

2021 **Umu**
Igbo Unite
M A G A Z I N E

**THE FACES
OF IGBO EXCELLENCE**

**Anyi Nwere
Mmadu**

August 5th -8th, 2021

Houston, Tx



Official 2021 Convention Partner



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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I have always had a sense of pride when discussing our Igbo culture. I must confess, much of it is due to a feeling of shared identity by association. Candidly, it is difficult not to be enamored by our people and the achievements we have made, as well as feel an innate responsibility to meet the unsaid expectations of our predecessors. Upon further reflection, I realize just how much our traditions have shaped my perception of the world and how *my* definition of success and excellence stems directly from my beginnings.

In the past year, we have collectively faced events that will likely have a lifelong impact. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten global public health security and has resulted in more than four million lives being lost. The circumstances we found ourselves in forced us to adapt to a “new normal” devoid of physical and emotional connection, and its effect and consequence have been evident.

In the US, we experienced a movement that galvanized the world following the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and other unarmed Black and brown people. Our hearts ached with our mothers, fathers, brothers, and sisters back home in their plight, witnessing thousands of youth fearlessly demand justice from the Nigerian federal government. The disdain, grief, and empathy cannot be captured in words.

Our hearts sting from the division within our home country and we continue to pray that the blood, sweat, and tears of our forefathers who fought for their right to live freely and justly do not go in vain.

And through it all, we managed to navigate trauma, pain, stress, and uncertainty by maintaining community and leaning on one another this past year. We were candid about our emotions, and sought spiritual and clinical guidance when needed. We know we are not perfect, but we are certain— now more than ever—that we are resilient. And that, in my opinion, is Igbo excellence.

This convention and magazine is a tribute and commemoration of our culture.

Sure, we will applaud each other's achievements and hopefully form lasting connections while exchanging ideas and delving into new experiences — but our culture extends beyond decorated biographies. This convention is also to recognize and celebrate the tenacity, courage, and perseverance of our Igbo people. That is the true pride of our culture.

This weekend will be embody insightful, joyful, and perhaps, even uncomfortable conversations that will require us all to continue to do the work long after it is over. It is my hope that this convention provides to you value, inspiration, and the needed support.

Here's to many more.

Cheers,

Desirée N. Anyasodo
Editor-in-Chief, 2021 UIU Magazine





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Gold Okafor

Vice President
Michael Iheakanwa

Treasurer
Ikenna Amuchie

Secretary
Adaku Onwuzurumba

UIU Magazine is published annually to commemorate the achievements of Umu Igbo Unite, inc. and its local chapters. Please send inquiries to the editor at uiumarketing@umuibounite.com

Editor-in-Chief
Desirée Anyasodo

About us

Umu Igbo Unite (UIU), was founded in 2005 in Atlanta, GA by the D.I. Anadu and J.C. Okpukpara families.

The motivation behind UIU's birth was to address the lack of a structured network that catered to the specific cultural, professional, and social needs of first-generation Igbo Americans and the greater Diaspora. Since its inception, UIU has grown to over 5,000 members nationwide with 16 active chapters: Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, DMV, Boston, Tristate (NY, NJ, CT), Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Nashville, Cincinnati, Twin Cities, Bay Area, Austin, Miami, and Seattle.

FROM THE FOUNDERS

Ndewo nu!

Welcome to the 17th Annual Umu Igbo Unite Convention! We thank God for His continued direction in our mission to Unite and Connect Igbo professionals in the Diaspora, keep the Igbo culture and language alive, and instill a sense of pride to be Igbo.

The inspiration behind UIU's birth was to create a network that catered to Igbo's specific cultural, professional, and social needs in the Diaspora. Each year, there are numerous success stories about friendships/bonds, relationships, engagements and marriages, and new businesses/career moves from attending the convention or attending a local chapter event. We are forever motivated in our efforts to unite and connect "Umu Igbo".

