

Igbere Progressive Association (IPA), Inc. General Meeting September 3, 2005 in Houston, Texas, USA

Introduction

The Igbere citizens in Diaspora held their first general meeting in Houston, Texas, USA in the evening of Saturday, September 3, 2005.

The President of IPA Texas, OJ Douglas Igwe who presided over the meeting, called the meeting to order around 4:30 PM. He appointed Peter Orji Anyaogu Imaa from IPA California to record the minutes of the meeting. The opening prayers were said by Mr. Dimgba Okorie from California and Dr. Ugo Ike from Pennsylvania.

Group Photographs

After the prayers were said, the President of IPA Texas announced the arrival of some photographers, and humbly requested that all the participants to the meeting step outside for group photographs or group photo shoots.

Meeting Called to order

The meeting came back to order after the photo shoots. Mr. Eme Onyeuku from Georgia, Mr. Peter Uche from New York, Chief Nnenna Ogwo from Washington D.C., Mrs. Elizabeth Agha from Texas, Mr. Udemgba Igu from California, and Mr. Emmanuel Ollawa (President IPA California) were all honored and invited to sit in the front make-shift podium in the company of OJ Douglas Igwe. Other participants to the meeting settled back to their seats for the presentation of the traditional "Cola Nuts." Mr. Eme Onyeuku from Georgia formally presented the Cola Nuts to the Igbere people and their in-laws and their friends. The Cola Nuts were shared to all those present at meeting.

Welcoming Addresses

The President of IPA Texas, Mr. OJ Douglas Igwe made his welcome address followed by a welcome address by Mr. Emmanuel Ollawa, the President of IPA California. The full texts of the welcome address of the host president (OJ Douglas Igwe) were passed out to the members present at the meeting. OJ Douglas Igwe recognized Peter Orji Anyaogu Imaa from California, Atty. Chukwu Oko from Texas, etc. for all their hard work and contributions to make the Igbere Convention event a reality.

Constitution for IPA

Mr. Oko Anyunku Igbokwe from Texas said that the next step in the deliberation should be the drafting of a "Constitution" for a brand new Igbere Organization in Diaspora.

The proposed brand new Igbere Organization also referred to as the "National Executive" will be the Lead Agency and the official policy making body for all the different, but smaller states/regional Igbere organizations (chapters) in Diaspora. The new organization to be established will become the parent organization and also will be responsible for the smaller statewide and regional Igbere organizations in Diaspora.

Mr. Anyaogu Ogba from South Carolina stated that the participants at the meeting were in Houston, Texas for the first ever Igbere Convention in the Diaspora. Consequently, he didn't think that it was the right time and place for the drafting of a constitution. The President of IPA Texas stated that members present needed to elect a "National Executive." The duly elected National Executive will then set up a body or a committee to write the constitution for the new organization. Mr. Peter Uche from New York thanked the President of IPA Texas for his formidable, good and hard work in organizing the first ever Igbere Convention outside of Nigeria. Ojukwu George Nwachukwu from South Carolina supported the idea of setting up a government that will be responsible for the national organization's future missions.

At this juncture, many people wanted to speak at the same time. Atty. Chukwu Oko wanted people to be orderly, remarking that everybody will and should be given the time to make their contributions to the deliberations by speaking their minds. Dr. Ogbureke Kalu Ogbureke from London, England recommended that all our deliberations be conducted in a very democratic fashion. Dr. Ogbureke stated that since it was the first time all Igbere citizens in Diaspora were holding a convention, we must start by finding solutions to the problems in our community Igbere. He went further to say that our efforts must be devoted towards finding a lasting peace and unity in Igbere. Dr. Ogbureke in his final remarks supported the idea of writing a constitution first before doing other things. The President of IPA Texas, who was presiding over the meeting, stated that "we cannot function in isolation." He reiterated the need for the election of a new National Executive before proceeding with other things.

A lively debate ensued between all the participants at the meeting regarding the writing of the constitution. Mr. Kingsley Ollawa from California supported the idea of writing the constitution first. He even went further to suggest that the constitution of IPA California be borrowed and used as the constitution of the proposed new Igbere Organization in Diaspora. In contrast, Mr. Elijah Kalu from Maryland supported the idea of the need to elect a National Executive first, which will then be charged with the task of writing a new constitution for the Igbere Organization. Leonard Ibeka from New York simply stated that we must start

somewhere, maybe with the constitution, the hospital project, etc., but that we must move on with the proceedings.

