

**GHANA NATIONAL COUNCIL OF METROPOLITAN CHICAGO**  
**51<sup>ST</sup> INDEPENDENCE DINER DANCE – 2008**  
**PRESIDENT’S SPEECH**

Honorable Commissioners Dana V. Stacks, and Norma Reyes,

Nananom, Niime, Togbewo,

Members of the Clergy,

Distinguished Guests, Fellow Ghanaians, Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Ghana National Council of Metropolitan Chicago, I warmly welcome you to the 51<sup>st</sup> Independence anniversary of our beloved country, Ghana.

As you have witnessed, a new administration of the Ghana National Council has been sworn-in for a three (3) year term. It is a privilege to be nominated amongst the finest in the community to head and serve this new administration. It is an honor but at your pleasure. At this point, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate those distinguished men and women of the executives selected to help me serve the community.

Also, I would like to thank my family, particularly my wife Gladys for her support. It is said, “behind every strong man, there is a very tired woman.” I would also like to extend a big thank you to the previous administration for their selfless service to the community that was sealed with a smooth transition. I will be failing in my duty if I did not acknowledge my predecessor; Mr. Reuben C. Hadzide for his “behind the scene advice and personal contacts” to the various groups and organizations that supports this administration. Ye man ayekoo!

As we stride through another milestone as an independent nation, I would like to send a strong message to our government in Ghana to watch the influx of Chinese citizens into our economy. Currently, Africa is enjoying over \$33bn trade with China of which Ghana enjoys a fair share. We do not have any problem with that. However, the only industry the government has no control, i.e. to lay off workers, is petty trading popularly referred to as “buy and sell.” This sector of the economy has sustained middle to low income Ghanaians for a long time. Now the Chinese are invading this vital area. This is why we in Chicago are advising our government in Ghana to do whatever it takes to preserve this area for our people. It is not difficult to do Ghana does not need any bilateral or trilateral agreement to implement this.

It is worthy of note that this administration of the Ghana National Council has moved strongly to take our rightful position in the United African Organization (UAO). After all, it was our first President, the late Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah who proclaimed a strong and united Africa and I quote; “as a great power, whose greatness is indestructible because it is built not on fear, envy and suspicion nor won at the expense of others but founded on hope, trust, friendship and directed to the good of all mankind” unquote. This flame lingers on and we will not stop until the total emancipation of all African people in Chicago is achieved and sustained.

Fellow Ghanaians, the state of the Ghana National Council is weak. Currently, we are over dependent on sponsorships, without which our pet programs cannot come to fruition. Often, when our people are confronted with the issue of council, the first question they ask is, “what do I gain from the Ghana National Council?” I would like to reiterate that the Council represents your national identity to the State of Illinois and the City of Chicago. All programs of the council are aimed at uniting us. We must pause and ask ourselves these simple questions “what legacy are we leaving behind for our children in the Diaspora?” “How do we want to be judged by posterity?” “Are we prepared to fail in our duties as Ghanaians?”

The Ghana National Council was founded by the Affiliates and it must be funded by the Affiliates. Although the Affiliates have their individual programs, activities organized by the Council, brings ALL Ghanaians together and that is healthy for our community.

Currently, the Council is \$20,000.00 in deficit. It is not by frivolity, precipitous or impulsive spending but by reality. Our annual budget stands at over \$50,000.00. However, the combined revenue from all Affiliates annually is only \$12,000.00. For example, it costs a minimum of \$22,000.00 to host Ghana Fest alone. Fellow Ghanaians, we must put out pockets where our heart is.

The era of scavenging for sponsorship is over. It is unpleasant to be overly depended on other people’s funds to sustain a prestigious event like Ghana Fest. The Affiliates have put the Ghana National Council on a diet for far too long. At the appropriate time, this administration would approach all Affiliates to formally put this issue before them. When that time comes, I would implore on all Ghanaians to do whatever it takes to help sustain the Ghana National Council financially. I can assure you that we would uphold transparency in our dealings with Affiliates to the highest level at all times. Make no doubt about that. The policies of this Administration would relayed to you in due course.

I urge those Ghanaians who do not belong to any Association to do so. If for any reason you do not want to belong to your home region’s Association, you can join anyone of your choice. I have seen a Fante belonging to Kwahu Association and I have seen a Ga belonging to Fante Association and so on. We are all Ghanaians. There is no excuse not to belong to an Association.

The Ghana National Council is dependent on the strength of the Affiliates and this administration will never support anything to undermine it. There is no room for negotiations on this principle. It is basic and it stays as such.

Before I conclude, I would like to use this opportunity to thank our prime sponsors MoneyGram, Ghanaweb, Annaka Enterprises and African Spectrum for their generosity. Without them, this event could not have come on. On behalf of the Ghana National Council and the entire Ghanaian community, I say thank you dearly.

Lastly, my brothers and sisters let us make good use of today because our tomorrow would be guaranteed by what actions we take today. Let us eschew bitterness and embrace unity of purpose because our destinies are clearly defined by where we came from. Believe in today and what you see presently. Be friendly with your neighbor today because no matter the situation of things, you would need that neighbor to celebrate happiness or sorrow tomorrow. Life is too short.

Long live the Republic of Ghana!

Long live Ghana National Council!!

God bless you all. Happy Birthday Ghana!!!

Have Fun

**JOHN HENRY ASSABILL  
PRESIDENT**