

**URHOBO PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION (UPA)  
HOUSTON**

**2023 Annual Report**

**January 7, 2024**

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## 2023 Annual Report

### Introduction:

On behalf of the EC, I present 2023 Annual Report.

2023 was a promising year for UPA despite the ups and downs trying to recover from Covid-19 pandemic effects. But perhaps, 2023 top highlight for UPA was the passing of UPA Okpako (most senior man), Chief Darocha Olokpa. Chief Olokpa passed-on peacefully in Nigeria, on Thursday November 23, 2023, (on American Thanksgiving Day). As our oldest man, he was our leader in UPA Houston. Chief Olokpa was a one-time Chair of UPA Ethics/Arbitration Committee, a position he held for a long time. He was a dedicated, hardworking and generous member. We know that some of our members experienced passing of very close family members and friends in 2023. For all the 2023 departed souls, we pray God to grant their souls eternal rest. And to their families, friends and UPA, we pray God to give us the fortitude to bear those we lost and the strength to carry on from where they left us. For Chief Olokpa service to UPA, UPA say Thank you.

### Membership & Meetings:

Members or Membership are the greatest assets of any association including UPA Houston. In 2023, UPA membership rose from 118 in January to 126 by December 2023. The following *Mrs. Mary Ezendiokwere (March 2023)*, *Mrs. Jacinta Oghenevware Obuseri (April)*, *Mr. Emmanuel Okan (April)*, *Mr. Napoleon Akushe (May)* *Mrs. Claudia Ukpolo (May)*, *Mrs. Onome Tawo (July)*, *Mrs. Maureen Ukpu (August)* and *Mr. Ebue Ogbevire (September)*, joined UPA in 2023. The number is quite impressive-it puts UPA as the largest chapter amongst UPUA family. Among the Nigerian Community in Houston, UPA Houston is a formidable group in terms of size. Even with our 126, now 125 number (with the passing of Chef Olokpa), I think we need to increase our number. One way of doing this, is to encourage members whose spouses are not yet members to enlist them. By so doing, we will increase both our membership number and family size.

On meeting attendance, the average monthly meeting attendance (present and absent) improved from 37.1% and 62.9% in 2022 to 41.1 % to 58.9% in 2023. This is encouraging considering the fact that (Meeting attendance has greatly dropped since the Covid-19). What is not encouraging however, was punctuality. Meeting starting time of around 4.30 pm as required by UPA constitution was gradually shifted to 5.30 pm and sometimes to as late as 6.00 pm! Some of our hosting members are very guilty of the lateness. Even though 2023 was fraught with punctuality issues, six members (*Mrs. Patience Adegoke*, *Dr. Nelson Akai ghe*, *Mr. Napoleon Akushe*, *Mr. Eric Erigha*, *Chief Godspower Oniovosa*, *Chief Rume Oputu*, *Chief Christy Origho* and *Mrs. Funmi Umaka* maintained “perfect present” (100%) meeting attendance in 2023. But again, not all the 2023 perfect meeting attendees were punctual to meeting. Please let us improve on meeting attendance and punctuality in 2024.

Our meetings in 2023 were sometimes very noisy and chaotic. Noisy situations may sometimes be acceptable because of our large number and therefore diverse views, opinions and idiosyncrasies. However over-talking and stressing on an issue for too long creates noisy situations. Please, let us try to keep our speeches short and simple. Remember there is always room to revisit issues after the meeting. On some of the chaotic situations, they are the result of unresolved outstanding impasses and other developing issue(s), some with questionable motives. Please report your issues to the Ethic/Arbitration Committee or talk to someone. In 2024 as was in 2023, we are relying on the Ethics and Arbitration Committee to take a lead in looking at the issues and provide paths to resolution. I appeal to members to calm down-Many UPA issues and your complaints are on the table!

## **UPA Executive & Other UPA Communities:**

Unlike 2021-2022 administration, the 2023 administration has a full EC participation. The UPA official Spokesman (Otota) position which would have still eluded us in 2023 year was gladly filled by our honorable Assistant Secretary, Chief Lincoln Itiveh, thus officiating in two capacities; Assistant Secretary and Otota. Thanks you Chief Itiveh for stepping up. Let me also appreciate Chief Godspower who many times helped out as Otota when Chief Itiveh was absent.

