

BACDA USA 26TH CONVENTION 2016

BOSTON, MA

THE STATE OF THE UNION

**Dr. Martin Akwensioge
President,
BACDA-USA**

35 Warren St, Lowell, MA 01852

Your Royal Highnesses
Members of the National Executive Committee
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the National Executive Committee and the National Organizing Committee, I am very humbled and proud to welcome you all here today to the great State of Massachusetts in the city of Lowell/Boston metro area. I wish to give our heartfelt appreciation to the hard working members of the Boston Chapter who have spared no stone unturned to make this 26th BACDA USA Convention very successful and memorable. It should be noted that this is the third convention that Boston is hosting, a testament to their strength, unity, resolve and staying true to the mission and vision of BACDA USA.

My dear delegates, we are gathered here today, having left our jobs, families and friends, because of our love for Ekose, our people and to strategies on the immense issues facing the development within our region and a better life for our people. It is wonderful to see many of you again after our celebrations in the Washington D.C. metro area last year. Your continued commitment is a statement to the rest of world and testimony to your love for this great association.

Please permit me to use this opportunity to recognize the dedicated members of my executive who, for the past several months, have worked tirelessly to help our beloved union to move forward. **(Introduce the members)**. Our union will continue to grow when members of this caliber continue to sacrificing time and personal resources for the greater good of the Bakossi people at home and our families right here in the good old USA, home of the brave and free.

I will be remiss of my duty and obligation if don't mention this honorable individual who for the past 4 years of his administration created a culture of giving, rallied Ekose over the world to focus our energy towards the deplorable roads in the Kupe Muanenguba area, championed health and education reform in the Bakossi land and worked with the ABC to set a robust agenda for Ekose development. His character and leadership is worth emulating. It was an honor to be his VICE and work closely with him for 4 years. It is with utmost respect and gratitude to salute Emeritus Joseph A. Ngalle. Please let's give him huge round of applause.

My dear members, our year started quite uneventful, coming from quite an exhaustive year from the robust road project, where as VP, I help oversee its implementation from this side of the world of the shipping and eventual clearing at the port in Cameroon of the third piece of road maintenance equipment, the Motor Grader. I have never been prouder of our collective effort that made this happen. We are equally very proud of our partners who went the extra mile to chip in when duty called to help defray the unexpected additional cost of custom duty at the port in Cameroon. Please join me sending a shout out to BACDA USA DC chapter, BACDA USA DFW

chapter and the Nninong Cultural and Development Association (NICDA USA). Let's give them a round of applause

The ABC

Many of you who may have not been in the loop, or have not been a part of BACDA USA's external activities, or just joining us for the first time, may not know what and who ABC is. The All Bakossi Conference (ABC) is an organization based in Cameroon that was created in 2008, when Bakossi sons and daughters from all over the world came together in Bangem for the first time to champion and brainstorm on strategies for Ekose development. This organization began under the leadership and was championed by no other than Emeritus Sango Larry Ekaney, BACDA USA president at the time. Today ABC is the voice and the conduit under which everything development is channeled. This is the reason why the road project maintenance equipment that was purchased and shipped to Cameroon has been under the auspices of the ABC. **And ABC, together with Bangem and Tombel Councils were able to help maintain the roads and render them passable.**

Together with the ABC, BACDA USA was able to raise a little over 7.6 million frs. CFA that was needed to clear the motor grader from the port in Douala, 6 million of which came from BACDA USA and its partners as mentioned earlier. And so it is my pleasure to acknowledging the leadership of the Honorary President and Minister of Forestry; Mr. Philip Ngwese, of the All Bakossi Conference and its leader, Professor Paul Ndue; and the VP of ABC, Chief Colonel Ngwese. Col. Ngwese has been a devoted and reliable partner, the custodian and coordinator of all three roadside maintenance equipment. Thank you for continuing the great collaboration between BACDA USA and the ABC. Their continued leadership also assisted in facilitating the clearing of the Motor Grader and transportation to Bangem. The dump truck and backhoe are fully operational and generating funds needed to maintain the equipment. The grader had to undergo some maintenance and it is now operation and awaiting work. We have plenty to celebrate. Please let's give them a round of applause

My dear members, despite our close collaboration between the ABC and BACDA USA, I am very concerned about the lack warm, non-challant attitude and the casual way in which our elected officials have been silent as our people continue to struggle. We should be concerned because until our elected officials are able to work with the rank and file Bekose of good will, developing our region will be hard and tedious. I have challenged the leaders of the various clan and village meetings, many of whom have direct relationships with these officials, to inquire as to why their elected officials do not participate in the current road maintenance project and other endeavors carried out by the various development associations.

