

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

AT THE 6TH ANNUAL REUNION OF OPASS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF NORTH AMERICA SATURDAY, JUNE 18, 2011 IN VOORHEES, NJ

Madam Chairperson, the Hon. Nii Amasah Namoale (our Dep. Minister for Agriculture), Dr. Godfried Antwi Arthur, (our keynote speaker), executives and members of the Planning Committee, my fellow OPASSIANS, friends, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of the executive officers, I welcome you all to tonight's function – the 6th Annual Reunion of '*mpaninfo*' in North America. In particular, we welcome and say a big thank you to our visiting, honorable minister for taking time off his official schedule to join us at this function.

Since the inauguration of this association in 2006, *mpaninfo* have assembled like this twice in VA, and then in NY, OH, CT, and tonight in New Jersey. Once again, we have gathered here to renew and strengthen old friendships, make new friends, socialize and have fun with our HS class and schoolmates. However, as we do so, we should not lose sight of our primary goals for these annual reunions – i.e. to raise funds, share ideas, develop plans and strategies and ultimately implement them to help enhance the status of OPASS - our alma mater – as one of the best SHS in Ghana. I know that some of you enjoy these annual reunions so much that you've not missed a single meeting. But regardless of how many times you've attended these reunions, I hope that your experiences here tonight will motivate you not to miss future reunions.

Ladies and gentlemen, two years ago, you elected me as president of this association together with a dynamic group of executive officers and you gave us the mandate to lead this association for a 2-year term which ends shortly. Tonight, it's my pleasure to stand before you and, on behalf of your executives, give an account of our stewardship of this association at the end of our term in office. First, I thank you all very sincerely for giving us the opportunity to serve our association in various leadership positions. Second, I wish to express my personal gratitude and thanks to our executive officers for their commitment and dedicated services to this association during the past couple of years.

Since last October, your executives, the Planning Committee, and a few members of the association have spent several hours participating in bi-weekly and weekly conference-calls to plan and prepare for tonight's event. I ask you to join me in thanking them for making this function possible. Please stand and be recognized when I mention your name and you're here tonight:

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| (1) Ben Awuah – Vice President | (7) Godfried Bugyei – Financial Sec & Amb W. Coast |
| (2) Edna Agyekum - Secretary | (8) Doris Awuah - Ambassador SE |
| (3) Robert Henking – Asst-Secretary | (9) Samuel Agyei – Ambassador New England |
| (4) Emmanuel Osafo – Treasurer | (10) Stephen Oduro –Ambassador NE (excl. New Eng) |
| (5) Charles Appiah – Organizing Secretary | (11) Pastor Seth Asomaning-Planning Committee Member |
| (6) Evans Twum-Danso – PRO | (12) Philip Oware – Planning Committee Member |
| (7) Alex Anim Mensah - Asst. PRO | |

I would also like us to say a big thank you to some special people. The first person is not even a member of this association and yet has played an invaluable role in organizing this event. She participated actively in the search for an ideal venue for this meeting and when the executives and the planning committee selected this venue, she negotiated and signed the rental agreement. She also called several members in NJ, asking for their participation, planning the food and drinks, setting up and decorating this place. May I please ask my dear wife, (Esther) to stand up and be recognized. The second person is our own DJ – *Opanin* Oduro Ampaw – who volunteered his services to play for us tonight free of charge. We thank you, *opanin*. To all our ladies and gentlemen who brought in various dishes and drinks for our enjoyment tonight we're very grateful to you. Your contributions have saved our association the expense we would have incurred on catering service and drink purchases - thank you! Last year, we spent \$1,450.00 on food catering service and drinks; this year our expenditure for both is less than a quarter of that amount. We would also like to thank the two young men who volunteered to serve us tonight at the bar – Fred Twum-Acheampong, Jr. and his friend Corey Bailey; guys we thank you for your services. Last, but not the least, we wish to express our sincere thanks to our sister Doris Darkwaa Korang (aka “DD”) who has consistently supported this association with financial and material donations. Last year, she donated \$300.00 as well as some African crafts that we sold to raise funds during our reunion in CT and just last week, she sent us a generous donation of \$500.00. “DD”, we truly appreciate your support, thank you. Finally, I bring you sincere greetings and best wishes for a successful reunion from our VP and his wife (Ben & Doris Awuah), our assistant secretary, Robert Henking, Prof. Alberta Yeboah, Dr. Kingsley Lartey, and ‘DD’ who are unable to be with us for various reasons.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is an expression that an organization is only as good as its people. I believe this truism applies equally to our association because the common vision, values and standards we share, expect and demand of each member determine whether or not we are willing to do whatever it takes to make our association worth its name and existence. As an association, our joy should be complete only when we know that we're accomplishing the primary objectives we

set for our association – i.e. contributing to make a difference in the life of current and future OPASSIANS. Only then can you and I have a sense of pride in this association. Therefore, let's remember always that we have a collective obligation to give back to our alma mater (OPASS) because the school unquestionably gave us a solid education and prepared us to become whoever we are today.