In 2023, the always-hardworking Urhobo Center Development Committee (chair, Mr. Cletus Akatugba) made great strides in Urhobo Center Development matters. Membership (chair, Ms. Rita Akposheri) and Social (chair, Mrs. Onome Umukoro) Committees, were very visible. The Community Outreach (chair, Dr. Mrs. Ediri Okiti-Egbegbetoro) and Membership Outreach (chaired by Dr. Mrs. Monica Wilson) Committees, were on track with volunteering at Houston Food Bank and reaching out to our long-time absentee members, respectively. We have high hopes on the Ethics/Arbitration (chair, Mr. Augustine Ikpesu) and Internal Audit (chair, Chief Godspower Oniovosa) Committees, as we wait to hear their first reports. Other committees are not left out-please hit it up! Like Chief Itiveh did in the EC. I encourage other members to step-up in their various committee.

## **Membership Interaction (Welfare, Socials, Community & Culture Affair**

In 2023, UPA have maintained the old tradition of taking care of each other and by extension taking care of UPA, in our voluntary donation efforts. This is tradition is built around two corners; *Culture and Unity* of UPA motto-*Culture Unity & Progress (CUP)*.

In 2023, we completed the 2023-leg of our long-list visitations from April to October 2023, giving out over \$35,000.00 in voluntary donations. We also contributed over \$6,000.00 voluntarily to our sister organizations (*Urhobo Progress Union, Southern California, Okpe Union of North America, Urhobo Association of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut, Benin Club of Houston, Waado Progressive Association of Kansas City and Isoko Association of Houton*) events or concerns. Continuing, UPA supported the family of late Mr. Joseph Akpobo, one of UPA Houston founding member who passed on in Nigeria. Mr. Akpobo family received voluntary donation of over \$3,000.00. Finally, UPA members supported the Nigeria Cultural Parade and Festival and UPA Annual Community events with amounts of over \$2,000 and over \$4,000.00, respectively. Fantastic!

Let me pause here and say “big thank you” to members who made contributions. Special thanks to our seniors, many of whom though retired but are not tired of giving. To Individuals members (*Dr. Mrs. Ottan-Obi* and *Chief Oputu*-who each donated \$500.00 for the Nigeria Cultural Parade Festival event), Chief & Chief Dr. (Mrs.) Eruwetere-who donated \$300.00 to Late Mr. Joseph Akpobo Family Support fund and (Chief Dr & Chief Dr. Mrs. Ukwade, Dr. & Mrs. Akpobome, Chief Oniovosa and Chief & Chief (Mrs.) Oloko, who gave \$300.00 or more, in donation to the 2023 UPA Annual Community Event, I say big thank you. While we are still here, let me also say a big thank you” to our Social/Publicity Secretary, Mrs. Umukoro, EC members and individuals, who helped out in one way or the other in handling 2023 events.

So much for UPA group. Congratulation to our individual members and families for their achievements in 2023; be it in marriage, buying a new home, Graduation (K-12, College, Post-Graduate), Childbirths, Promotion etc. And finally, we give a shout-out and big congratulations to our 2023 High School Graduates; *Ms. Chichi Brianna Umeh (daughter of Dr. Mrs. Hetty Umeh), Ms. Ese Ogbevire (daughter of Dr. Odiri Akushe), Ms. Mary Samuel (daughter of Mrs. Roder Afavor) and Ms Megan Ughovwa daughter of Dr. Ejiro & Mrs. Stephanie Ughovwa).*

## **UPUA:**

UPA still remains the largest chapter in UPUA, remitting substantial funds to UPUA in Membership Dues. UPUA runs a Group Life Insurance for qualifying UPUA members. As of 2023, 93 UPA members are enrolled in the insurance program. I encourage all UPA members to enroll in the UPUA Group Life Insurance program.

## **Finance:**

Total cash in UPA Bank accounts reduced in 2023. Total cash in the Bank as of December 2023 was **\$228,530.43** compared to **\$267,529.49** in December 2022. This means UPA accounts reduced overall, by over **\$38,000.00** in 2023, (*Attachments ii, ii(a)*). UPA Total Assets also reduced from to **\$585, 632.74 in 2022 to \$536,154.53**, (*Attachments ii, ii(a)*).

## **Revenue:**

2023 UPA Annual Revenue increased from **\$59,742.26 in 2022 to \$75,284.80 in 2023** (*Attachment iii*). The highest revenue contributor in 2023 was Membership Dues which stood at **\$35,564.64** compared to **\$31,535.16** Membership Dues generated in 2022. Membership Dues is always the chief revenue generator when revenue-generating events like Anniversary, Dedicated fundraiser, compulsory Levy payment are absent.

