

## **A Report By the President, Dr. Bertram C.I. Okpokwasili, to DOBANA 7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention, Held in Los Angeles, California on August 23, 2014**

### **An Introduction:**

Before I start with my discussion, I would like us to please stand for one minute, in memory of one of our dear members who left this world in April - Dr. Humphrey Umekwe Iroku, the Onowu Aham of Achi. Thank you.

Let me first say welcome to all of you great men and women of DMGS, and those who are associated with this great institution, who have gathered here today, to celebrate her greatness in various forms of human development, character formation and nation building. We are gathered here today, not only to remind us of the past of DMGS, but to keep us aware of the challenges she faces as well as where, we think, she is going as one of the best secondary schools on the face of the earth.

His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Owen Nwokolo, the Bishop on the Niger was en-route to the convention, but had to abort his trip because of disturbances in his Diocese at home.

The President General of DOBA Worldwide, Sir Engineer, Gibson Okeke cancelled his trip because of pressing developments at home that required his presence. He has asked the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President of DOBA WW, Sir Igweka Uche, to sit in for him. Sir Igweka was the recipient of the Chika Okonya award- DOBA WW 's most prestigious award, this year. He accepted the award with a 1 million naira donation to DMGS. Welcome Sir.

I welcome the president of DOBA UK and Project Director of DMGS 2025, Dr. Chijioke Oji. Welcome Sir.

I welcome Engineer Dr. Chris Oyeka, who also represents Prof. Ilochi Okafor, who had to cancel at the last minute because of emergencies. Welcome Sir.

I would be remiss if I forget to mention the presence of one who had scaled the ladder in terms of guiding secondary education in Nigeria, as principal of a number of Government Secondary Schools, and as the Government Director of Education in various Federal States in Nigeria- the 1956 prefect of Crowther House, the one and only Sam Nwarinze Abia. Welcome Sir!

We have many from different branches of DOBA in Nigeria and elsewhere who are here today to help us celebrate. May your stay be filled with joy and good cheers. I am sure that as we move forward today, we will come to recognize all of you.

Let me also take this moment to thank my executive members and many of DOBANA's standing and temporary committees, for a great job of guiding this association in the last two years. Our elected officials- Mr. Green Dim, our VP and President to be; Mr. Osita Okafor, our secretary; Engr. Nnanna Erike, the Financial Secretary; Dr. George Achebe, our treasurer; Chief Nwachukwu Sam Okonkwo, our immediate past president; and Mr. Okechukwu Achebe, the publicity secretary. I want to thank our area coordinators- Mr. Jonathan Achebe, Dr. Donald Anadu, Dr. Emmanuel Abara, Dr. Okechukwu Ekenna, Dr. Onyebuchi Offodile, Mr. Ndubisi Oguejiofor. We have a number of committees who worked tirelessly during the two years to move this organization forward- Dr. Nnamdi Offor and Dr. Emma Ekulide in membership, Dr. Chukwuma Okadigwe and attorney KC Okoli, Esq. in Constitution, Dr. Offodile, Dr. Adogu and Dr. Anadu in Scholarship, Dr. Okenwa Nwosu in Finance, Dr. Kingsley Oraedu in projects coordination. The Convention Planning Committee, under the chairmanship of Ndubisi Oguejiofor- Akajiugo n'Ozubulu, is responsible for our being here today. This team has worked so tirelessly, that this may be our most productive convention ever. I take the privilege of naming the members, and asking them to stand, so we applaud them- Mr. Oguejiofor, Mr. Green Dim, Mr. Uche Nwankwo, Dr. Achebe, Dr. Okenwa Nwosu, Uche Udemezue and Nwanneka Anene.

Many of you are participating in a raffle drawing today. One of us, and I call him our own Michael Angelo, donated an original painting to this convention. The painting is to be a source of funds for our scholarship program. So far the painting has generated more than \$4000 and is not done yet. I want you to help me thank the one and only Kanayo Ede for his gesture of generosity and thoughtfulness. Thank you Kanayo!

One more thank you, and I'll be done for now. Anybody who has asked for money for DOBANA or for DMGS, knows one name that is always on the list, at the top for that matter. There are no ceremonies, no fan fare. He gives, and he continues

to give. Please help me thank “Omeifeukwu”, Dr. Okey Okoli for his generosity and love for DMGS. God Bless you, Dr. Okey Okoli. Thank you Sir.