Since its inception, UIU has grown to over 26,000 followers nationwide with 16 chapters: Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, DMV, Boston, Tristate (NY, NJ, CT), Chicago,

Detroit, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Twin Cities, Bay Area, Austin, Miami, Seattle, Nashville and still growing! We are so excited to partner with each of you as UIU continues to develop.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 16th annual convention was held virtually last year. We had an amazing lineup of speakers, Onyeka Onwenu, Kingsley Moghalu, Vivian Nwakah, Chike Ukaegbu, Late Barrister Esther Uzoma (may her soul Rest In Peace), Ify Ike, Peace Amadi, to name a few. The sessions were informational and uplifting, and it proved that we can thrive in any situation. The stories shared with us about UIU's impact on your lives keep us inspired to continue to do this each year.

This year's theme Anyi Nwere Mmadu: The Faces of Igbo Excellence, will allow us to showcase fellow Igbo's flourishing careers and highlight the Igbo Healthcare Heroes that dedicated their lives to helping the world in a pandemic.



FROM THE FOUNDERS, CONT'D

We aim to keep forward momentum and keep aspiring to impact the diaspora positively and back home. We are achieving this through our five structured programs:

1. **UIUCares** - the community service arm of UIU. We are excited to contribute practically to several problems facing our people. We strive to provide support to Igbos back home and Igbos in the Diaspora by focusing on these five areas:
 - **Creation | Accessibility | Relief | Education | Service**
2. **UIUConvention** - the annual convening of over a thousand Igbo Nigerians in one city! For a fulfilling weekend of fellowship, professional networking and cultural exhibitions! Each year we strive to make it the best national convention to date.
3. **UIUTourism** - an annual trip to tour Igboland where we explore and experience the rich Igbo history and culture firsthand.
4. **UIUConnects** - a platform created to connect Igbo professionals in the Diaspora with domestic companies and international opportunities in Nigeria and abroad. Opportunities span from study abroad, internships to full-time employment.
5. **UIUIgbo101** - a program created to teach the Igbo language. This is done through onsite courses, videos, and our recently launched YouTube video series, Ije the World Traveler.

As we continue to develop these programs, we will keep you abreast of the progress.

We want to express our profound and heartfelt gratitude to our parents, Dr. & Dr. Mrs. D.I. Anadu and Reverend & Dr. Mrs. J.C. Okpukpara.

Furthermore, we must acknowledge the team constantly working to keep Umu Igbo Unite going, from the fellow Board Members, Chapter Executive Members, National Planning Team Members to the Chapter members. We are so grateful for your passion, time and dedication to this organization. The entire Igbo community in the diaspora thanks you.

A big thank you to all of our sponsors, attendees and supporters. We appreciate you!

We hope you have the time of your life this weekend (safely) and continue to make connections that will last a lifetime!

Sincerely,
The Umu Igbo Unite Corporation Founders

2009

Houston, TX
UIU hosted on-site blood screenings and discussed health and wellness in the community



Attendees gathered for brunch after church.

2014

Atlanta, GA
The 10th annual UIU convention! There were 900+ attendees and Phyno, KCee, and Chika Unigwa were headliners.

2005

Atlanta, GA
"Embracing Our Culture"
UIU held its first convention with just shy of 250 attendees, family, and close friends of the founder.



The first convention!

2010

Annapolis, MD
The first UIU convention in the Northeast and to attract 500+ attendees.



We took the block party to the beach in Los Angeles!

2016

Lombard, IL
If you know you know!
The convention was attended by 1000+ people with Flavour as one of the featured guests.



2020

Virtual Conference
A pandemic couldn't stop us! UIU held a virtual conference featuring a variety of speakers based in the US and Nigeria.

2018

New Orleans, LA
Igbo di Egwu!
UIU took the Bayou by storm with a weekend of events and cash prizes.

2017

Los Angeles, CA
In true LA fashion, UIU's first convention on the West coast was unconventional and engaging.

