

UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

A KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY
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At the
16th ENA CONVENTION IN SEATTLE WASHINGTON USA

All protocols observed.

My brothers and sisters, it is a great honour to be here delivering this key note address at the 16th ENA convention in Seattle Washington in the Pacific North West. It is not an accident that we are here because there are similarities between our homestead Edo land and the county of Seattle Washington.

Whereas Benin Kingdom was a Great Empire, Seattle was a great maritime port. Both cities were razed to the ground about the same time more than a century ago. While Benin City was plundered and burnt by superior forces, Seattle was destroyed by hay fire. Both cities have risen from their ashes and become famed for their products, Seattle for aircraft manufacturing and Benin for bronze and brass casting.

Whereas the revival of Seattle was facilitated by the gold rush, of 1897 the revival of the Benin Kingdom was facilitated by the people's tenacity, hard work and resolve, doggedness, determination and total commitment to a developed Edo Kingdom. Has that spirit left us today?

That is the question we shall explore in this discourse.

The topic: Unity in Diversity was well chosen as the theme for this convention. Although the topic: Edo Unity has been flogged so seriously in the last few years, we keep coming back to it as it is clear that the gospel of Edo Unity which I preached in Dallas Texas in 2004, Verona, Italy later in the same year, Darmstadt Germany 2005 is yet to be completely assimilated by our people especially those in the Diaspora.

The message of unity in diversity was ever first preached by W. Carl Ketcherside as reflected in his books, essays, sermons, and journal articles. We shall follow in his footsteps as there is a lot for our people to gain in the crusade for unity. The same theme, Unity In Diversity, chosen for this Convention is one phrase which best characterizes what we seek in Edo State presently and maybe many decades to come so that the rot of greed deposited by the godfather politicians can be completely swept away from our domain.

It is the lack of unity which epitomises greed, ethnicity, clannishness, tribalism, lack of accountability, nepotism, partiality, bias, prejudice, discrimination, unfairness, rigging at elections and some subtle apartheid in the disbursement of available resources to our people by those who by accident of history hold brief on behalf of our people.

What is Edo Unity?

Using my 2004 definition,

Edo Unity is pursuing a common goal and possibly a common agenda for the benefit of Edo people.

Edo Unity is speaking with one voice in dealings within the State and more importantly with the Federal government and the outside world at large.

Edo Unity is aligning and re-aligning with the government at the centre for the benefit of our people.

Edo Unity is realising that although our clans are many and varied but we constitute a part of a single whole that is Edo Kingdom.

Edo Unity imposes on those at the helm of affairs to use the available resources for Edo people without damaging Edo economy by taking our money to foreign banks.

Edo Unity imposes on Edo in Diaspora to taking active part in the issues that concern Edo State and contributing their widow's mite to the self-help development projects of Edo State.

Edo Unity is constructive criticism and the avoidance of smear campaigns.

Edo Unity is disagreeing in harmony without drawing each other's blood.

Edo Unity signifies all things good for Edo people irrespective of their clan wherever they may be.

Edo Unity is facing our worst fears and turning our failures into success.

Edo Unity is re-orientating ourselves, our thought processes towards honour for achievements rather than praise and respect for those with ill-gotten wealth.

Edo Unity is celebrating our achievements and cultural heritage.

A united Edo State is a fortress and building block for a strong and united Nigerian Nation.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST Edo Unity.

*** POLITICAL GREED**

We have a bad concept and attitude that developed in the last few years and this concept has swallowed our fore fathers' spirit of live and let live. The concept of you can choose after me but not before me. The concept of when we all have what is desirable there is no jealousy. That attitude has completely been eroded by the new concept of when I choose, no one chooses after me if he is not my son or my family member. You cannot have the same things that I have or even aspire to have it. I would always wish to be before you in all spheres of life.

This attitude has led to winning at all cost, even when it means annihilating your opponents by whatever means. This attitude is ungodly and may some day lead the whole kingdom into anarchy by sudden implosion. There is enough of what a human being can take. If we have to be united then we must learn to share and jettison the attitude of the winners takes all.

Government must show all inclusiveness and this support proportional representation which is practised in established democracy of the world.

