

## AKISAN, LA COMMUNITY CHAPTER MARKED THE END OF YEAR 2014 IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA IN STYLE.

On Saturday, December 20, 2014, the Akwa Ibomites, most of who reside in the sprawling Los Angeles (the City of Angels) gathered in an unprecedented number at the Auditorium of California State Polytechnic University (Cal Poly), Pomona, CA. This was on the instance of the First Annual/End-of-the-Year/Inaugural/Award gala Night organized by the Akwa Ibom State Association of Nigeria USA, Inc. (AKISAN) under the leadership of Dr. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem.

The theme of the event was “Working together, we can move a mountain”. The re-united Los Angeles Community chapter has garnered enough energy to withstand any magnitude earthquake or any level tsunami. This was first demonstrated when the newly elected administration used barely three weeks to put up a beauty pageant contestant and three different dance troupes that brought Akwa Ibom Convention hall at Phoenix Arizona to its feet.

When it was time to replicate all these at home, it was like a piece of cake. One would not have been mistaken if the event was renamed “Akwa Ibom Youth Night”. Although the event featured various cultural dance performances by men and women but the array of events exhibited by the youths stole the night.

Weary of losing our children into the nebulous society, the president, Dr. Mbeke-Ekanem, stated in his address, inter alia: “It is estimated that the population of Akwa Ibom in USA today is made up of approximately 70% youth. African adage states that it takes a village to raise a child. Then the question is, what does it take to raise a village? In other words, where there is no village, you have lost children. The thoughts of losing these many kids into the American society is very troubling to many of us the adults and the parents....”

Thus, this event was to create a “village” for our youths and to offer them the opportunity to showcase their creative and unique talents. Among the events was the youth Talent Show. This included individual and group dance displays, rendition of songs, and citation of poetry.



ABOVE: DR. & MRS. ABASIOFIOK IBE KWE GIVE OUT CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE TO A STUDENT

Perhaps the display of “Michael Jackson” by the 7-year Tom, jr. thrilled the entire hall. Daniel Essien who has participated in the national competition also thrilled the audience when he solved complex Rubik cube under 45 seconds.

To prove to the youth that we have now established a vibrant village for them, the LA Community chapter decided to acknowledge and honor their contributions and achievements over the years. This was to show appreciation and encourage them the more. About 150 students, beginning from Elementary School through college, were issued with “Certificate of Excellence”. The chapter also acknowledged two of our youths who excel in international sports. Both Aniekan Archibong and Maurice Edu participated in the Olympics games in 2008 in basket ball and soccer, respectively. Following this, Maurice participated in the FIFA World Cup that was held four years ago in South Africa while Aniekan played in different European basketball clubs. Both were given special *Certificates of Excellence*.

Needless to mention that these youngsters are our best hope for tomorrow. It would be fair to say that they are not restricted by the trivial matters that have inundated our society such as ethnicity. In fact watching them interacting from a corner, one could see their innocence and that they are hardly influenced by the prejudices that have undermined our collective unity. The excitement and enthusiasm these kids have shown on things of their mother land have given us hope



that owe them a duty to provide them with a vision of Akwa Ibom’s future where we can live in peace, unity, and harmony through a celebration of our common heritage.

One of the activities of the night was the launching of the 2015 Almanac to raise funds in support of our mission, one of which is to acquire a community building where our cultures and other issues of life can be imparted to the young by the elders.

In his address, the Chairman of the Board, Pastor Ubong Essien added, “We are here to celebrate and build understanding and awareness. Most importantly, we are here to appreciate and acknowledge our youths...As parents, we have responsibility to start early in their lives to educate them on the values and wisdom embedded in our culture and language so that when we are all gone, they will practice and preserve them.”

The event was chaired by Dr. Ekerete Essien, a recently retired Los Angeles based Psychotherapist. Also in attendance were prominent diaspora professionals and medical providers among them were: Dr. Charles Ukpong, his wife, sister and mother who flew in from Nigeria; Dr. and Mrs. O. T. Udoh of Bakersfield, CA, Dr. Solomon Egbohu and wife, Dr. Eliza Himinez, and Dr. Francis Essien, a Los Angeles based gynecologist and his family, and Dr. Ime Ebong and his wife, both of Cal State University at Bakersfield, CA.

Other diaspora community groups and individuals who showed up in large number were members of NASCA (Nigeria Association in Southern California), the only non-ethnic group in Los Angeles; Mr. Uchenna Nworgu, the Founder and CEO of African Focus; an organization that organizes Annual African Goodwill Awards. This organization inducts eminent African Americans into African families.

The MC of the event was non other than our sister, Mrs. (Evang.) Mercy Afaha, the same one who handled this role for AKISAN at Akwa Ibom Convention at Phoenix last August. Representing AKISAN Phoenix chapter was Uduakobong Ubon, a former chapter president and a most recent National Presidential Candidate. Also in attendance was the president of AKISAN, San Diego chapter, Dr. Mbom Ekiko, who represented his chapter.



In his closing remarks, the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Pastor Joseph Iton, thanked everyone “for the unwavering commitment that led to the success of this event, all due to your collective and individual sacrifices”. He implored all to continue to “support the organization with prayers, donation of services and talent, monetary gifts and ideas, volunteer efforts as have shown in the preparation leading to, in the execution of, and in the aftermath of the hugely successful August Gathering on 20th of December 2014.”

This was, indeed, such a successful event that plans are already in the way for the Second Annual End-of-the-Year Gala in December 2015!

By Dr. Tom Mbeke-Ekanem  
President  
AKISAN, Los Angeles Community Chapter







### AKWA IBOM STATE ASSOCIATION OF NIGERIA (U.S.A), INC.

#### LOS ANGELES COMMUNITY CHAPTER

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"Thank you very much for allowing me to be part of the community and for your love, warmth and support. They help continue to bless every one of you, especially those members who help the community together during difficult times."

— Mrs. Eshen Eshen, General Secretary