

BACDA USA 27TH CONVENTION 2017

HOUSTON, TX

THE STATE OF THE UNION

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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 Lone Star State of Texas in the city of Houston. I wish to give our heartfelt appreciation to the hard working members of the Houston Chapter who have spared no stone unturned to make this 27th BACDA USA Convention successful and memorable. It should be noted that it has been ten years that this great city last hosted a convention. This is a testament to their will to rekindle their chapter and establish goals of staying true to the mission and vision of BACDA USA.

My dear delegates, because of the love for Ekose, we have left our jobs, families and friends to strategies on the immense issues facing the development of our region and to better the lives of the inhabitants of this great tribe. I am very pleased to see many of you again after our celebrations in the Boston metro area last year. Your continued commitment is a statement to the rest of the world and testimony to your love for this great association.

My dear delegates, this year may have been a quiet one for BACDA USA activities but it has been a busy one for many chapters but particularly our host chapter which has suffered from the hands of death once more. Mr. Emmanuel Ngole fondly known to many as "Manny" has gone to meet our ancestors few days ago. This is following the departure of another member Mr. Francis and our Ekose Icon- Mr. S.N. Ejedepang-koge. Can we rise for a minute of silence for these wonderful individuals we have lost here and all our other family members we have lost from other chapters and home.

Now permit me to indulge for a few minutes to once more thank the leadership of one of our great chapter. They for countless years have continued 100% dues payment from its members, they continue to believe in the mission and vision of BACDA USA, have about 20% of its membership serving tirelessly on the National executive committee, and set a personal record in fundraising for BACDA USA. They go by the nickname "Small no be Sick" Please join me in thanking Mrs. Priscilla Kwo and the BACDA USA New England Chapter for staying true to the mission and vision of BACDA USA.

Also permit me to use this opportunity to also recognize the dedicated members of my executive who, for the past year, 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 USA.

My dear members, our year started very slow following the convention. However, there is always information to share with this great body.

The ABC and the Road Project

I would like to believe that many if not all are aware of the ABC (All Bakossi Conference) and its role in the Road project. If it is your first time to a convention I will inform you that the ABC is an organization that was created to better manage and execute the development in Ekose primarily with reference to the roads. I will plead that you see my state of the union from last year and the past road project reports listed on our website and then reach out to me or one of the executives for more explanation if needed. Suffice to say that the ABC is to be the central player in bringing the Bangem and Tombel councils together and help assist in maintaining the roads in Ekose.

It is also my pleasure to acknowledge 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

Before I detail the state of our roads and equipments permit me to share an observation. There is a saying that goes “beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder” Depending on the time of the year, when you ask someone who resides in Cameroon how are the roads; in the dry season they will respond, the roads are good and in the rainy season the roads are bad. However, I have been blessed to be in Cameroon and travelled a portion of our roads in the dry season and when they said the roads are good I say the roads could be better. I can only imagine what the roads look like when the rains start. I therefore would like you to understand that state of our roads have subjective findings and or reports.

So that said being most parts of Cameroon are in the rainy season as we convene here today and so the main roads that connect the towns and villages in Ekose are bad. Plain and simple. As regards to the state of our equipments (the Back Hoe, Dump Truck and Backhoe) are all in the Bangem area and it saddens me to report on their current states. The first equipment; the backhoe is in an fair state. It is operational but because of its limited functionality has not been put to much work. Its use was primarily to load sand into trucks. However, it still has a major mechanical problem further limiting its use. The Dump truck is also in a fair state. From the last

report the truck needs a good overhaul but has been limited by the availability of parts. Lastly, the grader is also in a fair state, It has limited functionality but needs a lot of parts to get it functional.

You would observe that I have kept the state of equipments all in a **fair state**. This is simply because with proper funds to purchase, ship and clear the necessary parts, the truck and grader would be in a fully functional state. My preliminary findings of the cost to purchase the parts needed from the last report from the ABC totals about \$15,000. This has been a cost I have struggled for us to bear. I would like to state at this time of my disappointment of the lack of members inquiry on how we can get these parts especially members who have experience in the automobile industry. I can not question our dedication to the success of the program but I question when a report clearly details what is needed and not a single member would start with even a google search to find the cost of one part needed.

Due to the cost needed to get all these equipments fully functional the option of having an entity in the form of a contracting company seemed to be the most cost effective option. Early last year the ABC president, Prof. Ndue had forwarded a document to bring to life such an entity. The ABC was looking at ways 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, the idea is to have this new entity fully utilize the equipment we all purchased for the task it was meant for. The initial document sent to BACDA USA did not meet our standards and a response was sent to the ABC along with follow up calls and texts. The reason why this option was more attractive was because of its cost to setup and eventual organizational structure. The initial cost to get this entity setup was 1,000,000 frs CFA. (\$2,000 depending on exchange rate). It is rather unfortunate that as we are assembled here today, I have not received the revised document in forming this entity.