Placing square pegs in round holes in the name of party patronage is counter productive. This leads to absence of opposition which in itself facilitate growth, progress and excludes the concept of one party state which easily leads to a slipping slope of demagogy and dictatorship.

In the recent screening for ministerial positions, it was reported that a woman was given a ministerial position because he is a widow and her middle name is progress. How can our people continue to bow their heads, when such frivolous criteria are used for giving jobs when the individual has no antecedents? So long we continue to give responsible posts to those whose only merit is their family name so long we shall continue to dwell in misery and poverty,

So long people continue to bow their heads without raising a voice when evil and bad

Precedents are being set, so long our people will continue in penury.

*** ETHNICITY.**

In spite of the fact that all of us know our ancestry, that all Edo people migrated out of Oredo at one time or the other during our chequered history, we still see ourselves based on our ethnic- linguistic groupings. Unlike any other State in our country, Edo State has the singular privilege of being historically and culturally linked. This makes Edo State one of a homogenous people which should be a source of strength but it seems to be our undoing.

Whereas Ekiti, Egba, Ijebu will answer to being Yoruba in spite of their obvious differences. You are more likely to hear that I am Esan or Ekpoma man rather than being an Edo, I am an Auchi or Ora person, rather than claiming Edo.

It is true Edo is a place Benin City and it is a people, Edo. The people of Oredo can no longer claim to be Edo people alone. Edo now encompasses all the people of Edo State with the aforementioned same origin. The ruling houses of all Edo State towns and villages have blood link to the Oba of Benin as at various times in our history, brothers and cousins were sent to these places to govern on behalf of the Oba. Can the river bed ever be greater than the river source? Those who are trying very hard to rewrite or distort our history will never succeed

If above is true while will anybody wants to give all the posts accruing to Edo State to the people from one town. Such actions do not bode well for unity.

*** CORRUPTION**

This is the most intractable problem of our nation and State. The issue of corruption has been flogged by all so we shall not dwell too much on it only to say that it has to be tackled head on if we are to succeed. The issue of oten mwen no, egbe mwen no oh has to be set aside in dealing with any airing individual who corruptly enriches himself/herself to the detriment of our people.

*** POLITICAL GOD FATHERS**

In everywhere in the world, there are political godfathers, party sponsors and elders. In our

country this has taken a new dimension. Such sponsors now wish to dictate every aspect of governance to the government; appointments, retrenchments, board memberships and some have a stipend for doing nothing. To get nomination one has to declare allegiance to these so-called godfathers and swear to an oath to prevent deviation or non-keeping an earlier agreement. The notorious role of Adedibu in Ibadan politics and Uba in Anambra politics come readily to mind. In Edo State, Tony Anenih comes readily to mind. He has been described variously as the Leader, Mr Fix it, Chief etc. People react differently to this kind of appellations. Do you respect and honour a man because he can change the natural course or order of events by any means? In civilised and other societies, the crude activities of using strong arm tactics will make them end up in jail. How do you react to someone who facilitates the theft of the mandate of the people? How do you come to celebrate evil to the exclusion of good? How has it happened that praise singers have drowned the voice of reason? If Mr Fix it could fix anything, why did he not fix the Lagos-Benin expressway?

Our people needs total re-orientation of their psyche, their thought process and value systems. Where has honour gone amongst our people? Why do we blame the armed robbers when we sing the praises of those who steal with pen and intimidation? There can never be unity when evil is allowed to float freely. Their day will certainly come. It will not be too long. To have peace and unity in our body politics, one man one vote must be respected, the mandate of the people must be respected, and Imposition of candidates by the godfathers must be relegated. The 'advance fraud fees' where prospecting politicians must pay homage to evil godfathers must be stopped; unconstitutional salaries to godfathers must be stopped as they have no worthwhile contribution to the kingdom.

A few weeks ago Tony Anenih declared at Uromi that there is no gubernatorial contest in Edo State come 2011. This was during the retreat for commissioners and governors. The interpretation is that the 2011 elections have been contested and won. Such pronouncements are inflammatory. Secondly and more importantly the last election case is still in the electoral tribunal. My dear people of Edo State, this challenge is hereby passed on over to you. Edo State progressives most not allow it to happen if the governors' performance does not merit it. To allow this to go unchallenged is our problem which is in our failure to organize our society or community based on rule of law, trust, follower ship and that is a problem of leadership.

