

Brothers & Sisters:

Mr. President and the New Jersey executive, honorable guest, BACDA-USA members, ladies and gentlemen, the National Executive wishes to thank you for taking time off your busy schedules to be here with us today. We also wish to thank all the members of the New Jersey chapter who have worked very hard to put this great event together.

My executive and I can not believe it has been two years since we accepted the challenge to lead this great association. Like the saying goes, time flies when one is having fun, and leading this association has been a lot of fun for us.

Leadership, as we all know, is as challenging as a war, and in every war some battles are won, others are lost. This was not different with this executive despite all our good intentions. Overall, however, we believe it has been a good two years.

1. The Houston Convention Update:

A year ago, our brothers and sisters in Houston together with each and everyone of us, worked hard to put together a great event. Hopes were raised, as we all looked forward to not only holding great deliberations but also having fun and raising funds for the Association. Unfortunately, based on the financial statement presented by the organizing committee in Houston, we lost money from the fund-raising events which were organized. We did get a few pledges and promises, but those too are still pending for various reasons.

a) Proceeds from the Presbyterian Church:

The Presbyterian Church in Houston promised to channel the sum of \$2,200.00 through BACDA-USA to the Presbyterian Hospital in Nyassosso. This money has not been disbursed because the Church is reluctant to send cash to the hospital. I spoke with Mrs. Jane Strange and plans are underway for hospital equipment to be bought and sent to NyassossoHospital. The chairman of the Health Committee, Mr. Larry Metuge Ekaney, is working on a list of equipment to buy with Mrs. Strange.

b) Pledge from Mr. Shelton Sparks:

Mr. Shelton Sparks of Boudreaux, Washington, and Sparks law firm in Houston pledged the sum of \$500.00 a year for an indefinite period to the Education Committee. We have not received these funds because Mr. Sparks needs a tax-exempt identification number from us to be able to declare this money on his taxes. Unfortunately, though a registered nonprofit organization with the District of Colombia we are still not yet in possession of a tax-exempt identification number.

Despite all the above, I would like everyone to remember the positive aspects of our convention in Houston, because BACDA-USA is listed in the records of the City of Houston since July 25th, 1998 was declared as a BACDA-USA day by Mayor Lee P. Brown. Our brothers and sisters in Houston lit a torch when they welcomed us in Houston last year and became BACDA-USA fourth chapter. My wish and hope are that they keep this torch burning even brighter than it did when they first lit it.

2. Incorporation:

There has been a lot of misconception about our status as a non-profit organization. Some have asked me whether we did become non-profit. The answer to this question is yes; we became a non-profit organization under the District of Columbia's Non-Profit Act. However, being declared a Non-Profit Organization does not automatically confer a tax exempt. We must fulfill the additional requirement of filing for a non-profit tax exempt identification number. The chairman of the Constitution Committee, Dr. Domenic Ntube and I will see to it that we accomplish this last but most important step for our Association.

3. BACDA-USA NEWS:

It is with great sadness that I inform you that our very able founding chairman of the Newspaper Committee Mr. Asume Bide, has tendered his ? temporary? resignation from BACDA-USA News.

BACDA-USA News saw its birth in Atlanta in 1995 when a very busy and struggling student had a goal to bring BACDA-USA in the limelight by proposing to start a Newsletter Committee. This proposal passed and he became the chairman of the committee he fought hard to start.

We have all been students in the United States at one time or another and many of us still are. We all know how difficult it is to juggle between school and a full-time job (because those bills must be paid). Mr. Asume had the unenviable task of juggling not only a full-time job, and a demanding Doctor of Pharmacy program, but also an increasing family and BACDA-USA News for many years. Did he succeed? You all know the answer, for we have all savored the fruits of his selfless labor. Today, he is asking for a temporary release from the duties of BACDA-USA News chairman, but promises to be back in the very near future.

On behalf of BACDA-USA, I would like to thank Mr. Asume for his dedication. I can not however end without thanking him on a personal note for his support to my administration both as a chairman and as a personal friend with a word of encouragement and praise here, a word of caution there, and a word of criticism where need be. I doff my hat for him and hope that we shall all emulate his exemplary commitment.

4. BACDA-USA Committees:

The chairmen of the various committees would have a chance to say a few words about the state of their committees. I would like to seize this opportunity to thank them and their members for all their support to NEC during our two years in office. Special thanks go to Ms. Maggie Sone, Mr. Larry Ekaney and Dr. Domenic Ntube, for recently organizing a memorable fund raising event at the Holiday Inn in Laurel.

5. Meet the People Tour:

Because of some personal family tragedies during the year, I was unable to fulfill my goal of holding a meeting in Cameroon and meeting the people of Europe. Rest assured however that this is still on my list of priorities and I promise to work with the incoming executive to fulfill this goal. Therefore, Cameroon and Europe, we still have our eyes on you and will inform you in due course when to expect us.

6. BACDA-USA Financial Situation:

Dear BACDA-USA members, our finances have been embarrassingly low. It has been very challenging to get members and chapters to pay their dues for the smooth functioning of the association. Often, we had to deep into our pockets, as has happened on many occasions with the newspaper committee, in order to run BACDA-USA affairs. You must agree with me that this unorthodox way of running an association must stop. We must put forth concrete proposals today on how to provide finances for our association.

I would like to thank all the chapter presidents and their executive for their dedication and commitment to the BACDA-USA cause. I would like to extend NEC's congratulations to our newest chapter president, Mrs. Rose Ngalame, President of the Atlanta chapter and her executive. Two years ago, when we took office, our first meet the people tour was in Atlanta. Today, during our last meeting as NEC, it gives us great pleasure to have Atlanta with us in full force. Special thanks also go to our Cameroon based coordinators, Mr. Ejedepang Koge, Mr. Ambrose Ewane both of Yaoundé, and Dr. Andrew Eneme of Buea, for the successful conclusion of the medication delivery, and to our BACDA-USA News coordinator, Mr. Fidele Muabe of Yaoundé.

I cannot conclude this statement without taking a minute to thank each and every one of you for your support during the many tragedies that befell my family during the year. Your moral and financial support meant a lot to us. Especially during the regrettable loss of my nephew Michael Sunday Ejuma whose young life ended in a tragic and mysterious way in Atlanta. To the Atlanta members, I say thank you for showing my Ndu in-laws the importance of belonging to the Bakossi family and for showing me my efforts to keep us united are not wasted.

May God bless and guide us.

Love always
Olga Ekume-Ejuma.