2023 Membership Dues payment information show that 31 (24.6%) members had positive balance (credits), thus, their 2024 total Dues will be less than \$300.00. In 2022, 19 (15.4%) members had positive balance (credits), (*Attachment iv*). 54 (42.9%) members paid their Dues in full (up to date) while 19 (15.1%) members owe \$150.00 or less. The last category are 22 (17.5%) members, who owe more than \$150.00. These members are considered non-members until they pay their outstanding Dues sometimes with re-instatement fees, before they become members again.. Accumulating your UPA debt (Dues) for up to a year and above is not good and unacceptable. Members who have special concerns or are in some situations, should let the President know.

## **Expenditure:**

2023 UPA Annual Expenditure was **\$114,124.21** (*Attachment iii, v*). Highest expenses were on Urhobo Center Development (**\$53,994.73**), followed by Annual Community Event (**\$12, 360.00**) and UPUA Group Life Insurance Premium (**\$8,416.56**). Urhobo Center Development was UPA highest expenditure made in 2023-the funds was utilized for completing the preliminary stage of the Urhobo Center Development.

## **Total Net income**

2023 Total Net Income was (**\$38,838.41**).

## **UPAT:**

UPAT had few financial transaction is 2023. This was due to the fact that most of UPAT revenue and expenditure are now transacted by UPA. Total cash in UPAT account as at December 2023 stands at **\$14,246.02** (*Attachment vi*). Total Assets of UPAT increased from **\$205,197.66** in 2022 to **\$205,800.60** in 2023 (*Attachment vi*). In 2023, UPAT generated **\$1,000. 00** revenue and had expenses of **\$397.06**. The Total Net Income of UPAT in 2023 was **\$602.94** (*Attachment vii*).

## **Developments:**

### **Urhobo Center Development Preparation & Financing, UPAT to UPA, UPA Property Tax Exempt Pursuit**

In addition to routine association work, 2023 was focused on preparation for Urhobo Center Development, Transferring from UPAT to UPA and studying UPA Property Tax Exempt.

On the preparation for Urhobo Center development, the Urhobo Center Development Committee has been involved with Urhobo Center final plan drawings, seeking permits and approval for the plans. For this phase of Urhobo Center Development project, the association has spent over \$50,000.00. Our final products will be approved building plans.

On financing, I am happy to report that UPA still has \$200,000.00 ready for the Urhobo Center Development project. We have explored other possible financing or funds source for the project including but not limited to fundraising, member levies and bank loan. In addition, the Urhobo Center Development Special Finance Committee, chaired by Mr. Monday Anigbro, is going to guide us on how UPA can either raise the remaining \$800,000.00 or the \$1M, which the committee estimated as cost of Urhobo Center development.

Since the revision of the of 2020 UPA Constitution, the need arose to obtain and maintain a (501) (c )(3) tax-exemption for UPA instead of using UPAT (501) (c)(3) tax-exemption. With UPA tax-exemption granted, the effort shifted to transferring properties and items under UPAT name to UPA After that, we will proceed to merge UPAT and UPA at State Level (Texas Secretary of State) before proceeding to inform the Interval Revenue Services (IRS) of our intention. We got the services of a Property Attorney, Barrister Conrad Willard, who has been guiding the process.

On UPA Property Tax Exemption, the process has just started. My visit to and interactions with the Harris County Appraisal District (HCAD) indicates the we still have a lot to do to obtain Property Tax Exempt. The Vice President, Mr. Larry Boje in conjunction with some EC members will be handling the assignment. I encourage anyone vast in this area to work with the Vice President.

### **Looking Forward**

In 2024, the Urhobo Center Development should be highest priory in 2024. Developing Urhobo Center has been an agenda issue for UPA as far back 2003 and up till 2014 when the present Urhobo Center was acquired. It should not take us another long years before we develop! We can do! .

In 2024, we need to extend UPA (501)(c)(3) tax-exempt outlook and community services to our immediate environment. In 2023, we had a budget for donation to community concerns but it was not utilized. Let do more in 2024.

Lastly, I will like to see more participation in UPA affairs, especially at committee level. Every member should get involved with their assigned committee and just do something!

Thank you.

Eric Erigha, President (UPA)  
January 7, 2024