

CONVENTION 2014 – NEWARK, DELAWARE

STATE OF THE UNION BY JOE NGALLE

BACDA USA NATIONAL PRESIDENT

Members of the National Executive Committee,

Fellow BACDA USA Members,

Distinguish Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply humbled by your presence here this weekend as we converge to take stock of our past year activities and plan for the coming year. We all do this out of self sacrifice and strong commitment in order to achieve the goals of our association. I salute your dedication and urge you to continue this spirit of love and care you have for our tribe.

This past year many of us lost our loved ones back home and here. Once more, permit me to extend my sincere sympathy to you and your families. We also lost an illustrious son, Mr. Albert Ndille who worked very close with BACDA USA tirelessly in the pursuit of better roads in bakossi land. These and many other deaths within the bakossi community deserve our thoughts and prayers. Let us therefore rise for a minute of silence in honor of these fallen souls.

On a happy note, many of us received new additions in our families; some brothers and sisters moved to the US to find a new home; and above all many of you made academic achievements and job promotions. All these and many other accomplishments are blessings we all need to be grateful of. Let me use this opportunity to congratulate all of you and be rest assured that BACDA USA is proud of your accomplishments. We pray for many better days ahead of you.

I will be doing a disfavor if I fail to give credit to my executive members who have demonstrated time and again their loyalty in serving all of us. These are folks who do take away their personal commitment to serve BACDA USA without any form of compensation. I invite you to join me in thanking these men and women for their selfless services to BACDA USA. Let us show our appreciation and give a round of applause to these great men and women.

Permit me to also extend my deep appreciation to our fellow brothers and sisters of Delaware chapter who have demonstrated their total commitment in putting together a spectacular convention. What can you say about Mr. Jerry Nnoko who has handled the preparations with such dexterity? I couldn't have asked for more. Mr. President, I want to thank you for your leadership here in Delaware and you and your members deserve a round of applause.

I have mentioned to you time and again that leadership responsibilities in BACDA USA is fast becoming enormous and require too much time to accomplish a task. It is therefore my humble appeal to all of you to step forward and serve in any leadership role in order to lessen the burden weighing on the shoulders of the few. I recall the statement made by one time US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice during the Republican Convention in Florida; she said inter alia "you cannot lead from behind; you have to step forward to lead".

Folks, we all have better ideas and love this group dearly, but unless you step forward to lead, no one will lead your ideas for you. Leadership is not about serving in a position, but it's about working hard to ensure you give your all and make BACDA USA achieve the things you strongly believe in. You all read several emails from Mr. Walter Ngome drumming support for the dump truck drive which he is so passionate about because of the appalling if not abysmal nature of our roads. He is not an executive member of BACDA USA, but he took upon himself

to take the front seat in the dump truck drive. Also, last year at the Dallas Convention, Chrispo Yaya Ajang made copies of CDs of our traditional music, sold them and donated the money to BACDA USA projects. Nobody assigned him to do it, let alone was he reimbursed for his expenses. He too is not a member of BACDA USA executive, but he did what his mind believes in. This is what leadership is all about; working hard in what you believe in, and this is what I am asking all of you today to do; I urge you all to emulate the leadership exemplary role demonstrated by Brother Walters and Chrispo. Let's give them a round of applause.

My dear brothers and sisters do not sit back and criticize others when you have equal chances to serve just as those you criticize. If you cannot do it, then consider to appreciate those who dare to serve and make mistakes rather than castigate them on their mistakes. You cannot motivate people working for you by trouncing them on their errors, but it serves right if you give them words of encouragement and appreciation. There is nothing wrong in pointing out mistakes provided you do that with politeness and civility. A group can only be as strong as it ought to be if its members show respect to one another and shun away pettiness and undue arrogance.

Next year is an election year in BACDA USA. All positions will be up for grab. I urge you to consider serving in a position. The idea of recycling one and the same persons to serve in executive positions has always been criticized and yet the same people who criticize deny stepping up for the very positions. Here comes an opportunity for us to choose those whom we think can better direct this group, and finally put to rest the constant criticism of some members being recycled. On a serious note, these people will come up again and serve if there are no replacements. This group can only be what we want it to be if we all do our fair share of the responsibilities.