Registration of Members

Mr. Emmanuel Ukandu from Texas was of the opinion that the membership must decide first on the expected organization's mission and vision. He went further to state that members must start with some form of comprehensive registrations. Igbere citizens, the in-laws, and friends needed to furnish their names, addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses to be recorded in a central place. With such basic information, members may start networking amongst themselves. Sister Elizabeth Agha thanked all the participants for coming to the meeting/convention. She was very appreciative of the fact that we were able finally to come together and gather in Houston, Texas in unity and peace. People were able to see and meet with those that they have not seen in 10, 15, 20, 25, or even in 30 years. Finally, Sister Elizabeth Agha suggested that all participants in the meeting be given the opportunity to formerly introduce themselves to the general audience.

Introduction of delegates to the Convention/Meeting

Digressing a little bit with regards to the constitution debate, Mr. Agbai Ekperi from Washington D.C. educated members in the meeting on the proper ways to perform the cultural "Igbere Ezumezu" greetings. Mr. Ekperi equally recommended that all participants to the convention/meeting be allowed to formerly introduce themselves.

Chief Nnenna Ogwo from Wahington D.C. was in agreement with Mr. Agbai Ekperi's recommendation regarding the introduction of participants at the meeting. She said that the introduction could proceed City by City or State by State. It was unanimously agreed to proceed with the introductions - State by State and in alphabetical order. OJ Douglas Igwe suggested that new regional Igbere organizations (chapters) should pay registration fees of \$350. Mr. Udemgba Igu from California disagreed with that suggestion. He pleaded that unregistered regional chapters should not be required to pay the suggested \$350 registration fees.

The deliberations continued with the introduction of Igbere citizens and all the other participants at the meeting/convention. California was the first state to introduce all its delegates to the convention. Georgia was the next state to introduce its delegates followed by Nebraska. Participants from New York, Maryland/Washington D.C., New Mexico, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South and North Carolina introduced their delegates to the convention respectively. Texas, the host state introduced its delegates to the convention at this time followed by the introduction of the lone delegate from London, England, United Kingdom.

The Reality Organization

After the introduction of the delegates to the convention, Lady Nkasi Nyamah addressed all the participants in the meeting. She urged members to join the "Reality Organization." The Reality Organization happened to be a political organization, working and campaigning hard for the Executive Governor of Abia State, Chief Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu. The activities of the Reality Organization were geared towards the election of Chief Dr. Orji Uzor Kalu as the next President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria come 2007.

National Executive

The President of IPA Texas, OJ Douglas Igwe reminded members that the next item on the meeting's agenda was the election of a National Executive. Mr. Eme Onyeuku from Georgia made a motion, which suggested the creation of a temporary National Executive or a Care-Taker government that will be charged with the task of writing a constitution for the proposed new Igbere Organization in Diaspora. Mr. Mike Awa from Texas supported the creation of a Care-Taker government or committee. He stated that each state or geographical region should nominate someone from its area to be in the Care-taker government or committee. At this time, OJ Douglas Igwe withdrew his earlier suggestion, which would have required unregistered new Igbere regional chapters to pay registration fees of \$350. Instead, he wanted members to define the composition and titles of the soon to be created Care-Taker government or committee. Examples of possible titles of the committee members could be - President, Vice President, Secretary, etc., etc. Mr. Mike Awa suggested that the selected or appointed people from the different regional chapters be responsible for the election of their fellow Care-Taker members to the required committee's different positions. Mr. Samuel Udogu Eke from California suggested that the full house at the meeting elect at least three (3) members of the Care-Taker government.

Another lively but protracted debate ensued once more regarding the creation of a Care-Taker government or Interim government or Care-Taker committee. Mr. Emmanuel Ukandu from Texas supported Mr. Mike Awa's position regarding the formation and composition of the Care-Taker government. Mr. Okorie Ezieme from California, who was also appointed to serve as the Provost at the meeting, supported the election of the Care-Taker government by the full house at the meeting. OJ Douglas Igwe called on the full house to vote on two apparent consensus motions. The motions to vote on were as follows:

1. Election of members of the Care-Taker government by the Igbere citizens present at the meeting.

2. Members of the Care-Taker government should comprise of selected or appointed people from the different regional Igbere organizations (chapters).

