

# Black Mathematics at Cambridge

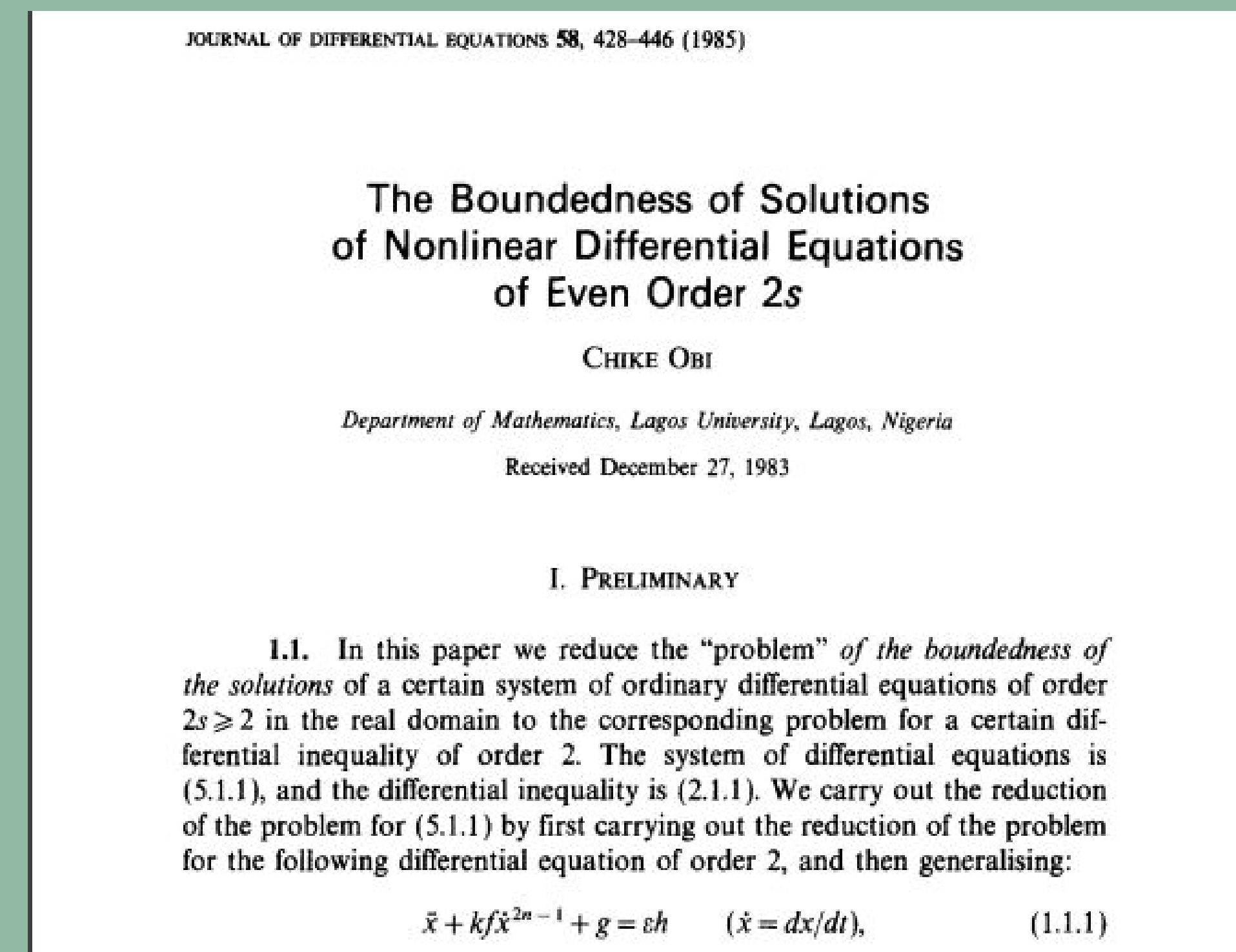
## Chike Obi



## Profile

Professor Chike Obi was the first Nigerian to be awarded a PhD in Mathematics. When he finished school, only colleges offering teaching diplomas were available in Nigeria, and students wanting higher education had to study by correspondence courses and obtain degrees from the University of London.

Chike Obi's early research dealt mainly with the question of the existence of periodic solutions of non-linear ordinary differential equations. He successfully used the perturbation technique and several of his publications greatly helped to stimulate research interest in this subject throughout the world and have become classics in the literature.



## Education

PhD, University of Cambridge, Pembroke College, 1950

Dissertation: 'Periodic Solutions of Non-linear Differential Equations of Second Order'

Supervisors: Mary Cartwright and John Littlewood

MSc, University College London, 1947 (by correspondence)

BSc, University College London, 1946 (by correspondence)

## Academic Positions

Founder and Director, Nanna Institute for Scientific Studies, Onitsha (1985- )

Dean of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, University of Lagos (1971-1973)

Chair of Department of Mathematics, University of Lagos (1971-1977 )

Professor of Mathematics, University of Lagos (1970-1985)

Member of the Eastern House Assembly (1961-1966)

Member of the Federal Parliament of Nigeria (1960-1961)

Senior Lecturer (previously Lecturer), University of Ibadan (1951, 1959-1962)

Chike Obi devoted his life almost equally between mathematics and politics. In 1953 he was one of the founders and the first leader of the Dynamic Party, and was elected to the delegation that negotiated Nigeria's path to independence at two London conferences in 1957 and 1958. Because of his involvement in politics, he was frequently jailed. A conviction in 1961 on the grounds of sedition for printing a pamphlet with the words "*Down with the enemies of the people, the exploiters of the weak and oppressors of the poor! ... The days of those who have enriched themselves at the expense of the poor are numbered.*" made legal history. In 1970 he returned to full-time mathematics, but continued publishing political articles in the Nigerian press. In 1985, Chike Obi was awarded the Sigvard Eklung Mathematical Prize. He died in 2008, and is fondly remembered by many as an almost mythical figure.