Annual Report

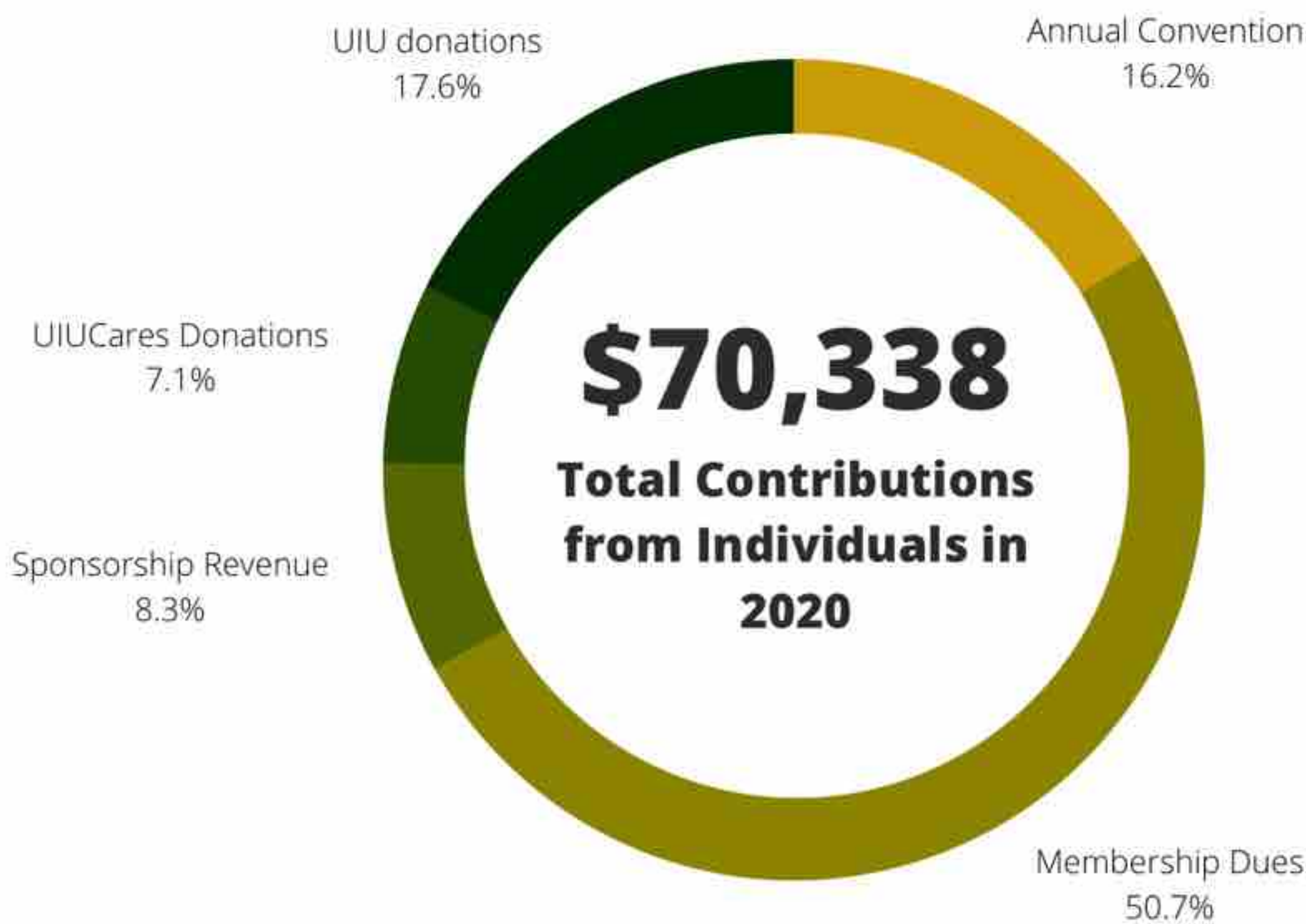