## **Our Plan For DOBANA and DMGS :**

When we took over DOBANA in early 2013, we set out to plot a new trajectory for the association. Our previous presidents had done a great job of organizing for the Biennial Conventions, and raising funds for DMGS infrastructure. DOBANA had pioneered the DMGS 2000 and Beyond project to rebuild the main school academic building. We had also made various efforts to modernize the water supply system and to provide bathroom and toilet facilities in the dormitories. We had provided computers and computing instructions at various times in the last 12 years. These efforts were very successful, though not quite finished by the time we took over, especially the school building.

At the 2010 DOBANA Convention, hosted by my home branch, the Tri-State Branch, I advised the then President General for DOBA WW, Dr. George Udezue, that it was not fair for DOBANA alone to be expected to carry the DMGS 2000 and Beyond responsibility. Not when we had Old Boys in Nigeria who had more financial resources than many of us here in the US. I advised that efforts had to be made to galvanize Old Boys everywhere, especially our Old Boys in Nigeria, and get the DMGS work moving forward.

When I became DOBANA president last year, I made it abundantly clear that DOBANA would not be engaged in infrastructure only, and by no means alone. And it did not matter who got the credit – all Old Boy groups must be involved in that effort. DOBANA was not in this for the credit. I am very delighted to report that the people at home have revved up their participation quite a bit. Not all are involved yet, but many have come forward to help give DMGS a new lease on life. The DMGS 85/85 and DMGS 2025, led by Dr. Chijioke Ojji, have come on board, to galvanize our Old Boys, even though a preponderance of the contributors still came from the US. But home people have in effect waken up to the need to participate.

We felt that DOBANA needed to chart a new course, not just for itself, but for DMGS. In this information age, we at DOBANA and at DMGS, cannot afford to let other schools gain worldwide recognition while we seem to be consumed with nuances of infrastructure. CKC, Umuahia, Kings College featured on the list of 100 Best Secondary Schools in Africa. DMGS did not make the list. That is not to say that infrastructure is not important. It is very important. But there are other

components of a 21<sup>st</sup> century secondary school that must be put in place to augment and supplement infrastructure.

**So we put together a five point plan:**

1. DOBANA needed to build a world class website, stable and recognizable. If people cannot find us on the web, and cannot read about DMGS accomplishments in the life of Nigeria, they would not think of us when it comes to thinking about Best Schools. More importantly a well-designed website would give a credible picture of DMGS to the world. Also such a site would give a picture of the involvement of Old Boys in the life of the school.
2. DOBANA needed to enable DMGS admit and retain students regardless of whether or not they have the financial where-with-al to meet DMGS tuition and fees. In which case, DOBANA must start a scholarship scheme which would sustain students throughout their stay at DMGS. DOBANA needed to get this started, and hopefully, eventually expanded so that DMGS is in effect, a needs-blind admissions institution.
3. DOBANA needed to build, in partnership with DOBA WW and DMGS administration, a searchable database of all DMGS students –old and current. With a vast reach and achievements of DMGS Old Boys, no network of secondary school alumni organization could rival ours. It could be a comprehensive encyclopedia of individuals, professionals and geographical reach that would prove invaluable to our sons and daughters for generations to come.
4. DOBANA needed to continue to work with DMGS 2000 and Beyond, especially as we approach our Centenary year in 2025. It must exert its influence, financially and experience-wise in making our dormitories and living quarters a 21<sup>st</sup> Century abode. We must do this in cooperation with other stakeholders of DMGS.
5. DOBANA will continue to strengthen the relationship with DMGS 2025 in all aspects of the existence of the organization-financially and managerially.

These plans were circulated to all DOBANA and non- DOBANA DMGS Old Boys in North America, in the form of a presidential letter early in 2013. Thanks to my good friend and successor, Green Dim, who helped in the construction, reading and review of these plans, a document of many pages.

## Now For a Brief Report of What Has Been Done So Far.

1. We have a **website- DOBANA.org** in operation. It is still very much a work in progress. I would urge everybody in their spare time, to please visit the site and offer any suggestions as to what you would like to see. There is still a lot of work to be done with it. We hope that in time we will take over the WW website and design it so that the DOBANA.org becomes a link from the WW website. We have the name dengramites.org reserved, and could use it for the WW, unless any other name becomes preferable.
2. On July 6, 2014, at the DOBA WW Convention and Rededication at Onitsha, 10 **DOBANA scholarships** were awarded to 10 deserving students of DMGS.