Each and every one of us here wants to be a President so you see three to four Edo unions in one town in Diaspora. How can one lead when we have not learnt to follow.

*** THE NATURAL ORDER OF THINGS.**

The patriarchal age recognizes the prerogative of the father as the oldest member of the family, and later of the clan, for every nation was first a family, then a clan or tribe, and finally a nation. Abraham was a patriarch (Heb. 7:4). God said, "He will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19). Today our children no longer listen to us. Those who came after us want to choose before us. It cannot be right. It is not right.

The evangelists begin his series of lessons on eldership by pointing out to the congregation that the God who created the universe is a God of order and arrangement. To maintain order where two or more parts function in relationship, there must be control. God has ordained three organic institutions as a blessing to mankind. These are the family, civil government,

and the congregation of the saints. Government is an essential feature of each. In each one there is authority to be respected, and rule to be obeyed, if we merit God's approval.

In the home, children must obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). In the political realm we "must be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience' sake" (Rom. 13:5).

In every dispensation the rule of elders, or ancients, has been sanctioned as the most appropriate to man in his earthly state.

The natural order of things must be respected and followed as this is unifying, to do otherwise is to seek disharmony and division. A house divided against itself cannot stand. In the same vein give that which is Caesars to him and God's unto God.

In the creation of local governments, the natural order or proportionality was set aside hence a senatorial district with more than half of the population of the state has less than half of the created local governments. Righting such wrongs created by some of our people will support long lasting peace, unity and progress. To try and say it did not happen is to keep a keg of gun powder above the fire place. The truth must be said and what is right in the eyes of God and man must be done. Gone are the days when we should pretend that all is well. One thing we all seemed to agree about after the election results were declared is that all is not well.

*** INDISCIPLINE OF YOUTHS.**

The recent indiscipline shown by our youth's results from poor planning by the various governments of Bendel and now Edo state. With such a large turn out of school leavers and university graduates having no gainful employment, good percentage that are jobless resulted to crimes, especially armed robbery. When we went to school, there was a future for us and something to live for. Today, that is not the case. The youths who were armed to kill, maim and terrorize opponents during election campaign refused to return such deadly weapons after the elections; as they are jobless, they now use the weapons as means of livelihood. Blame the politicians who vow to win at all cost. Blame the politicians who provided these deadly weapons. The retributive justice is that sometimes these politicians are also at the receiving end of robbery and kidnapping by these restless youths.

Everyone here today can solve Edo State social problems but our individual greed for example to win at whatever cost, exceeds the need for collective wellbeing of our people. The dictum is if you cannot stop them, join them and the meeker amongst us checked out like Andrew during Sanni Abacha's time.

That some of us ran away from Nigeria because of our collective failure to organize our society to be functional and productive is due to lack of unity of purpose and action and this is a problem of leadership.

*** ELECTION RIGGING.**

In the crisis following the announcement of the results of the last election in Edo State, one thing was certain, there is no laid down organization that one can activate for immediate response. We were in total disarray. As I was unsure of what response I would get, I had to test the waters with my toes by sending in a poem prose titled "Who will cry with me?" The response was very positive especially privately and I knew I was not alone. This gave me the courage to send in more directives.

A spontaneous problem needs a spontaneous response, I did not need to test the waters with my toes or hold telephone conferences before going into action. Due to disunity of action and purpose, I or anyone else had no mandate of all Edo in Diaspora to do anything.

You can see how much we need unity even in diversity, we need peoples thinking hats, we need those with deep pockets and need good follower ship without which we shall fail.

I shall share with you a few of the e-mails I received that help galvanised me into action.

Dr. Ogbomwan, (In the place of Dr Ogbonmwan, you substitute your name and feel the effect of this short prose.)

This is NOT the time to cry or windbag about what might have been.
This is the time to act.
EVITA didn't cry.
The RIVONIA defendants didn't cry.
Those who pushed the Magna Carta didn't.
The SLAVE abolitionist didn't cry.
They stopped the madness around them by acting because they knew that EVIL would
continue to succeed so long as only FEW are bold enough to stop brazen injustices.
Weep Not Dr. Stephen Ogbonmwan, You Must Rise and Shine!
Sandra

Subject: [Edo-Nation] Re: Edo_Global. A CRY FOR FREEDOM

Dear Dr. Ogbonmwan,

Yes, we should all cry with you and for our fatherland.

