

Preparing for OPASS' Golden Jubilee: Our Duty, Our Charge

Keynote Speech Delivered By

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At the
5th Annual Reunion

of the
Ofori Panin Secondary School (OPASS) Alumni Association of North
America

Master of Ceremony, platform guests, *mpaninfo*, families and friends of OPASS, invited guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is with great honor and humility that I stand before you to deliver this keynote address for this august occasion: the dawn of our dear alma mater's Golden Jubilee.

I felt very humbled when I received a phone call from Edna Takyi inviting me to serve as one of the speakers for this year's reunion. I felt even more humbled when Edna informed me later that the other speaker is His Excellency Professor Danso-Boafo, Ghana's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom. However, I understand that the High Commissioner could not attend this reunion due to an urgent national assignment he had to attend to.

The topic for my speech tonight is "Preparing for OPASS' Golden Jubilee: Our Duty, Our Charge". This is in sync with the theme for this reunion, "OPASS at 50: What are our Roles and Responsibilities?" The essence of our gathering this evening is to deliberate on our roles and responsibilities, on our duty and our charge towards our dear alma mater, Ofori Panin Secondary School (OPASS), as she steps into the threshold of her Golden Jubilee.

I will like to focus my speech on our roles, responsibilities, our duty, and our charge as Alumni, but before I do that please indulge me by allowing me a few minutes to reminisce on how OPASS participated in preparing me to be where I am at today by God's grace. I believe all *mpaninfo* gathered here have similar stories to tell about how OPASS has benefited you.

In my reminiscence, permit me to list a few of the numerous ways OPASS prepared me, with God's grace, for today. OPASS prepared me spiritually and academically. I was inspired by the leadership of our former Headmaster, Mr. S. T. Ampofo ("Oga") who is described in the literature as the real founder of OPASS; by our Assistant Headmaster, Mr. Twum-Danso; by great teachers like Mr. Budu, Mr. Yeboah, and Mr. Amoyaw (Gadeamus); by great prefects and students like Evelyn Teye, Joyce Peprah, Kate Mensah, and Comfort Agyekum; and by the Scripture Union. These and all of the OPASS community together, with God's grace, helped shape me for my subsequent journeys: attending university, attending graduate school, and teaching in a university. The foundation that I received from OPASS, which I believe is similar to what all Opassians receive, equipped me with academic, spiritual and social discipline - the type of discipline everyone needs for the road I have traveled on. Let me cut this story short, due to lack of time, and iterate that all *mpaninfo* are who we are today by God's grace, thanks in part to OPASS. Consequently, each of us has a duty and responsibility to do our quota for the advancement of our dear alma mater.

What then are our roles and responsibilities, especially as we prepare for the forthcoming Golden Jubilee? I believe our roles and responsibilities are as numerous as there are former Opassians. In other words, each of us can play a specific role or take on a specific responsibility that will enable OPASS, as an institution, attain the ranks of the Achimotas, the Mfantsipims, the Accra

Academys, the Holy Childs, and the Wesley Girls. What am I postulating? I am postulating that each of us can help lead OPASS into becoming an Ivy League secondary school in Ghana in this and subsequent centuries. *Mpaninfo*, you will agree with me that this will take a lot of hard work, determination, perseverance, and of course, God's help. This, I believe is our duty and our charge.

In the next few minutes, allow me to share with us a few of the ways I think we can embark on this feat together. As part of my preparation for this speech, I decided to sit in the meetings of the Executives and Planning Committee for this reunion so I could learn from them. The president and the committee members were very gracious and gave me permission to participate in their meetings. I learned a lot from the committee and will like to utilize this opportunity to applaud their outstanding work towards making this reunion a great success. Mr. President, Executive Committee, and Planning Committee members, congratulations on a job well done. The roles and responsibilities they took on are some of the ways we can engage in accomplishing the feat of ushering OPASS on to an Ivy League status.