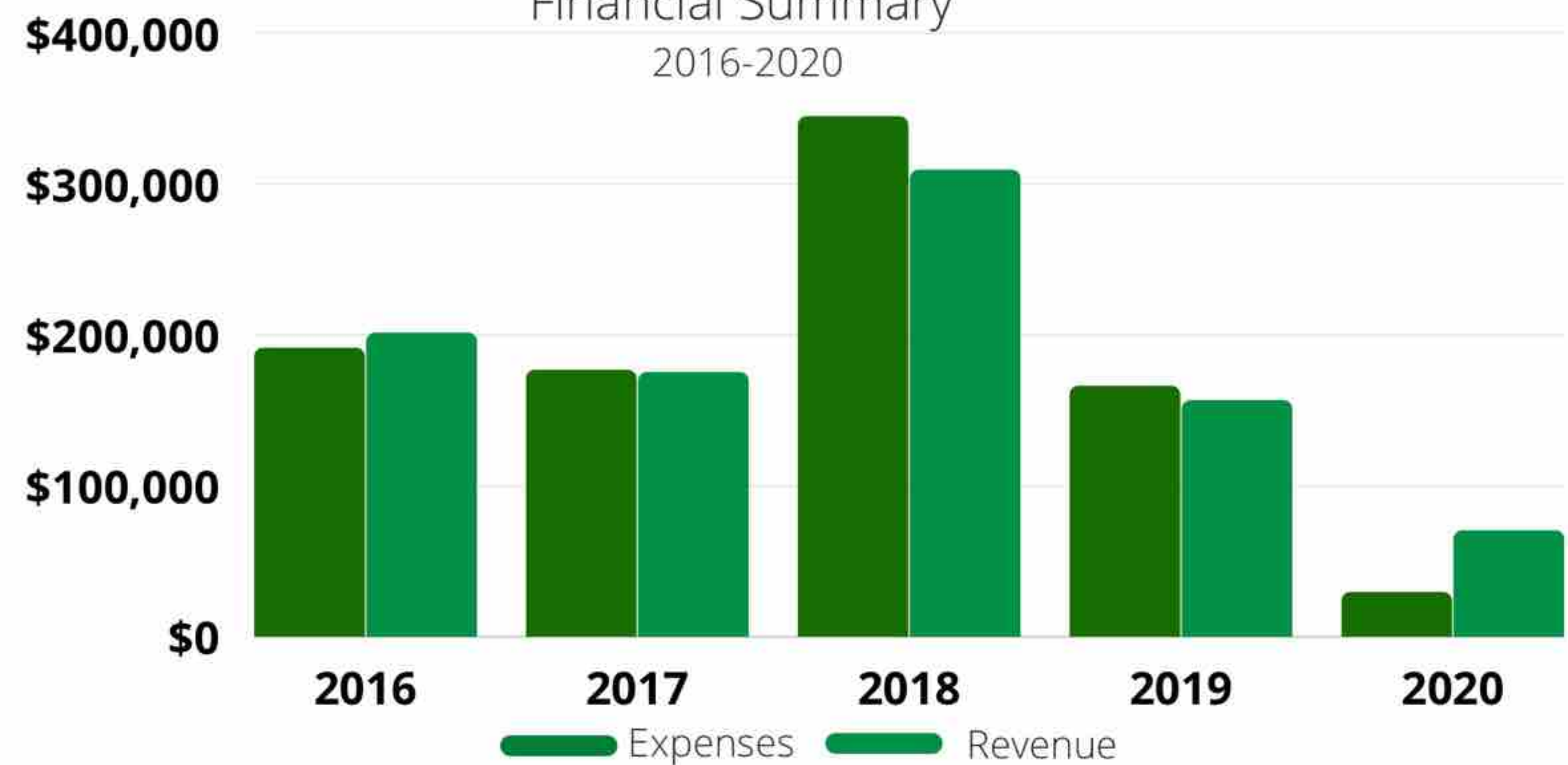
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