Now, let me address two areas of our stewardship – accomplishments, and challenges. I will then conclude with my personal view of what needs to be done to advance the goals and aspirations of this organization.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Since our last reunion, we have added five new members to the association. Our current bank account balance is \$9,280.00. Tonight, we'll earmark a substantial amount to finance a Sick Bay project for our school in joint partnership with the Class of '79 and possibly with additional support from our counterparts in UK.
- You may recall that in November 2009, we presented ten new computers, a network printer and accessories worth over \$7,000.00 to our school to help upgrade their Computer Lab. Last year, your executives proposed to the school administration to name the computer lab after Mr. S.T. Ampofo, (the 2nd headmaster) in recognition of his many years of dedicated leadership of our school. When I went back home last August, I visited the school and presented to the headmaster, Mr. Kyei-Brobbey, a letter with our proposal. He, however, informed me that his administration had already decided to name after Mr. Ampofo a street at the campus that they hoped would give his name more exposure than the computer lab. The street naming ceremony will be done prior to the climax of the school's Golden Jubilee celebration on November 26th.
- Also, last August, we presented to Mr. S.T. Ampofo an amount of GHC300.00 (C3 million) as our gift to him on his 86th birthday. He wrote later to express his appreciation and thanks to us for our thoughtfulness and for thinking of him in such a special way.

Briefly, these are our key accomplishments for the period under review. Could we have done more during the past two years? Yes, absolutely, but for a number of challenges that limited our efforts.

B. CHALLENGES - Let me highlight two of them.

➤ **Lack of adequate support from the general membership.** It has become increasingly apparent to me that a lot of our members have lost their interest, enthusiasm, and support for our association. Let me give you two supporting evidence. First, during the last three months, your executives extended several invitations to all members to join us during our bi-weekly conference-calls to provide a wide range of input for the success of this event but unfortunately only a couple of people cared enough to dial-in a few times. Second, on paper, we have..... registered members. However, out of that number only thirty members attended last year's reunion in CT and tonight, we have only about 25 members. The question is where are the other *mpaninfo*?

As some of you may know already, it's relatively easier to lead a localized association that meets monthly than one like ours with nation-wide membership that meets annually. However, I believe that regardless of our geographical locations we can still participate in the activities of our association if only they are that important to us. It would be rather easy for each of us to give a number of excuses to justify why we cannot play active roles in this organization but then our association will be as good as dead! We must not allow that to happen. In deed, we must all realize that the success of our association depends on the collective effort and support of all members and not just on a select group of *mpaninfo*?

➤ **Cash Flow Problem** - The second challenge was how to generate adequate cash-flow to fund viable projects for our school. Our financial records show that since the inauguration of this association in 2006, the majority of our members have failed to pay their monthly dues, contrary to the tenets of our Constitution. Obviously, without adequate funds in our bank account, we simply can not finance any project to benefit our former school. Tonight, we'll decide whether or not to amend our Constitution and do away with dues payment and replace it with an alternative means for generating funds. I ask that you consider this issue thoughtfully before you cast your vote.

C. LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE

I would like to restate one salient point in my speech at last year's reunion. We simply cannot meet annually and eat, drink, dance, and socialize and not give back to OPASS, our alma mater. I know that we have a limited number of members who are willing to make the necessary commitment and sacrifices needed to achieve our goals. However, we must not leave the task to only those people. We must all rededicate ourselves to the goals and ideals that we stand for. Quite frankly, we

cannot and must not allow our individual, hectic schedules, workload, and issues to cripple our interest and support for this association.

Tonight, we will be electing new officers to lead this organization for the next two years. I'm optimistic that this crop of leaders will care so deeply about our objectives and work tirelessly to develop strategies that'll continue to transform our association. However, on their own, they cannot do much. Therefore, I ask for your full commitment and support for them so that together, we can strive to attain our set goals. I believe that an environment of open communication and collaboration produces positive results so I would like to encourage all members to participate fully in the affairs of this organization. Be ready and willing to provide the executives with different perspectives on issues impacting the association and do not hesitate to give them constructive criticism, whenever necessary.

Before we leave here tonight, I ask each member to rekindle your interest and support for this association. In addition, let's go from here and mobilize all other *mpaninfo* so that we can utilize our united strength and collective resources to help improve teaching and learning as well as student life in general for the current and future students of our beloved OPASS.

Long Live Mpaninfo!

Long live the OPASS Alumni Association of North America!

Long Live OPASS!

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Thank you all!