I also want to remind all of you that next year BACDA USA will clock twenty five years old. As you all know, next year convention will be hosted by the Washington DC Chapter. I hope you gird your loins and prepare to have a hectic celebration. We have a lot to celebrate about, and rightly so because we have accomplished a lot as a group. I have great confidence that the young and dynamic leadership we have in DC will offer you the best treat ever imaginable.

Ladies and gentlemen, the tradition of presenting a State of the Union by the National President gives all of us an opportunity to review our past year performance, and take a detail account on our successes and failures. ***Today, with total confidence and without mincing words, I am reporting to you that our Union has passed all the tests and is very strong than ever before.*** We have to take this success into this coming year. In order for us to do that, I urge you to be constructive in asking questions, tender proposals that will move us forward and above all to be ready to engage yourself in these proposals. If we respect these basic tenets of a meeting, not only are we going to have a successful deliberation, but develop cohesiveness that is vital for the growth of any organization.

Fellow convention delegates, our performance last year in terms of projects realized was incredible if not absurd that BACDA USA will live to remember. We made tremendous strides in Education Projects, Health Projects and above all the Bakossi Road Project.

Following last year budget, BACDA USA awarded donations to five different schools based on the needs presented by these individual schools. The following schools; Government High School Muambong, Government Technical High School Tombel, and Unity Comprehensive High School Tombel each benefitted; five computers, one multi-function canon printer, one universal current converter and some extra cartridges for the printers. Government High School

Ngusi received a 5400 watts generator and three computers, while Government Secondary School Muebah got repairs of a roof destroyed by strong winds. They also fortified the Principals office with an iron door and made some computer desks. Mr. Ernest Ebwelle, Education Committee Chair was in Cameroon for a personal trip, but devoted some time and joined our Cameroon Education Representative Mr. Fidelis Etube in distributing these donations to these schools. It is an honor for me to notify you that Mr. Ebwelle covered the distribution expenses in Cameroon and charged nothing to BACDA USA. This is the kind of commitment that BACDA USA need and I ask you to join me and give a round of applause to both Mr. Ebwelle and Mr. Etube.

The Education Committee intends to complete the roster of schools in the bakossi area. This means that the following schools will take priority; Government Secondary School Nyandong, Government High School Ebonji, Government Secondary School Ndom and Government Technical College Bangem. This indicates that BACDA USA will complete its micro project donations to all the nineteen Secondary, Technical and High Schools in the bakossi land.

The Health Committee successfully organized two health campaigns in Bangem and Ebonji. The first was in Bangem where I was privileged to join our Cameroon representative Ms. Mercy Abwe Ngone and a team of Doctors and Nurses who carried out this exercise for two days and over seven hundred patients were consulted and given free medication. The next stop was Ebonji where close to four hundred patients were again consulted and given free medication. The campaign in Ebonji was blessed to also have in attendance the Health Committee Chair, Mr. James Mbide who himself as a health professional served his people in what he is good at. Please join me and give Mr. Mbide a warm round of applause for his steadfast commitment to BACDA USA. I also ask you to join me and thank the following Medical Doctors who gave their talents

to us as always without a fee; Dr. Pascal Forgan, Dr. Gilbert Nzume and Dr. George Nkome Ejedepang. I also want to extend my sincere thanks to the several nurses and community volunteers who made these events successful. And finally, our hearty thanks to the always devoted Lady Ms. Mercy Ngone who braves all the odds to deliver services on behalf of BACDA USA. We truly cannot thank her enough.

It is our plan to continue this important health outreach program in Muambong and Ngusi Health Centers and their environs. This will ensure that these campaigns though will not cover 100% of the villages in the bakossi area, but will capture substantial areas that we ought to be proud of ourselves. The smiles that always beam on the faces of these patients, and their personal stories that I hear all the time motivates me to keep going. I hope you all feel the same way, and never to get tired anytime soon.