Before the full house had the opportunity to vote on the above motions, Mr. Barry Kalu from Texas stated that the ground rules for the elections ought to be defined. Mr. Oko Anyunku Igbokwe from Texas reiterated his earlier suggestion regarding writing of the constitution first before other things could follow. He said that "we do not have a constitution," and hence could not elect people to offices. OJ Douglas Igwe presiding over the meeting insisted on the election of a Care-Taker or Interim government. The Care-Taker or Interim government will then set up a panel that will be charged with the task of writing a constitution for the brand new Igbere Organization in Diaspora.

Official Name for the National Organization

The deliberations proceeded with the discussion of a motion made by Mr. Okorie Ezieme from California. Mr. Okorie Ezieme wanted the members to adopt a name for the proposed brand new Igbere Organization (the National Executive). His suggestion was that the new organization be called "Igbere Progressive Association, USA." Mr. Emmanuel Anyaogu from California and Mr. Chidi Ogbonnaya from Texas all supported Mr. Okorie Ezieme's motion and the name of the new organization. Mr. Agbai Ekperi from Washington D.C. countered with his suggestion of a name for the new organization. He wanted the new organization to be called "National Igbere Progressive Association." Mr. Samuel Udogu Eke from California suggested that the new organization be called "World Igbere Progressive Association." Mr. Emmanuel Ukandu from Texas preferred "Igbere International Progressive Association." Mr. Oko Anyunku Igbokwe from Texas suggested "Igbere Progressive Association International." Chief Nnenna Ogwo concurred with the name "Igbere Progressive Association International, Inc."

The full house eventually voted for two names as follows: "Igbere Progressive Association International, Inc." or "Igbere Progressive Association, USA."

The majority of the participants in the meeting voted for the name "Igbere Progressive Association International, Inc." Generally speaking, IPA International, Inc. crushingly won the majority of the votes. The new National Organization will henceforth be known as the Igbere Progressive Association International, Inc.

Moving forward with the proceedings, OJ Douglas Igwe suggested that the issue of the Care-Taker or Interim government be put to vote at this time. Mr. Saul Onyeuku from Nebraska wanted to know if the new organization will be formed as a "not-for-profit" or "for-profit" organization. Mr. Okorie Ezieme suggested that the

new organization be formed as a nonprofit organization. That was collectively accepted.

Mr. Okorie Ezieme diverted the attention of the full house back to the issue of the Care-Taker government. Mr. Mike Awa from Texas made a motion, which stipulated that the Care-Taker government should comprise of representatives appointed or selected by the different states or regional Igbere organizations (chapters). The representatives may then be trusted with the task of writing the constitution for the newly formed IPA International, Inc. Mr. Mike Awa's motion was supported by Mr. Agbai Ekperi. Additionally, Mrs. Ugo Agwu (Nee Ogwo) from Washington D.C. spoke about the need for Igbere citizens to establish IPA chapters in their different states or geographical regions. She said that existing IPA chapters could advise the new chapters on the processes needed to establish a new IPA chapter. Mr. Emmanuel Anyaogu concurred by urging Igbere citizens who did not have state or regional IPA organizations to establish chapters as soon as possible.

The full house drifted back to the issue of Care-Taker government. Mr. Mike Awa's motion regarding the composition of the Care-Taker government was still up for debate. Another motion was made at this time by Mr. Daniel Onyike from California. He wanted the Care-Taker government or committee to comprise of IPA Texas and IPA California members. His motion was supported by Mr. Okorie Ezieme. Chief Nnenna Ogwo did not support the idea of having only IPA Texas and IPA California members in the Care-Taker government. Mrs. Erinma Juliet Mbonu (Nee Ogwo) from Washington D.C. wanted members from states or regions who did not have IPA chapters to be given the chance to establish chapters.

Composition of the Care-Taker (Temporary) Government

Mr. Esse N. O. Esse from Tennessee made a motion, which called for the members of the Care-Taker government to be selected right from the floor. That meant that every Igbere citizen present at the meeting was eligible to be selected to be in the committee. That motion was unanimously adopted by the full house followed immediately by nominations of individuals to be in the Care-Taker government.

The following Igbere citizens were selected to be in the Care-Taker (temporary) government:

1. OJ Douglas Igwe - Texas
2. Peter Orji Anyaogu Imaa - California
3. Mike Awa - Texas
4. Barry Kalu - Texas
5. Leonard Ibeka - New York
6. Elijah Kalu - Maryland/Washington D.C.
7. Atty. Chukwu Oko - Texas

8. Udemgba Igu - California
9. Dr. Kalu Ogbureke - London, United Kingdom
10. Dr. Ugwa Ogbureke - Georgia
11. Juliet Erinma Mbonu - Washington D.C./Maryland
12. Esse N.O. Esse - Tennessee
13. Okorie Ezieme - California

Mr. Esse O. Esse stated that the mandate of the newly formed Care-Taker (temporary) government included but not limited to the task of defining the mission and vision of IPA International, Inc., the body should also write the constitution of the organization.