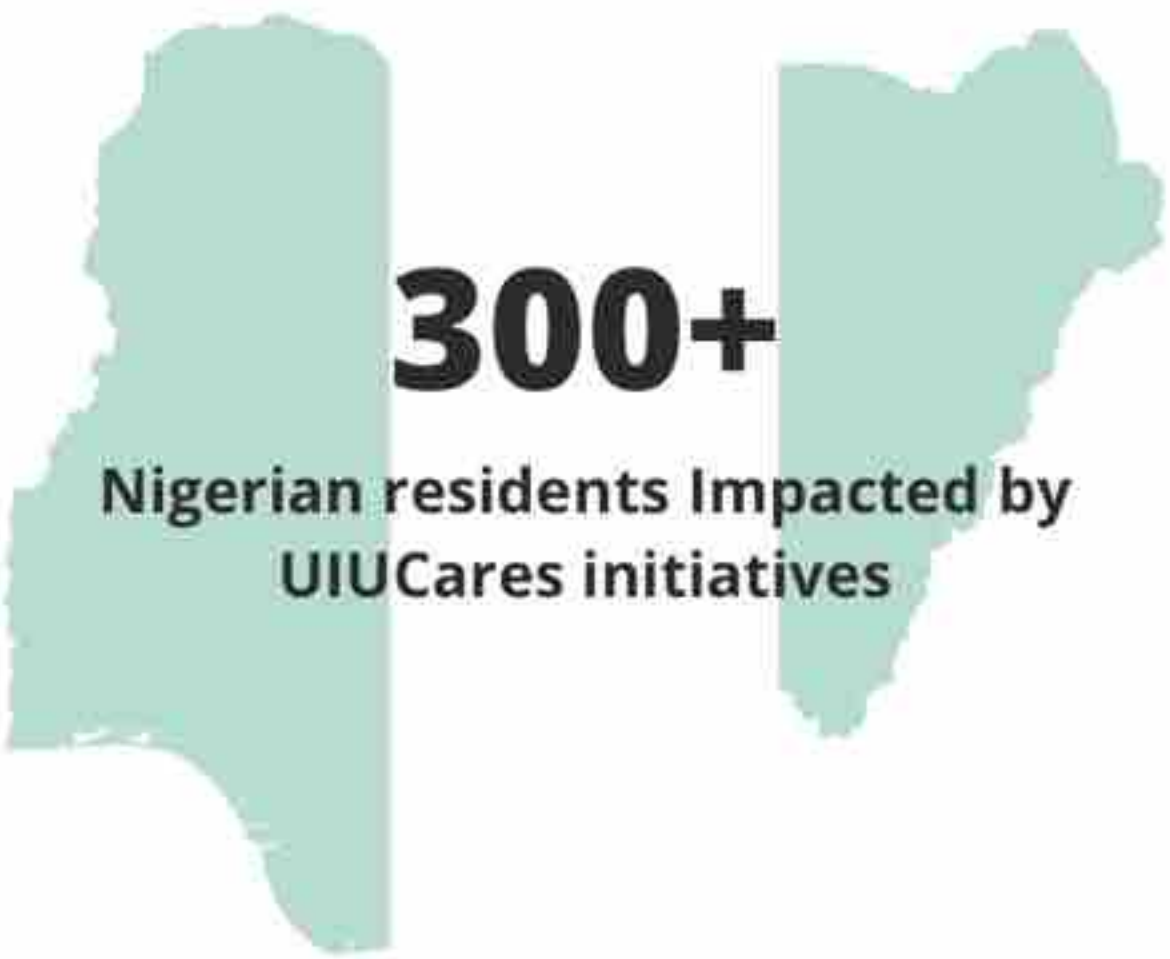
2020 Annual Report