Dear members, the visions of our past presidents, Emeritus Sango Larry Ekaney, who saw the need for a strong, robust and credible organization/partner at home and one that can speak for all Ekose, hence the ABC and Emeritus Joseph Ngalle, who made a powerful case for a strong and robust collaboration on larger scale with the purchasing of road equipment and eventual implementation, has paved the way for the ABC to file the paperwork necessary for the creation of a Road Construction Company whose main purpose will be to independently access, strategies and implement the maintenance of the roads within the Kupe Muanenguba area. Although the creation is in its infancy, pending finalization of the modus operandi, the idea is to have this new entity fully utilize the equipment we all purchased for the task it was meant for. Please let's give these formidable visionaries a round of applause,

Road Project Overview

Dear delegates, as you are well aware, the past two years has been a ground swelling success story for our union. For starters, and just to refresh your minds, we collectively raised over 50 thousand dollars towards the purchase, shipping and custom duty for the three road maintenance equipment; The Backhoe, dump truck and then the Grader. These were equipment whose role is to help make the roads passable for our people year round. These equipments have been operational for a year now and delivering some good results for our community. The Road Committee is finalizing a comprehensive report on the road project. We shall make that available as soon it is completed.

501 (C) Update

Dear members, I am proud to announce today that through the hard work of our President Emeritus Joseph Ngalle, our 501(c) status has been reinstated. So members, as well as patrons can now deduct convention expenses, national and chapter dues, per IRS regulations. Please contact your tax preparer for advice.

The Myth: Clan vs BACDA USA

Dear convention delegates, in the furtherance of our goal to unit Ekose all over and to refute the myth that our organization is at odds with Bakossi Clan and village groups our administration, in collaboration with Clan groups, organized a teleconference last February 10th, 2016, with the goal of discussing issues that we both agree is the plight of the Ekose area. In attendance were leadership from the following Clan groups and friends: Nyassoso, Nninong, Poala, Mwetan, Elung women, MUADAC USA, Nkikoh, Mwanyoe-Mbogmut, Mwanbong and Harmony group. We are very glad to report that BACDA UDSA is in agreement in principle with the Clan groups on many aspect of development, including healthcare and education. We agree to meet more frequently to discuss areas than we can both partner on and share ideas on ways to help and develop our people.

Dear members, despite our best efforts as a family union and our constant communication from national, we still face challenges within the chapters as concerns compliance with national endeavors, including membership and finance. It should be known that no organization can survive with dwindling membership and funds. It is very important for all to remember that for the umbrella organization, BACDA USA National, to thrive, the chapters must be strong. For BACDA-USA to be able to carry out big projects, like those we carried out the past couple of years, we must be united on our mutual goals and aspirations. It is also generally understood that the vision and alignment of chapter members is equally incumbent on the vision and alignment of its leaders. When the leadership is not engaged on national priorities, the members are not engaged. That, my dear members, you will agree is a recipe for disunity, dysfunction and creates a hostile environment, name calling, rumors, backstabbing, just to name a few, and that it unacceptable.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel. My chapter, DFW, in my opinion, is a model of what we expect in our chapters. Each member knows and it is enshrined in the bylaws that all dues must include, local and national. I would like to seize this opportunity to salute the DFW chapter and their Leader, Mrs. Adeline Ekaney, for navigating this ship in the right direction.

Dear delegates, it is my humble opinion and I am sure you all share my optimism that the state of our union is Strong and the best days of BACDA USA is still ahead. We have been working behind the scenes to craft fresh new ideas that will be rolled out next year.

Legal Affairs Committee

For a long time now we have not been able to consolidate our convention resolutions and updated our bylaws. We are very proud to announce today that our Legal Affairs Committee, with the leadership of Chairman Joel Kalle, our past SG and current DFW chapter president, Mrs. Adeline Ekaney and our current SG, Mr. Crispo Ajang, have been hard at work and has reformatted all resolutions into a comprehensive legal documents that will help strengthen and streamline our bylaws. Please let's give the committee a round of applause. It is our hope and prayers that all chapter general secretaries will join this committee to make sure that chapter bylaws are not in direct conflict with national bylaws and constitution and also serve as a forum where ideas can be shared.

Communication Committee:

Kudos to our Communications Committee for showcasing our organization in a very colorful light for many years now. The award winning GlamMag has been the talk of the town in all of our chapters and even non Bakossians are asking for copies. The BACDA USA Magazine has been the envy of other associations, many of whom have struggled to copy without success. BACDA USA is stepping up a nudge and now is on Twitter...can you believe that! The committee is even in process of consolidating the Facebook accounts. Now we are going places. It is our hope, as we become more exposed through social media, we can interact with more Bakossi of good will,

attract more of the younger generation and share with them the need to belong with us. Please let's give a round of applause to Chairman Maggie Sone and the Communication Committee.