Igbere Citizens in London, U.K.

Moving on with the deliberations, Dr. Kalu Ogbureke from London asked a poignant but specific question to all the participants at the first Igbere Convention meeting. He wanted to know what he can say to all Igbere citizens in London regarding the convention when he returned to London. Mr. Chidi Ogbonnaya from Texas told Dr. Kalu Ogbureke to make all Igbere citizens in London aware of the formation of the brand new IPA International, Inc. Further, he must describe to them the things he saw during the convention - the get together, the camaraderie, etc. In addition, Dr. Oko from Texas said that Dr. Ogbureke should tell the people in London to form IPA chapter there, and come to the next convention. He (Dr. Ogbureke) should describe to them in details his experiences during the convention in Houston. Mr. Emmanuel Ukandu told him to say to those in London that no experience can be sweeter than seeing those that one has not seen in years. Mr. Udemgba Igu from California told Dr. Ogbureke to tell the Igbere citizens in London that the main purpose of the convention was to establish a medium for dialogue that may one day lead to a better Igbere. Chief Nnenna Ogwo told Dr. Ogbureke to say to those in London that people in the USA do support the efforts of Governor Orji Kalu in his bid to become the next President of Nigeria. In conclusion, Dr. Ogbureke requested that the minutes of the meeting, the group photographs, etc. be sent to him in London whenever they become available.

Establishment of more IPA Chapters

Mr. Samuel Udogu Eke from California suggested that members should help to spread the news of the new centralized Igbere organization in Diaspora. Mr. Emmanuel Anyaogu encouraged members to organize themselves and register new IPA chapters. Mr. Emmanuel Ukandu wanted the Care-Taker government to help in the recruitment of new members. Mr. Okorie Ezieme said that the Care-Taker government should draft the organization's new constitution within six months (6 months). Mr. Agbai Ekperi stated that members should spread the news about IPA International, Inc. People should organize themselves and establish regional or local

IPA chapters everywhere that Igbere citizens reside. There must be a time frame for people to organize themselves. The Care-Taker government must enforce or set the time frame for people to organize themselves. Mr. Anyaogu Ogba said that people from the same geographical region could organize into one IPA chapter even though members may actually reside in different but neighboring states.

Future Igbere Conventions

Mr. Mike Awa wanted the members present at the meeting to decide when and how to host future Igbere Conventions in Diaspora. Mrs. Ugo Agwu supported the idea of members present to decide when the next convention ought to be held.

Mr. Alfred Onyeuku suggested that the Igbere Convention in Diaspora be held the same time as the Igbere Ezumazu, which meant every three years. OJ Douglas Igwe suggested that the convention be held every other year, which meant every two years. Mike Awa supported having the convention every three years. Mr. Oko Igbokwe supported having the convention every two years. Few (but not very vocal) members wanted the convention to be held every year. Three motions regarding the time the convention was to be held were presented to members to be voted on. The motions were as follows:

1. Should the Igbere Convention be held every one (1) year?
2. Should the Igbere Convention be held every two (2) years?
3. Should the Igbere Convention be held every three (3) years?

The majority of the members present voted overwhelmingly for the Igbere Convention to be held every two (2) years.

The next thing was for members to decide the time of year or date that may be suitable to host the convention. After several suggested dates or certain periods of the year from different members, the majority of the members present voted to have the convention during the Labor Day weekend. Labor Day usually falls on the first Monday of the month of September. The Care-Taker government was charged with the task of deciding the IPA chapter that will host and the place (the City) where the next convention will take place. Mr. Agbai Ekperi suggested that IPA California be considered to host the next convention.