### **On July 10, 2014 Mr. Chukwujetu wrote:**

*“My name is Mr. Michael Chukwujetu the father of Emmanuel Chukwujetu of D.M.G.S. Onitsha. The boy whom by the mercy of God you have awarded a scholarship. Sir, we are dumbfounded and lack words to express our feelings. You are a God sent to our family. We are also grateful and appreciate beyond measure, this kindness upon our family. Sir, the good Lord who inspired you to this will do the best for you, he will keep, guide and forever protect you and your family. Your heart desires will never be cut short. You will live to reap the fruits of your labour in Jesus name Amen. Thank you sir, thank you for putting smiles on our faces.*

*Remain blessed the beloved of the Lord.”*

I am sure there are many other letters of this nature that went to the scholarship sponsors. But the goals are more than putting smiles on the faces of recipient parents, even though I would take that any day. We have started on the road to making DMGS a needs-free admissions institution. I

would be remiss if I did not mention the names of our Old Boys who made this possible here in the US and in Nigeria.

First the names of DOBANA members who gave the money, and in various cases, the time to enable the scholarship. Each one made a scholarship commitment for 5 years –

Dr. George Achebe

Mr. Green Dim

Dr. Okee Ekenna

Late Dr. Humphrey Iroku

Dr. Buchi F. Offodile

Mr. Ndubisi Oguejiofor

Dr. Chukwuma Okadigwe

Dr. Okey Okoli

Dr. Kingsley Oraedu

Dr. Bertram C. I. Okpokwaili

Please help me give a hand of applause to these great Dengramites.

It is one thing to give money. It is another to use that money to make something happen. And it's the following Old Boys who made the DOBANA Scholarship a reality. First the scholarship committee here in the US, headed by Dr. Buchi Offodile:

Dr. Buchi F. Offodile

Dr. Beze Adogu

Dr. Donald Anadu

And the scholarship committee in Nigeria, headed by Sir Igweka Uche:

Sir. Igweka Uche

Mr. Noble Uzochukwu

Sir. Robert Aralu

Sir. Gibson Okeke

Please help me give these great Dengramites a hand of applause.

We did not only award 10 scholarships to deserving students. We awarded 10 consolation prizes also to the 10 out of the 20 students who did not get the scholarship. It was so difficult to select 10 out of the 20 applicants sent to us from Nigeria, that we were hard pressed to find who deserved the scholarship more than the other. So a big heart amongst us- Dr. George Achebe- awarded 10 consolation partial scholarships of 20,000 naira to each of the other students.

Please help me give Dr. George Achebe- Nwakibie n'Ogidi, a hand of applause for this act of compassion and generosity.

The DOBANA scholarship program is a beginning, not an end. The goal was to start with 10 scholarships and expand it to enable Old Boys all over the world sponsor these scholarships. It is to assure that no student will be denied a DMGS education for lack of the financial resources to pay the tuition and boarding fees at the school. We want to tell the whole world that. This is a call for all listening to help fund more scholarships.

DOBANA executives have also mandated that money be set aside from each Biennial Convention to provide an Endowment that will fund these

scholarships in perpetuity, even after some of us initial contributors will have passed.

3. **The Database:** I will confess that this project was crowded out (as they say in economics) by the first two projects. It went to the backburner. But will definitely be resuscitated before the next administration takes over in January 2015. I am however confident that the next administration, under Green Dim (Omenuko-aku n'Uga) in cooperation with DOBA WW, will move this forward.
4. **DMGS 2000 and Beyond** – DOBANA contributed about \$25000 to the 2000 and Beyond after the 2012 Convention, early in 2013. I am sure we will continue to contribute until this project is done.
5. **DMGS 2025** – DOBANA executives authorized contributions to DMGS 2025 to the tune of 200,000 naira for three years. I am sure we will make this commitment. Many DOBANA members are on the Project Team and DOBANA has a representative on the Board. DOBANA supports this effort and will continue to do so in word and deed.

## MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES

- a. **DOBANA Bank Accounts-** It is unbelievable, but it is true- our treasurer had been issuing and signing checks for as long as he had been treasurer- about 6 years, even though his name was not on the bank books. Neither he nor the last 3 presidents were signatories to DOBANA accounts. Only in America can you do that. Thanks to Green Dim (the banker among us), Dr.

Achebe and Nnanna Erike, we set out to change that. We regularized our bank accounts by moving the account to a nearby physical location, so all four of us had to appear before the bank officers, and put the proper signatories on DOBANA accounts. We should now be able to move the bank accounts from one administration to the next, and have the proper officers put their signatures on the organization accounts.