This past year BACDA USA recorded great success in the road project. As you all know the greatest problem faced by communities in Cameroon is the deplorable nature of the roads. Bakossi roads are not different. You all saw the YouTube Video forwarded by Mr. Jerry Nnoko showing how bad the roads are. I call upon your leniency to watch that YouTube video for a second if you have not done so and see for yourself what our people go through. Our people have written several letters of appeal to all sorts of quarters for more than four decades crying for passable roads. Several personal and group initiatives have sprung up to tackle the road problems but all proved abortive. But about eight years ago, BACDA USA National Executive under the leadership of Mr. Larry Ekaney met in Ms. Angela Sanda's home in Atlanta and finalized arrangements with Professor Ndue, Ebume Muanengoe President in Yaounde the need for an All Bakossi Conference to be held in Cameroon in order to talk about the road problems in the bakossi land. The conversations were lengthy and sometimes very confusing on what exactly is

the best approach we can use to handle the deteriorating roads. In October of 2013, BACDA USA and ABC took some bold measures and purchased a backhoe equipment which is presently in Bakossi land.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this equipment is a life saving gift to our people. I have received several phone calls people expressing their joy and thanks to all of us. We demonstrated to our people that we understand the urgency of better roads in bakossi land. This past January, I launched the famous dump truck drive that will accompany the backhoe for effective work. A team of four great men, the Road Project Committee Chair, Mr. Linus Ngide, the rapporteur of the Committee, Mr. Walter Ngome, Mr. Benson Njumbe and Mr. Jerry Nnoko as members were tasked to work together on this project. Please join me in thanking these great men of our tribe for their hard work and true commitment. You all saw the updates that were published weekly for the purpose of accountability and smooth running of the drive.

It is my honor to report to you today that we have raised over eighteen thousand dollars within a six month period. Let us all rise and give a huge round of applause to ourselves and tell a friend near you 'well done'. Plans to purchase and ship the truck to Cameroon are already in the making. We will continue to update you as we make progress.

Brothers and sisters, just as you think we have made enough progress; information coming from home describing the deplorable nature of the roads is heart bugging. There have been cases of deaths reported because the patients could not get to the hospital on time due to bad roads. Last week Dr. Godlove Ngunde forwarded an article on our egrouop from Cameroon Post written by a brother of ours and a retired journalist Mr. John Ndahne. He laments how the Bangem hospital has been rendered without a Medical Doctor for several months. That the transfers of patients

from the Bangem hospital to nearby hospitals like Nyasoso and Nkongsamba is almost impossible due to the deplorable nature of the roads. That the death toll in the hospital is rising, Mr. Ndahne bewailed!

Similarly, the markets in the bakossi land are shut down because buyers have no means of transporting their goods from and to the markets. The hard working men and women of bakossi tribe are still subjected to poverty due to dreadful nature of the roads.

I really want to share with you the sad story of a young lady, twenty years of age from Mbabe village, in Tombel Sub Division, Ms. Lovelyn Ekane who was pregnant with twins. On a New Year day in 2014, this young lady went into labor and needed to get to the Tombel hospital to deliver her lovely twins. She could not walk on her own and because of the extreme bad roads at that time; there was no vehicle to take her to the hospital. The men of the village decided to put her in a truck and started pushing her as quickly as they could in order to make it to the hospital on time. This lady could not sustain the pains of the bumpy road; and regrettably as they got to Ngab village, she died and the twins as well did not make it alive. She finally got to the Tombel Hospital in corps and was kept in a mortuary instead of a maternity ward. The pains that our people go through because of bad roads are unbearable and heart wrenching. Our generation cannot sit back and observe this happen over and over. Something has to be done.

