

The State of Our Union is Strong

Umu nnem na Umunnam Ekene! E-kene! E-kene m Unuoo.

It is with great pleasure as an Izuogu indigene and a member of this great union, APUNJ that I convey to you the state of our union. As 2008 draws upon us, which also brings to an end the two year term of the current executives, I will like to reflect on the state of our union. But first of all, my fellow members of APUNJ, the state of our Union is strong. It is your fervent endeavors, selflessness and dedication couple with your unselfishness to our organization that is instrumental in strengthening our union and making this job a lot easy. I salute you immensely. I will like to thank all of you our members for your unparalleled steadfastness, devotion and love for one another which have been the bedrock of our organization. All of you made APUNJ the best and most admired Izuogu community in the North America, if not in the world. Let us continue to work in making in setting good examples to our community.

It will be an understatement to say that the past two years has been “business as usual” for any one of us nor for the organization as a whole for that matter. The past two years for me personally, has been very challenging but rewarding times. Our organization has grown and matured beyond imagination and far from the reach of our critics.

If I were to look back at what we have accomplished in the past two years, I am filled with admiration for all of you. We have all taken this organization from a self focus infant organization to focus on what matters the most; our children. We have in most occasions, extended a piece of our big hearts and pockets to reach out to our brothers and sisters at other APU branches across the U. S when it matters most. We did it with humility and big smiles on our faces despite oppression and alienation from other branches.

We have outwits the test of time and have stood up for our beliefs despite humiliation and dissociation imposed upon us by other APU branches. We have made our children and our people proud. Our readiness to embrace peace and progress for our people and our vigorous response to other challenges that we face as Izuogu people in Diaspora are some of the qualities that set us apart from other organizations.

Ikeji/Summer Picnic

We are steadily devising and encouraging steps to strengthen the ways in which we display our rich cultures to our audience. In the future, I will like our organization to create a coalition of people that will continue to review and recommends how we present our culture in a consistent fashion that showcase the richness of our Aro culture. We had successful Ikeji celebrations and I look forward to many more successes. This year is our fifth anniversary. The 2008 Ikeji committee and everyone else are working hard and making every preparation to make sure that our 5th anniversary is a memorable and enjoyable one.

Our summer family picnic has always been a time and place to relax and enjoy each other’s company. Our children and our youth have not participated as we would have liked, but I hope that we do not give up on them. Let us continue to find ways to appeal to our younger ones. I know that this year, our family picnic will be bigger and more enjoyable than before. Let us send an invite to our neighboring brothers and sisters to come and socialize with us. Oriaku Gloria

Onwuka and Oriaku Chidi Okereke have been doing a wonderful job of organizing the picnic on our behalf. They have consistently and relentlessly made sure that we all have the best location and a worry free picnic. I will like to extend my sincere gratitude to them. I will also like to say thank every one of you who helped to make the occasion a success.

APUNJ and the Future Generation

The greatest asserts we have as a people are our children who represents our future, our parents who nurtured our past and our community that defines our present. We have responsibilities to all of them to define ourselves. Our children are our future and we have the responsibility to make sure that they have the necessary tools that they will need to uphold the values of who they are; an Arondizuogu indigene “Umu Chukwu,” so that they can become valuable citizens in the country in which they find themselves and uphold the values of their lineage. We have to realize that our children are our future who will continue with our tradition, our way of life and most especially, uphold their identity as Izuogu descendants. We have to lay the foundation now so that we do not become the first and the last generation of Nigerians and most especially, Izuogu in this part of the world. Let us invest in our children to assure the existence of our future.

In 2006, we launched the first Igbo classes for our kids in order for them to learn Igbo language and Aro culture. I will encourage all parents to participate in this Igbo language/cultural classes so that our children can continue to learn our way of life. Mazi Nnaemeka Ikoro, I salute you for all of your efforts in coordinating the children Igbo class.

We launched the first youth forum for our youth to focus on the needs and growth for our young adults. The youth forum is the avenue for our young adults to socialize and discuss issues that may be facing them as they maneuver themselves through the webs of emotional entanglements of belonging to two different cultures. We as a people can not afford to loose our youth as we speed into the new millennium of social uncertainties. We have to lay the foundation for our children now, so that we do not become the first and the last generation of Nigerians and especially, Izuogu in this distant land. I will appeal to all of our parents to please make every effort to encourage their children and include them in Igbo affairs. The youth forum caters to our young adults between the ages of 14 years old to 30 years old. Our older youths (especially the working adults) between the ages of 25 to 30 may choose to join the general meeting.

APUNJ Projects

We initiated our first Medical mission to our hometown, Arondizuogu. This is a project of personal importance to all of us. We have not been able to execute the project as of now, because of the death of one of the key project manager’s mother. May her soul rest I peace. Our goal is that the Medical Mission project will be implemented during this year Ikeji celebration at home. I appeal to all of you to please join hands to ensure that this Medical mission project is executed successfully.

We will have to further implement various initiatives and projects that we started in the previous year. Our project committee outlined the ways that projects can be funded by our union. One of those outline, is to initiate projects to benefit us here in New Jersey. Therefore, I look forward to APUNJ investing here in New Jersey. I propose that we start to launch “Obi Izuogu” building fund and plan to inaugurate Obi Izuogu in New Jersey. I am confident “Yes we can” that we can

accomplish all of these things as we are prepared from the “tail wind” generated from our enthusiasm for progress.

In conclusion, we are steadily devising and encourage steps and measures to strengthen the operating fabrics of APUNJ. As a people, we will continue to work hard to minimize indisciplinary attitudes while respecting individual attributes. APUNJ is not a forum for personal attacks, insults or long speeches. Thank God. It is rather a forum to harness individual attributes, promote cultural disciple, and encourage growth and healthy networking.

In 2007, we rejoined Izuogu family in North America after a request from APUNCNA for us to reconsider and join the broader Arondizuogu family. We accepted. We accepted because of the love of unity and progress that is the showcase of APUNJ members. As we rejoin our brothers and sisters, we look forward to impact the affairs of APUNCNA and consequently, effect positively in the lives of the people in our home town, Arondizuogu.

We had a successful end of the year party and I commend our director of children’s affairs. I thank Ada Mazi Priscilla Nwankwo and her fellow directors of children’s affair for organizing and teaching our children. We have focused our attention on our children and the future of who we are; Izuogu people. We still have challenges ahead of us, but nothing that we can not overcome. We have showed that we are resilient and steadfast. We have to bring our children together and provide a forum for them to network with one another. We owe this to them, and we owe it to ourselves.

We are putting a lot of efforts in the planning for the celebration of our 5th anniversary. No one can do this alone. We need each and everyone to contribute in making this year’s Ikeji the most successful celebration. “Yes, we can. We will need each and everyone to participate to build the great walls of our dreams. Yes, we can. If you can’t be a wall, be a brick. If you can’t be a bush, be the branch and if you can be a highway, be a trail. For together we can build and stand. No progressive ethnic group has prospered and excelled by non-involvement, inactivity or self-centeredness. It is by involvement, commitment, selflessness and zeroing on the bigger picture that have put all of the progressive groups like the Jews, Japanese, Koreans and the Indians in the cockpit of success in this country.

I challenge us to join together in the quest for a better tomorrow for our children who represents our future, our parents who nurtured our past and our community that defines our present. The state of our Union is strong and that is because of you.

To all of the current executives, I salute you for your exceptionally devotion to your call to duty. Thank you and may God Bless our union, and our home town Arondizuogu.



Chris Awam
President, APUNJ