I know the state of this project looks gloomy but we can reverse this course. To start of I would like everyone to read our road project report. I would like to remind you all that, we as a people collectively raised over \$50,000 towards all these equipments and am proud to say we have a comprehensive report on the road project. Nevertheless, the time is now to make a change collectively. We lost our chair of the committee and would this time ask MEMBERS who continue to have passion for this project to stand up and volunteer in this committee. We can not afford to see our hard earned money go to waste.

501 (C) Update

Our IRS status is up to date and we have filed our taxes for the last filing year thanks to the continued dedication and hard work of our President Emeritus Dr. Joseph Ngalle. So dear members, you are reminded that you can deduct convention expenses, national and chapter dues, per IRS regulations. Please contact your tax preparer for advice.

Clan/ Village and BACDA USA relations.

Following our inaugural teleconference last year, it was agreed by all participants that we meet more frequently to discuss areas that we can both partner on and share ideas on ways to help and develop our people. I report today that we have not called for another meeting with clan and village leadership since then. However, I can say with confidence that most if not all our clans and villages associations are doing well. Some have had and others are preparing to have fundraisers to complete the many projects that impact lives in the Bakossi area. I will dedicate time to meet with the leadership of the clan and village associations

My fellow members, despite our best efforts as a family union and our constant communication from national, it saddens me that we still face challenges within some chapters as concerns compliance with national endeavors, including membership and financial obligations. As I stated last year an organization will have a hard time to survive with dwindling membership and funds. It is very important for all to remember that for the umbrella organization, BACDA USA, 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. I will say it again boldly that 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.

There are currently two chapters that continue to be model chapters in our union. Each member of these chapter knows and is enshrined in the bylaws that all dues must include, local and national. I would like to seize this opportunity to salute the New England and DFW chapters and their Leadership, Mrs. Kwo and Mrs. Ekaney, for navigating their chapters in the right direction, the directions that upholds the mission and vision of BACDA USA.

Dear delegates, it is my humble opinion and I am sure you all will share my optimism that the state of our union is **not** Strong however the best days of BACDA USA is still ahead and our Union will be Strong again. We have been working behind the scenes to recraft new ideas and bring in new programs. It is my hope that next year when we meet we all will be proud to stay our Union is strong.

Legal Affairs Committee

Last year saw the consolidation of our convention resolutions and legal documents that will help strengthen and streamline our bylaws. However, the committee's work is only beginning, I would like to see the committee investigate the possible scenario where BACDA USA transcends its current structure and how it can function wholly with its members in constant communication. It is still my hope 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:

Over the years BACDA USA has seen its newsletter evolve to a Glam Magazine. Kudos to our Communications Committee for showcasing our organization in a very colorful light for many years now. The BACDA USA Magazine has been the envy of other associations, many of whom have struggled to copy without success. However, as you would have noticed this year we do not have a new edition for a few reasons but rest assured that next year there will be an edition and I hope that we equally have a web version to this edition aligning us with organizations that promote a green environment. BACDA USA is continuing its presences on the social media sphere last year i reported we were on Twitter, today i report we have a verified Facebook page as well as a Youtube channel...can you believe that!. BACDA USA is going places. It is my continued hope, as we become more exposed through social media, we can interact with more Bakossi of good will, attract more of the younger generation, have live feeds of our convention and share with them the need to belong with us.

Health Committee

BACDA USA continues to make a strides in making a difference in the lives of the bakossi and its inhabitants. I am very proud to report that with the sum of \$5,000, BACDA USA was able to impact the health of over 700 people in the bakossi area. Our first health campaign took place in Ngusi at the IPA campus where over 300 sick men,women and children were seen over two days. The second health campaign took place at Ekah banjo where over 400 individuals were seen. Of course the execution of this campaign would not be a success without the dedication and commitment of Mrs. Mercy Ngone. Please give her a round of applause for her selfless dedication in seeing a better Bakossi area.

I would like to equally report that that i received a state of all the government health institution in the Bangem Health District. This exercise was carried out by the newly appointment Medical director of the Bangem District . The Report will be made available on our website. I am excited to say with this report BACDA USA, its chapters and clan and village associations can be better prepared to carry out health campaigns. I have asked Mrs. Ngone to reach out to the Medical Director of Tombel district for a similar report.

Education Committee

Last year I reported of new ideas and rebranded ideas that the education committee was to embark on. 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 we introduce a novel program, the Mentor-Mentee Program (MMP). The purpose of this program was 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 be relaunched and help our members and children of Bakossi decent 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

Cultural Committee

Our National Cultural Committee, the custodians of our culture, will continue to coordinate and showcase our annual cultural exhibitions. However, we will be reintroducing, the Cultural Committee to 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 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.

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 its 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

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