It is for this reason that today I want to dedicate the theme of my message, (*Save a Life!!*) in memory of Ms. Lovelyn Ekane and her twins. This theme, '*save a life*' is a strong message to our people back home to let them know that their cry is loud enough and today BACDA USA has resolved to do all it takes and make the bakossi roads passable all year round. We can do it if we chose not to relent our endeavor or derail our commitment. We can do it if we chose to keep

our union strong and work under one mission and one goal. We can do it if we chose to sink our personal differences and work for the common good of all. Yes, we can do it, if we chose to step up the contribution plate and together we all will *save a life*. Let us resolve today with strong conviction that never again should we let this to happen in our generation.

I am very much dumbfounded by the strong sacrifice from an elite from Mbabe and one of ours, Jerry Nnoko who has taken a single handed responsibility to bulldoze the hill entering Mbabe. This was his pledge in memory of Ms. Lovelyn Ekane. Jerry wants to do it alone; we too can do it as a group.

In this respect, I want to unveil a plan to you that will eliminate the toll put on our people by the deplorable roads and that will make the road maintenance initiative effective; a plan that will make our roads passable all year round. Today I am asking BACDA USA once more to take a lead and purchase a grader for our roads. Yes we can do it. Consequently, I am laying out a nine month plan that will help us get this done. This plan is achievable if we chose teamwork to be our core value. Findings from used equipment dealers indicate that with twenty thousand dollars we can purchase a used grader in perfect working conditions.

In order to make this plan effective and realistic, I am requesting BACDA USA to take a lead in this plan and make a down payment of ten thousand dollars towards the purchase of a grader. I am asking the host chapter of this year's convention, the Delaware group to follow soothe and write a check of one thousand dollars.....you can do it. I am also asking the Boston Chapter, Atlanta Chapter, Houston Chapter, and Dallas Chapter to each write a check of one thousand dollars. And the mother chapter, Washington DC, I am requesting you to write a check of three thousand dollars. As for the independent members like myself, I am appointing my wife, Ms.

Patience Ngalle to synchronize all independent members, and she is expected to raise one thousand dollars. Finally, a thousand dollars will be allocated to miscellaneous contributions from individuals within and outside of the BACDA USA family.

You all must have noticed the convention pins that have been going around for sale. These pins were the personal initiative of Yaya Chrispo Ajang who told me he was raising the money for the road project. Thank you my brother for your steadfast commitment demonstrated time and again in this association. Please let's rise and give a well deserved round of applause to Chrispo Ajang. The funds from this drive will be directed under the miscellaneous of this '*save a life*' plan.

The above plan will raise the twenty thousand dollars projected as equipment cost. However, I will be writing appeal letters to all bakossi groups here in the US, beginning from village meetings to clan meetings. I am also appealing to all of you who take this initiative very close to your hearts to freely donate as your heart tells you. All these extra effort will help us in the shipment of this equipment.

You all will recall that I attended the last two ABC conferences in Tombel and Bangem representing BACDA USA. The fundraising portion of the conference recorded a failure consistently. We barely made one million francs profit each from the conferences. My proposal to ABC officials during the ABC in Bangem was to consider next year ABC conference to be held in Yaounde in April of 2015 as a fundraiser that will bring together all the elites based in Cameroon to pool their resources together. This will help minimize the excuses from people who have consistently complained they could not make it to ABC because the roads were too bad. I am in constant talks with ABC President, Professor Ndue in putting together this event. The goal is to raise funds and use the money to pay for the custom duty of the grader at the ports in

Cameroon. As we continue to work on this plan, I will make all vital information available to you for the purpose of transparency and accountability.

Brothers and sisters, with the purchase of these three equipment; the backhoe, a dump truck, and a grader, our roads will effectively be maintained and passable all year round.

Fellow convention delegates, if you carefully examine this plan, and think for a second how much God has blessed us with, you will agree with me that this plan is achievable. Commitment, dedication, and teamwork are the three main things that will help us accomplish this task. We've been there before and we prevailed. There is no doubt in my mind that we will stand out tall on this one too. Let's do it like we mean it. Let's do it as a family. Let's do it with one Love, and execute this plan unequivocally and *save a life*.

Thank you and God bless you all!

Long Live BACDA USA

Long Live Cameroon

Long Live the United States