

## **AKWA IBOM DIASPORA IN NEW YORK CELEBRATES NEW YEAR, REAFFIRMS SHARED HERITAGE, ANCESTRY**

The music of Uko Akpan was stirringly loud in the Bronx, New York, Saturday, January 16, as 300 guests crammed in the community hall of the Highbridge Community Church under the auspices of the Akwa Ibom State Association New York (AKISANY) to celebrate Akwa Ibom heritage and mark the New Year.

Akwa Ibom women, elegantly dressed for the evening, added pomp and pageantry to the event as well as showcasing a full display of sumptuous Akwa Ibom cuisine. Activities featuring children and young adults were the highlights of this year's event, which celebrated the past year and provided opportunity for networking and membership drive. Second-generation Akwa Ibom children entertained the audience with traditional and contemporary dances.

New York Chapter President Eno Udo spoke on the diversity of the Akwa Ibom Diaspora in New York and stated that the New Year get-together was intended to bring together those who, for various reasons, do not usually socialize. He enjoined them to come out to take an active role in the community development activities of the association. Udo introduced Edinam Oton as the interim secretary of AKISANY, and expressed appreciation to the outgoing secretary, Ubong Jonah, who served the community diligently for over five years.

Chief Ime Umoh, a traditional title holder, who recently returned to the US after a year-long assignment in Nigeria, spoke on the cultural identity of Akwa Ibom people and their common bond, re-echoing the invitation of the president to the Akwa Ibom diaspora to assume participatory roles in AKISANY.

Umoh reaffirmed the oneness of Akwa Ibom people, adding that his travel and interaction with the people of Akwa Ibom back home had led him to make discoveries that have not only forced him to reassess his previous views on the kinship of the Annangs and the Ibibios, but would amaze members of the Akwa Ibom Diaspora about their common ancestry. Umoh affirmed that he would report his findings to the community at the March 19 meeting of the association.

John James Etim, National President of Akwa Ibom State Association of Nigeria USA, Inc. (AKISAN) a special guest at the event, lauded the efforts of the New York Chapter President and his officials. Etim encouraged members of the Akwa Ibom Diaspora to rededicate themselves to worthy causes and to maintain the peaceful co-existence of Akwa Ibom people abroad.

Etim announced that the National body of the association had received funds pledged by Akwa Ibom State government. He noted as well that at the national level, the association is focused on proper accounting to ensure transparency and probity.

Among the dignitaries at the event were Chief Charles Akpabio, Dr. & Mrs. Edet Affiah, Rev. & Rev. Mrs. Ben Udofia, Dr. & Mrs. Samuel Ukonne, and Dr. & Mrs. Offiong Aqua.

Other dignitaries at the all night long event included Dr. & Mrs. Nkanga Nkanga, Obong & Mrs. Kokoette Essien, Bishop Dr. & Mrs. Samuel E. Ottong, and Dr. Joseph Ewa.

Also in attendance were Elder & Dr. Mrs. Imeh Akpan, Pastor Ubong David, Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Essien, Chief & Mrs. Eniang Inyang, and the first lady of AKISANY, Mrs. Justina Udo.

Dr. Arit Essien did a wonderful job as MC. Music was provided by DJ Rix.

AKISANY Information Service  
New York, NY