The wanton disregard for the democratic process leaves much to be desired. It is quite unfortunate that we as a people can not do much unless there is a concerted effort and coordinated action plan using civilized channels to express our disappointment and seek redress through appropriate means in the system(in this case through the judiciary).

This is the time for leadership of all the various organization in the Diaspora to bind together and act swiftly. I hope we can phantom a way to do this before it is too late.

Franklin Omoruna

"Nobody can give you freedom.

Nobody can give you equality or justice or anything.

If you're a man, you take it."

This hydra headed beast that has recently subdued our people may have to be confronted.

Our people should remember that there is nowhere in history where freedom have been easily attained. If a handful says no and few thousand says yes and the handful prevail

People have to obtain their freedom, freedom to choose those who should lead them,

Freedom to choose who should speak for them,

We should no longer accept imposition as it is a rape of justice.

As it contradicts the United Nation Charter.

People should be free to choose without manipulation of votes in elections.

We reaffirm the Charter of UN that states nations should

Save succeeding generations from the scourge of war which has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women, justice for all and equitable distribution of resources; respect for the obligations arising from national constitution like conducting a fair and free elections, promote social justice and human progress and better standards of life in larger freedom and in peace.

Yes! We are a people in bondage today.

We have to seek our freedom from our oppressors.

Freedom will not come by sitting on the fence.

Freedom will be elusive if we adopt the wait and see approach.

Today I cry for freedom.

Will you weep with me? *SEO*

FIGHTING ON THE WW WEB.

Walking away from a fight is not necessarily a sign of cowardice or fear, it is a sign of wisdom and self control; it is possible to lose a lot more than one is fighting for if one chooses to go full steam ahead with an avoidable conflict. There are some fights that are unavoidable where every other option has been explored, but, it takes wisdom to choose such fights and ensure victory before one begins. it takes a stronger and more disciplined person to walk away from a fight after provocation The fight to save Edo State from charlatan politicians is a fight we cannot run away from. It is a fight we have to face headon.

ENHANCING Edo Unity

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN UNITY

The Edo people in Diaspora in spite of their training in law, finance, management, political science, human psychology, medicine etc. have not been able to make a substantial impact in Edo land due to lack of unity of action, unity of purpose and lack of unity of heritage.

So far we have been involved in pockets of various activities in Edo State, from scholarship award to deserving students to adopting wards in Central Hospital Benin City. We need to do more. We need to be involved in effective and visible projects in Edo land. As individuals we may be respected by our friends but collectively we are not thought of much because we are not included in the scheme of things in Edo State. This should not be the case. We can organize ourselves and form a unifying but formidable group that can move mountains in Edo if only we choose to do so. But can we make that choice and follow it up with sacrifice both in sparing our time and financial resources? That is the question.

CREATION OF EDO STATE THINK TANK

The creation of an arena where like minds and progressively thinking nationally focused elements and intellectual can evolve can be set up for Edo State if we can work together in unity to achieve this for our people. The proposed think tank can be a repository of ideas and research reports for the government to tap into as this would help to reintroduce levity and innovation to Edo State and national dialogue.

The stark absence of radicalized thoughts presently and acceptance of such thought in our conservative and staid body politic is a cause for much concern. This could be seen as the harbinger to the paucity of ideas and direction hitherto in very short supply on the State and national horizon.

To support this view point, it isn't necessarily that Edo people lack innovation, but conservatism constricts innovation and makes it less likely that new and emergent views and ideas can filter through. In unity we can work to set aside those thinking that have been unprogressive; that have kept us in the same place for a long time. If we continue to do the same things the same way, we shall continue to get the same results; it is therefore pertinent that to get a different result we must all agree in unity to do things differently.