Matters Arising

The next item on the meeting's agenda was "matters arising." The President of IPA Texas, OJ Douglas Igwe suggested that the organization donate some money to the members who will be participating in the "Igbotonma" ceremonies during the 2005 Igbere-Ebiri Ezumazu. Mr. Mike Awa suggested that the organization decide on the amount of money to be given to the members concerned. Mr. Mike Awa was of the opinion that the organization ought to send representatives to Igbere to donate any decided amount of money to the retiring members. Mr. Mike Awa's suggestion was

supported by Mr. Anyaogu Ogba. Some people wanted the Care-Taker government to decide on the amount of money to be given to the members involved with the Igbotonma (retirement) ceremonies. OJ Douglas Igwe wanted members present at the meeting to decide the amount of money that the organization will donate to its retiring members. Several members floated varying amounts of money like \$100, \$200, \$250, \$300 and \$1,000. The suggested but different amounts of money were put to vote, and the majority of members present voted for \$200. Henceforth, IPA International, Inc. will donate the sum of \$200 to each of its retiring members during the Igbere Ezumezu as the case may be until such a time that the program may be amended in one way or another.

The President of IPA Texas, OJ Douglas Igwe read a letter from Mrs. Elizabeth Olekanma Onwubiko (the wife of the late Igwe Onwubiko) from New Mexico. In the letter, Mrs. Onwubiko thanked all the people who consoled and provided monetary assistance to her and her children when her husband died in 2004. OJ Douglas Igwe remarked that the letter of thanks to members was overdue and came very late to members. However, he urged members to forgive the fact that Elizabeth did not come earlier to thank Igbere people for their efforts at that time, rather to accept the letter from Mrs. Elizabeth Onwubiko in good fate.

Moving forward under matters arising, Mr. Mike Awa updated the members present at the meeting regarding the 2005 Igbere Ezumezu. He was convinced that the Ezumezu will be a united event, and he implored IPA to send a representative to Igbere for the event. He further stated that the Ezumezu's organizing committee wanted the Igbere Organization in Diaspora to contribute or donate some money to Igbere during the occasion. On its part, IPA International, Inc. will see to it that all money contributed or donated to Igbere during the event will be accounted for. Mr. Emmanuel Ukandu wanted the general members to respond to the briefing and suggestion by Mr. Mike Awa regarding the Igbere Ezumezu. Mr. Chidi Ogbonnaya responded by saying that IPA International, Inc. just got established, and as such did not have any funds. That fact of life ought to be explained to Igbere people during the Ezumezu. For sure IPA hope to donate money in the future when it must have become better established and equipped to handle such issues. Sister Ugo Eme from New York suggested that IPA pledge some amount of money to be donated on its behalf in Igbere during the 2005 Ezumezu. Mr. Mike Awa disagreed with any excuses that will exonerate IPA from donating money at the 2005 Ezumezu. He vehemently advocated a position that required IPA to donate money to the Igbere people during the Ezumezu. The matter was debated for quite some time. Some people suggested that each member contribute \$5, others suggested \$10. The money contributed by members could then be donated at the Ezumezu on behalf of the organization. Nevertheless, no decision was reached regarding donating money

to Igbere during the 2005 Ezumezu. People at this time were very tired from the unique, lively but long-drawn-out meeting.

Mr. Udemgba Igu from California spoke to the members present at the meeting about an organization that was established by 20 Igbere pioneers in the year 1948. He explained in detail how this group of prominent Igbere citizens came together with an initial amount of "50 Pounds" to establish an organization called "Igbere Development Corporation." They accomplished that remarkable and laudable act during a meeting at No. 51 Jubilee Road, Aba, Nigeria. Mr. Udemgba Igu disclosed the names of the Igbere citizens that were involved in the formation of the Igbere Development Corporation in 1948. He urged all Igbere citizens to emulate the good work and efforts of our past elders, and to work in that same spirit to achieve even greater things for Igbere in the future. Above all, he urged members to strive to be honest, faithful and progressive in all that they do. In conclusion, Mr. Udemgba Igu presented "Okwa Ose", several "Oji" and several "Akilu" to OJ Douglas Igwe. The kind gesture was to thank OJ Douglas Igwe for all his efforts and hard work to make the first ever Igbere Convention in Diaspora a reality. The President of IPA Texas, OJ Douglas Igwe showed his gift to everyone at the meeting and thanked Mr. Udemgba Igu immensely for the gift.

Chief Nnenna Ogwo suggested that one of the organization's future missions should include formulating means of raising funds to be used in solving IPA's problems without dipping into the organization's purse or pocket.

Finally, OJ Douglas Igwe read to the full house the planned program of events for the next day. The next day was the main Igbere Convention Day.

Mrs. Josephine Onyeuku from Nebraska said the closing prayer of the meeting. The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 PM US Central Standard Time.

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cc: (IPA Texas, IPA California, All Members)