrated Steel Plant in Nigeria from 1978-1984.

In 1984, there was a government takeover in the country. I was swept away by the military regime, along with all the other government leaders. I was thrown into prison detention for 26 months. It was there that I came to know Christ. I could not comprehend, after I had done so much, why I should be locked up. I thought I had connections with people of influence and position. But nobody could help me.

I began to be more conscious of the power that is greater than all powers, and that is God. I started to become drawn to the Bible. In detention, there was nothing to read, no news, no radio, nothing. Only the Bible or the Koran was allowed. Therefore, I started to read the Bible. I was really amazed as I read from page to page that it contained such wonderful truths. Even things I had looked down upon before, I discovered were in the Bible. My background caused me to be more scientifically minded. Most traditional scientists tend to believe only the things

they can see and prove. While reading the Bible, I found that it explains even the scientific theory that I used to really wonder about.

I believed there was a God; but not in a living sense as I do now. However, from the prison detention experience, it was ingrained within me that there is a living God. It was really that experience that drew me to Christ. I came out of detention in 1986.

My experience with prison detention was the major turning point in my life. I had been a technocrat. Now I was locked up with politicians, former state governors, ministers, etc. The Vice-President was my next door neighbor in prison. I was moved from one prison cell to another because they thought I was a danger, a



“security risk.” I was later moved to a maximum-security prison. I would debate and try to settle disputes between my cell-mates. This created an additional interest in politics.

I was in prison detention because of some people who were in power, but they were ignorant; or at least they were imprisoning me for very wrong reasons. I decided it would be advantageous for me to get into a position of higher authority in the government of the country, so that such kinds of mistakes could be avoided. I reasoned that if more people with knowledge were in positions of authority, many mistakes could be avoided.

In 1992, the government became a democratic government. That year I joined a political party and ran for the Senate. I won the elections, but because of a technicality that I had been held in prison detention, I was not supposed to serve. But the question was, Was I found guilty of anything? NO! That election re-instated me. For the second time in 1997, when they asked for new elections, I came up again uncontested. I won again in 1999 as senator for another term of four years.



I knew Christ all along, but it did not become a dynamic part of my being until I went through the “salvation process” in 1990, when I gave my life publicly at a Christian outreach. I was asked, “Have you been born again?” The preacher then told me, “If you have been born again, you will know it.”

Later in the year I was introduced to the FGBMFI. There was a move in the Lagos area to establish a special chapter of the Fellowship, that would address established leaders, people who are recognized as the shakers and the movers of society in Nigeria. In trying to put together this Chapter, I was invited among the initial ten people. When we introduced the Fellowship, the Chapter grew so rapidly that it has since grown to become eight Chapters.

In 1991, I came to my first FGBMFI World Convention. It transformed my life more than any other event in my life. Every time I come to the World Convention, there is a manifestation of God’s glory. The first year I met the founder, Demos Shakarian. He prayed for me that I

would become a “pillar of the Fellowship.” I took it as normal. But the following year, I came again to the World Convention in Boston. Again, Demos laid hands on me and prayed again that I would be a “pillar of the Fellowship.” When he prayed that, I did not answer. So he repeated it, and then told me, “Say Amen!” And I said, “Amen!” That was a beautiful event that day.

Some say that Christianity and politics do not go together. Politics involves many dirty games and activities. The righteous are those who believe in Christ. Therefore, it is essential that Christ-minded people be in politics, to get to positions of authority in government.

Being a senator, I try very hard to uphold the Christian values, especially among my fellow politicians. The activities of Members of Parliament and the National Assembly keep us so busy with things of the world, that there is little time to pay attention to spiritual things of God. It requires dedication to remain steadfast as a Christian.

There is an increasing awareness of the fact that Christians should participate in politics and in government. Christians should be encouraged to run for and try to win elections. We believe that in Nigeria, the transformation of the country can only be done by the power of God. The blessings of God will flow into a country when the sons of God, who believe in and fear God, are in authority in the land.

The vision towards Christian participation in politics is gaining ground. Today, I am a most happy man that the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria is a born-again believer. He has gone through the same prison experience where he, himself, turned to God. God tends to prepare His people. I feel that God is doing His work in Nigeria. I believe, by His grace, the problems of this country will be overcome.

Senator Fred A. Brume is a distinguished member of the National House of Assembly for the Federal Republic of Nigeria. He, his wife, and five children live on Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. He is also an International Director at Large for FGBMFI.