Working Together for the Good of Edo State:

Today we have Edo Global Organization, Edo Okpamakhin and Edo Nation Association of the Americas (ENA) and a plethora of other Edo Associations in Diaspora all pursuing different agendas without a meeting point or a clearing house like our contemporaries of the other Nigerian nationalities do; for example, Ohenanze in the East, the Arewa to the North and the OPC to the west. The blessings and gifts of these Edo Associations differ greatly. Acting separately, they will continue to make little impacts but working together and pooling their resources, different gifts and talents for common use and purpose, the result will be awesome and Diaspora Edo will be surprised at what they can achieve.

This cooperation that we speak about is envisaged to cut across party political lines; cut across religious beliefs; cut across ethnic divide; with the main focus being what is best for Edo State and Nigeria. Then we can work together as one body, speak with one voice, sustain a common agenda and take active part in the process of change that will definitely come to pass in Edo State and Nigeria.

To reach that goal, we have to constitute ourselves into one front and working together will ultimately strengthen the component parts. By the components parts, I mean the various associations that form one unifying group for all Edo people due to the centripetal forces at play. This will improve output and facilitate progress and economic emancipation our people.

The shine of the moon is different from the shine of the stars and the shine of the sun. Together they light day and night whereas separately they can either light the day or the night but never both simultaneously.

Secondly their beauty differs and the effect of the combinations of these three celestial sources of energy will be awesome. It can be so for Edo Associations or Organizations in Diaspora working together if they choose to do so. The worry is the strong lack of trust and suspicion of the motives of the various individuals working for the team spirit to prevail. This may make the desired unity virtually impossible to achieve. The luck on our side is that those who think cooperation are the way forward are in the majority.

For example, Edo Global Organization as the union of all separate Edo associations mainly in Europe which forms its foundation and building blocks will also ensure its stability.

Due to its broad base and solid foundation, like mount Zion, it will weather any storm. This is what we seek for all Edo in Diaspora.

In practical terms, we have been cooperating with one another. We need to take this to a higher level of cooperation to execute meaningful projects for the benefit of all in the land of our birth. In that way we will be regarded as messengers of good tidings and agents of change and progress.

Emphasising Edo Unity in Diaspora.

I cannot stress the need for this unity more as the result will be overwhelming since there is total failure of the political system in Edo State which is apparent even to the blind man in spite of what some newspaper reporters try very hard to sell. A hard sell it has been indeed. If a government without any opposition or hindrance to its activities cannot make visible impact to the lives of our people, then we are in serious trouble.

There is no doubt that we need a strong platform from which we can execute not only our projects but effect desirable changes in Edo State collectively or by proxy. Behold, how good and how pleasant for brethren to dwell together in unity, to achieve a purpose in unity and so edify our heritage in unity. Those who think one brethren or one group is better than the other or that one brethren or group should compete with one another or do things separately because our individual endowments differ are ignorant.

Where has a tree made a forest?

Each of us is endowed with a different gift just like the shine of the moon is different from that of the star or the sun. The utilization of the combination of these gifts and talents brings out the best of the groups; in this case Edo in Diaspora.

We should therefore endeavour to work together with one another and in so doing keep **Edo Unity** of Purpose not only in Edo Land but in Diaspora within the bond of peace, mutual trust, mutual understanding and respect for our individuality, our respective religion, political affiliation and ethnicity.

We constitute many parts of a whole that is ancestrally, historically and genetically linked and we shall function best as one body with one purpose.

The overwhelming result of our unity will be the fruit of cooperation born out of unity of purpose, unity of action and unity in diversity. In this regard, the objective will be that the best among us will be representing all Edo people in Diaspora in articulating our desire for a better Edo State. In so doing, barking behind closed door will be banished forever as we will take the bulls by their horns by our action.

In co-ordinating this unity we should establish ourselves in unity, independent of forces of ethnicity, based on sound principles of justice and fairness, make informed decisions democratically, sensitize Edo public of their political rights and the importance to exercise their rights in the political processes rather than allowing a few godfathers to decide for them without their participation. More importantly we should work to be an effective force for change for the good of Edo people.

Co-operating with the System on the Ground in Edo State.

Sometime ago, one of our brothers wrote in Edo Nation forum that there was no government in Edo State for us to work with which implied we should abandon hope.

I responded by saying that there are at least two parallel governments in Edo State, the civil and traditional. No matter how badly the civil government may be performing or how controversial their position may be, they still represent Edo State and as such we have to do business with them, cooperate with them and make useful suggestions to them to enable them do things better for the benefit of our people.