I learned from the executives that OPASS has a wish list which I will like to reiterate here. The list includes building of a sick bay/health center, building a boys' dormitory annex, additional dinning hall table and benches, upgrading the road network within the masters' and mistresses bungalows, additional classroom chairs and desks, and bunk beds. This wish list may seem too much, but I hope that we, as an organization, will be able to honor some, if not all, of this list in the years

to come. I hope that in our deliberations tonight, we will make definite decisions about the items on this wish list.

As individuals, there are a plethora of roles and responsibilities each of us can engage in. I will state as many as I can here with the belief that each of us will pledge to take on one or more of these roles and responsibilities.

Ways to Help OPASS

- Adopt a student and pay his or her fees until he or she graduates from OPASS.
- Provide annual or term-by-term scholarships to one or more students.
- Give book, stationery or uniform scholarships to one or more students.
- Donate books, stationery or uniforms.
- Adopt a dormitory and donate beds, mattresses, bed sheets, pillows, pillow cases, toiletries, etc. to that dormitory.
- Adopt a dormitory room and donate beddings and toiletries.
- Adopt a dormitory and renovate that dormitory.
- Adopt a dormitory room and renovate that room.
- Adopt any of the buildings on campus such as the Administration building, classrooms, bungalows, etc. and renovate that building or provide furniture for that building.
- Adopt a House. Please correct me if I am wrong. My understanding is that the Houses are still called House 1, House 2, House 3, and House 4. I think

it is about time for the houses to be renamed after individuals who have made or make invaluable contributions to a House such as adopting a House and making donations for the upkeep of the House.

- Endow a teaching position.
- Adopt the school library.
- Donate money for field trips for students.
- Donate furniture.
- Buy a vehicle for the school.
- Visit the campus and encourage the teachers, students and administrators.
- Mentor a teacher.
- Mentor a student.
- Guest-teach while on a visit to Ghana.
- Bequeath property that can generate income for OPASS in your will.
- Establish a scholarship fund in memory or honor of a loved one.
- Do individual fundraising for the benefit of OPASS. Talking about individual fundraising, I am going to lead by example. I will donate a portion of the proceeds from the sale of my CDs and books at this reunion to the association to be used specifically to buy furniture for the school library in memory of my grandmother, Madam Adjoa “Odihyire” Yeboah and my mother, Madam Christina Abena Bempomaa Amankwah. Please buy all the

CDs and books I brought so I can make a substantial donation for this purpose.

- The association recently donated computers to OPASS. Bravo to this association for the donation.

Mpaninfo, I can go on and on and on about what each of us or the association can do to shift OPASS from a school in a state of academic and infrastructural dystrophy to an Ivy League school. Our elders say that “*Agoro eeye de no, na adee eesa nkurasifo*”. For our purposes I will say that “*Agoro eeye de no, na adee eesa kuromfo*”. So I will pause here and make my concluding remarks.

The theme for this occasion is “OPASS at 50: What are our roles and responsibilities?” I think our roles and responsibilities lie in the motto of OPASS, “*Dwen na Som*” (“Think and Serve”). “*Dwen na Som*” points to academic scholarship and service to humanity. As the philosophical underpinning of Opass, “*Dwen na Som*” is the basis of all that happens at OPASS. All students who attend OPASS are drilled and grounded in thinking and service. As a result, all graduates of OPASS become thinkers and servers. All *mpaninfo* gathered here can attest to the fact that OPASS, by God’s grace, contributed in no small way in making us thinkers and servers.

Mpaninfo, let us go and continue living this philosophy we were blessed to be grounded in. Our roles, our responsibilities, our duty, and our charge are “*Dwen na Som*”. We must continue to think and serve. Think and serve God.

Think and serve humanity. Think and serve our dear alma mater OPASS. I have outlined some of the ways that we can serve OPASS as an organization and as individuals. It is said that “A word to the wise is enough”. I think a word to the wise is not enough until the wise act upon the word. Let us act upon this word to the wise which has been given tonight. Thank you for thinking and serving. Thank you in advance for serving Ofori Panin Secondary School by helping propel her into Ivy League status. *Mpaninfo*, men and women of wisdom, thank you for listening. I rest my case.