Cultural Committee

Our National Cultural Committee, the custodians of our culture, will continue to coordinate and showcase our annual cultural exhibitions. However, for the first time, the Cultural Committee will work with our Education Committee to develop audio/video archive of Bakossi culture. This will include:

- a) Introduction to speaking Bakossi 101
- b) Introduction to word pronunciation 101
- c) Names of the Various clans
- d) Autobiography of prominent custodians of our culture.

The goal of this exercise is that 25 years from now our children and grandchildren will take advantage to learn the culture, retain their cultural identity and never forget where they came from. They too will be able to build on this success for posterity. We are very proud of the work that the Cultural Committee has done for many years to cast the spotlight on our culture. Please let's give a round of applause to Mr. Ernest Ajang and the Cultural Committee.

Education Committee

For too long our children have not benefited from our collective expertise within our community. Our community is blessed with a diverse group of professionals from different walks of life: teachers, nurses, doctors, pharmacist, physical therapist, social workers, bankers, professors, just to mention a few. Dear members, the Education Committee (EduCom), for the first time will introduce a novel program, the **Mentor-Mentee Program (MMP)**. The purpose of this program will be to assist new Bakosians (Mentees) to our community make appropriate career choices with advice from BACDA USA professionals (Mentors). The mentees could also be members who may want advice on career change. The mentors will be available through a robust database accessed through the BACDA USA web portal. It's our hope that this program will help our members excel in all walks of life.

It is also worth noting here that the EduCom will be re-launching the scholarship program to recognize the achievement of Bakossi children. Please let's give Chairman Alobwede Epie and the Education Committee a round of applause

Health Committee

As we work to ensure that our roads are passable and that we provide educational assistance to our kids in the villages, we should not forget also that a healthy mind and body makes for a sound

and sane person. So we have decided to present a proposal to revamp the popular and sought after health fairs all over the Bakossi area from three central locations. These health fairs will complement the great work that other chapters, clan and village groups are implementing as well. These proposals will be made available immediately after the convention.

Fundraising

For the first time in BACDA USA history, there is a program in which BACDA USA can benefit without having to make great sacrifices. This program has been introduced to our community by one of our own Mr. Larry Sume. The program I am referring to is the Ambit Energy. If we take the time and energy to see what this program has to offer, BACDA USA can transcend our current fundraising strategies.

Closing

As you retire this weekend from this convention, I will like to implore you to engage a fellow brother or sister who has not yet registered or who has not paid their dues or whom you feel may be misinformed about our organization or who may not have heard of the great initiatives that we are currently implementing, and future initiative in the pipeline. There is no better time to join BACDA -USA than now.

I know, sometimes it feels like we are asking for too much from you and you feel drained and overwhelmed. Just think about the villager who has no options, they have crops that cannot be sold because of bad roads, the sick child who cannot afford a hospital trip, a father who cannot send their child to school because he has not been able to sell his crops, a child who is failing in school because they have no text book, and on and on and on. It is only through our collective efforts (all hands on deck) can we achieve greater objectives and make the lives of our people a whole lot better. Please join us in making this possible. Join in making the lives of our people better and more productive.

Dear delegates, we have come this far as a result of your hard work and dedication. We have seen what the love for our people looks and feels like. We came together to create the ABC that is helping navigate our programs and projects in Cameroon. We came together when we created libraries and computer centers in Tombel and Bangem in 2007 and 2008. We came together when we launched several mobile healthcare clinics and health fairs including cataract surgeries in health centers in the Bakossi area 2008 through 2010. We came together when we launched the Road Maintenance Equipment drive in 2012 till today. Dear brothers and sister, I am convinced without a shadow of a doubt that we can come together again if we are engaged and involved. **Yes, we can.** But we will need every hand on deck. We need your commitment once more. We

need for you to come together in your chapters and commit to align with the national agenda. We need our chapter and committee leaders to align with our national programs and together we can impact change like we have never seen before. We need to recommit ourselves to pay our dues so that we can fund the programs and projects that will change lives of our people for years to come.

Thank you all and may the good Lord continue to bless you and your families for this sacrifice. To grant you journey mercies as you travel back to your respective homes.

Long Live BACDA USA

Long Live our Bakossi Region

Long Live Cameroon

Long Live the United States of America

Long Live BACDA USA

Long Live Cameroon

Notes:

- a) Your opening. Make it exciting!!!
- b) **Old Business:**
 - 1) Road project (over view of where we've been, where we are and where we are going
 - 2) 501 (c), Details from Joe Ngale
 - 3) ABC, update on ABC, next fund raiser. Any meeting this year?
- c) **New Business**
 - 1) Culture: Audio/Video
 - 2) Mentor-Mentee
 - 3) Fund raising; Ambit Energy
 - 4) Clan meeting
- D) Strong closing statement.