The traditional Edo System of government is unrivalled in modern civilization.

With the Omo n' Oba as the head and custodian of our custom and tradition;

We also have the palace chiefs and the town chiefs headed by the Iyase, the 'Prime Minister'.

In every district and streets in Benin City for example is an Odionwere or Okao who administer the district or street on behalf of the supervising chief of the area who in turn, is responsible to the Omo n Oba.

Under the supervision of these Okao in various communities are the Ikpolughe the youngest group, followed by the Igbama, Eghele who make things happen in the various communities; then the Edion, who take crucial decisions in the council of elders chaired by an Odionwere or an Okao.

This system is repeated in most Edo towns and villages with an Enogie or Enigie or Onogie or Onojie, as the head. In view of the above, we have a very effective and virile administrative system in place which any good civil government can draw upon and use for its own benefit and for the benefit of our people through effective and efficient mobilization of our people.

For us to be effective as Edo in Diaspora, we must connect with our grassroots and identify with whatever they are doing that is good for the people.

Political parties will come and go, party chairmen will come and go but our traditional roots will remain forever. It is for this reason that I consider them the most effective vehicle with which to mobilise our people for a good course.

Similarly an effective civil government in Edo State must connect and work closely with our traditional ruler ship system who can reach farther than party members who are more prone to congregate in urban centres. Secondly, the traditional rulers know our customs and tradition well and they can easily cut across party political divide, religious divide and divide due to ethnicity.

The Edo people in Diaspora have assimilated other cultures and can weigh the merits and demerits of various attitudes and adopt the best which they can safely introduce into Edo culture. We therefore constitute a special group that can be a catalyst for change not only in Edo State but in Nigeria as a whole.

Our Oba has led by example by introducing some changes into our people's culture and tradition in keeping with modernisation; he has gone further to present the true picture of the history of our people in his aeon making book "I Remain Sir Your Obedient Servant" which has caused earthquakes in some quarters. He has led from the front, and our duty as true Edo citizens now is to follow. And follow we must!

We can arrive at that critical point in Edo history where there is peace, harmony, progress, economic emancipation, health, wealth and total fulfilment of our people in the community of ethnic nationalities of our country Nigeria.

In addition to the above, we must identify, associate and co-operate with other cultural groups in Edo Land for example the Benin Forum in Benin and similarly other organisations in other parts of the state; as this will facilitate the desirable changes we are hoping for and keen to introduce.

My brothers and sisters, there is no one group that can do it all alone; we must therefore cooperate with each other, unite for a common cause and achieve that change or changes we all so desperately want. Those advocating segregation are not speaking in the best interest of our people.

Investing in Edo State.

In all we do, we should not forget the land of our birth, the land that gave us life, the land of our ancestors, the only place we can truly call our home on mother earth.

In happiness and joy - in despair and hope - even when the road of life becomes a little too rosy, or a little curvy or a little too long, we should always remember home in Edo Land. It is only in remembering that we can work harder to make it better.

The idea of sending money home regularly which I have preached in the past may not be the best solution in making Edo State progress like other parts of our country. In fact, it may create a problem of over dependency by our relatives in our home stead.

We could go a step further by setting up small to medium scale enterprises based on our skills or exposure here that could employ a few individuals in Edo Land, then we would have contributed more to the economic development of Edo State and in the same vein Nigeria as a whole. We all recall the Chinese saying of teaching people how to fish and feeding them for life rather than giving them fish which only feed them for a day.

Our people are proud people and do not want handouts. They want to be gainfully employed and earn a decent salary from a decent job for a decent living.

It may not be possible for individuals to set up such a business; therefore, a few of us could form co-operatives to pull our resources together to set up business enterprises that will employ labour if we trust one another. There are numerous areas yet untapped in our state which we can go into and even make profits that will make us smile when we get the dividend at the end of the financial year.

By providing employment, we will not only be improving Edo State and Nigerian economy, we will also be reducing crime rate as the idle mind is the devils workshop.