**b. DOBANA General Meetings-** We sought to convene general meetings during the term of the administration, other than waiting for the Biennial Convention. We felt it would be useful to schedule these meetings for the purposes of addressing topics of current importance to the members. We convened two general meetings in 2013. The first meeting was a DOBANA meeting with the DMGS Board Chairman (Sir Ike S. Otubelu), the President General of DOBA WW (Sir Gibson Okeke) and the DMGS principal (Sir Robert Aralu). It was a very useful teleconference between Nigeria and the US. The second general meeting was with the Bishop on the Niger, Rt. Rev. Owen Nwokolo. I am sure that more of these meetings will take place before the end of the year, especially now that neither the Bishop nor the Board chairman was able to attend the Convention. I must add that these meetings would not be possible without the full cooperation and assistance of the PG WW and his associates, the DMGS former principal and the Bishop. We hope that these types of cooperation will continue in the future. I am particularly grateful for these.

**c. The DMGS School Board** – DOBANA has two representatives on the DMGS School Board- the president and the vice president. Needless to say that this seems to be in name only, since none of us has received any

communication from the Board. DOBANA appointed these representatives for a term of two years.

- d. The Removal of Mr. Robert Aralu as DMGS Principal-** DOBANA was pleased in the way DOBA WW protested the unceremonious removal of an Old Boy DMGS principal without due process, and without proper consultation with the Old Boys. DOBANA members were very upset both at the national and branch levels, at what seemed like a high-handed approach to the dismissal of a principal who, in spite of his limitations, had indeed made significant achievements in the effort to return DMGS to a more manageable institution. Better consultation with Old Boys, and a much more humane, if professional, transition must be the approach going forward. Old Boys have a good reason to demand that only Old Boys of DMGS be considered for the position of principal at the school. This wish should be honored whenever possible. Old boys insist that deviation from this wish be in very rare cases, and in consultation with the Old Boy Association.
- e. The number of students at DMGS –** Our primary goal must remain a very progressive, disciplined and intellectually vibrant DMGS. To achieve this, the student population of DMGS must be brought down to 500 to 600 students, all living on campus. It must be our goal to maintain a clean and 21<sup>st</sup> century living environment. We must also engage where necessary, in securing the best teachers in English (spoken and written), in mathematics, in the arts and in the sciences. DMGS must regain its status as one of the best secondary schools east of the Niger- or in Nigeria for that matter.

- f. **A More Inclusive DOBANA Executive** - We sought to expand the make-up of our executive body at DOBANA, to include non-elected individuals. I am glad to report that some have actually participated in our executive meetings. I am sure we could have used more participation. I am hopeful that the incoming administration will continue to encourage more, especially our more senior Old Boys (the pre-war gentlemen) to participate more. We can use more ideas and wisdom, I am sure.
- g. I must not fail to thank many of you from outside the US and Canada, who are here today. We are very proud of you, and hope that these sessions will continue to meet your expectations, and generate ideas that you believe will move DMGS forward.
- h. I am very grateful to our DMGS wives, who have continued to find ways to enliven our Conventions, and have been supportive of the contributions their husbands make to DMGS. This year at the initiative of some of them, there will be, for the first time, a women's dance at the banquet. I hope we will show up with a lot of change in our pockets.
- i. **Now Going Forward-** Our Old Boys Association membership is not what it should be. We recognize, and our executives have said, that even if one does not have money to pay the annual dues, one could still register and pay whatever he could, if any. We recognize that many have ways other than financially to contribute to an organization. That could not be more true than here at DOBANA.
  - a. We will also be discussing lifetime membership, so that members, if they choose, can pay once and that would be it. But let us recognize that we value every member. And anybody who has spent any length

of time as a DMGS student, is an Old Boy, no matter how short a time.

- b.** We need all DMGS Old Boys to register as financial members, whether or not they can pay the present annual dues. We will never ask anybody out for fees, as long as they are genuinely unable to pay the full fees.
  
- j.** Finally, Let me apologize for the length of this report. I am sure I left a lot of activities out, so as not to make it unduly long. Once again, Thank You all for coming, and Thank you for keeping the DMGS flag flying.

### **LUX FIAT & LONG LIVE DMGS**

**Dr. Bertram C. I. Okpokwasili**  
**DMGS Class of 1960/1962**  
**DOBANA President**  
**(Ichie Onyeogadilinma n'Ukpo)**