BIDCO an acronym for Benin Investment Development Company has taken a lead here. It was launched with fanfare by His Royal Highness Omo n'Oba n'Edo Uku Akpolokpolo Oba Erediauwa, Oba of Benin in April this year. I hereby challenge all of us gathered here today to buy into BIDCO and make it a success story. Details about BIDCO can be found on Edo Global Organization web site www.edoglobalorganization.org

In spite of our bashing of the government and showing their inadequacies, the truth of the matter is that the government alone cannot provide all the necessities of life for our people. There is no where in the world that is done. The people must also contribute their quota towards their own welfare. Public spirited individuals who have must share with those who have not. Our people must be mobilized to get involved in self help development projects. We have done it in the past. We can do it again with good leadership and effective publicity. Those who have no money to donate can donate their expertise, and those who have no expertise can donate their time and those who have time but no skills can donate their labour.

While we are making this effort, the government must also contribute by creating an enabling environment to ensure such small to medium scale enterprises prosper. Good roads and security of life and properties are important to success of such ventures. It is obvious

therefore that it will be the cooperation of the government or people on the ground in Edo State on one hand with those in Diaspora on the other hand that will ensure success.

We can also improve Edo State economy by projecting the image of Edo and Nigeria in Diaspora and working to make it a tourist attraction and destination. There are a lot to offer in Edo State. Tourism sustains the economy of many nations. We can invite our friends to come on holidays and be their tourist guide until the establishment of visible and viable tourist companies in Edo or improvement of the existing tourist companies. I have recently been informed of the wonders in Okomu Forest reserve.

"The proof of the pudding is in the eating" is a proverbial saying which is quite true. Because appearances can be so deceiving, things are not always as they appear to be. A plate of food may be tempting to look at, but the pangs of hunger can only be allayed by eating it.

It is not what men profess to know or what they intend to do at a convenient time which will justify them in the Day of Judgment. It is doing what can be done to supply the thing needed, or to relieve a condition while the need exists, and when there is opportunity to act.

There is no pattern of righteousness which a man may set up and adhere to, but that which will harmonize with the new covenant scripture, or laid rules or articles of a national constitution and to which by faith, respect, and knowledge man will apply himself as an individual. The justification is dependent entirely upon an individual doing what is right in God's sight according to His standard of righteousness or doing what is legal according to national or state laws.

The man who knows what God, the people or the State requires and refuses to do it, is no better off because of his knowledge and insight. Regardless of all he may profess to be, or of his claims to faith in God or level of education or number of degrees acquired, he is still classed as a sinner, under achiever, a transgressor (James 4:17). "You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone" (James 2:24)

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement, give us a spirit of understanding and unity among us as we deliberate on what is best for Edo Kingdom to enable us do what will glorify many rather than ourselves.

Finally it will be good if before we leave this place we form ourselves into these committees so that we start working in earnest in unity in spite of our diversity.

- **Politics,**
- **Projects,**
- **Campaign,**
- **Education**
- **Business Development**
- **Investment in Edo state.**
- **Co-ordinating Group.**

Conclusion:

Finally, I call on all of us gathered here today to be law abiding, to be good ambassadors of Nigeria and Edo Kingdom in particular in our abode here in America so that they will not

regret our presence here and so prevent other Edo from coming in for their post graduate training and further studies.

You must see it as a duty to enhance the good name of our country Nigeria in all you do, at work, on the highway and in your various places of study, in your homes and in your relationship with your spouses especially those of American or European descent.

I have said a lot today but our people say you only tell an Edo man one word and in his/her mind, it will form a million words, he/she will know where you are going and where you are coming from; hence, the knowledge of our ancestors is the knowledge of the ages.

Once again thank you for this opportunity! Remember together we can make that Change we so desperately need. This is not the time to say it does not concern me as it does concern all of us.

It is clear we cannot change our yesterday, we can unite and work hard today for a glorious tomorrow.

May the peace and serenity of our God, Osanoghodua be with us today and always and may the good spirits of our ancestors allow this address to take a firm root and hold in our hearts and mind so that we can make manifest what we have heard to day.

SEO OGBONMWAN
SEPTEMBER 2007

IF WE ARE ONLY FOR OURSELVES, WHAT ARE OUR LIVES FOR? MAKE A DIFFERENCE; MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE

DR STEPHEN OGBONMWAN