Financial Summary

2016-2020



Umu Igbo Unite, Inc. guarantees 100% of your contributions and donations go directly into programs and operating the organization. For additional information, please visit www.umuigbounite.com



\$4,121

Awarded to UIU members in
education scholarships



Each chapter hosted unique
events throughout the year
including professional
development, career,
networking, and holiday -
themed sessions.

Did You Know?

Umu Igbo Unite, Inc. funds programs in Nigeria and the United States by providing education scholarships, hosting medical missions, and coordinating community outreach.

Umu Igbo Unite, Inc FY' 2020

Income

Convention registration.....	\$11,416
National membership dues.....	\$35,662
Sponsorship.....	\$5,850
UIUCares donations.....	\$5,000
UIU donations.....	\$12,411
UIUConnects.....	---

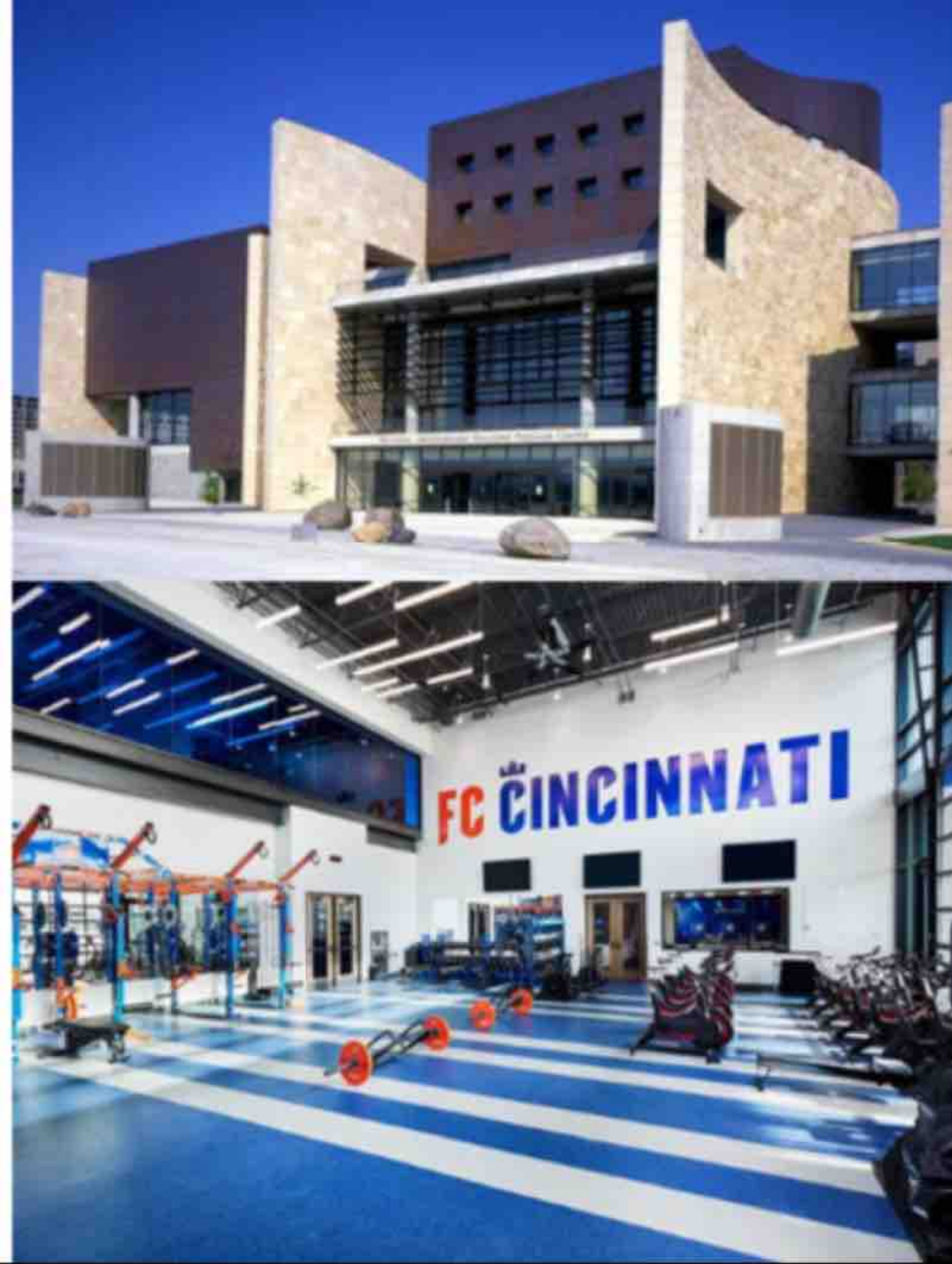
Total Income **\$70,338**

Expenses

Annual convention.....	\$13,744
Media and marketing.....	\$1,995
Charitable contributions.....	\$1,100
Office supplies.....	\$484
Legal and professional.....	\$569
Management technology.....	\$7,448
Bank charges and miscellaneous.....	\$4,182

Total Operating Expenses **\$29,523**

Net Income **\$40,815**



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Leadership

2019-2021 UIU National Officers



Gold Okafor

President



Michael Iheakanwa

Vice President



**Ikenna
Amuchie**

Treasurer



Adaku Onwuzurumba

Secretary

Planning Team: Registration Lead

Leadership

UIU Co-Founders



Emeka Okpukpara

Co-Founder & Chairman of the Board, Program Advisor: National Convention



Ijeoma Okoli

Co-Founder & Board Member, Executive Director & Program Advisor: National Convention & UIUConnects



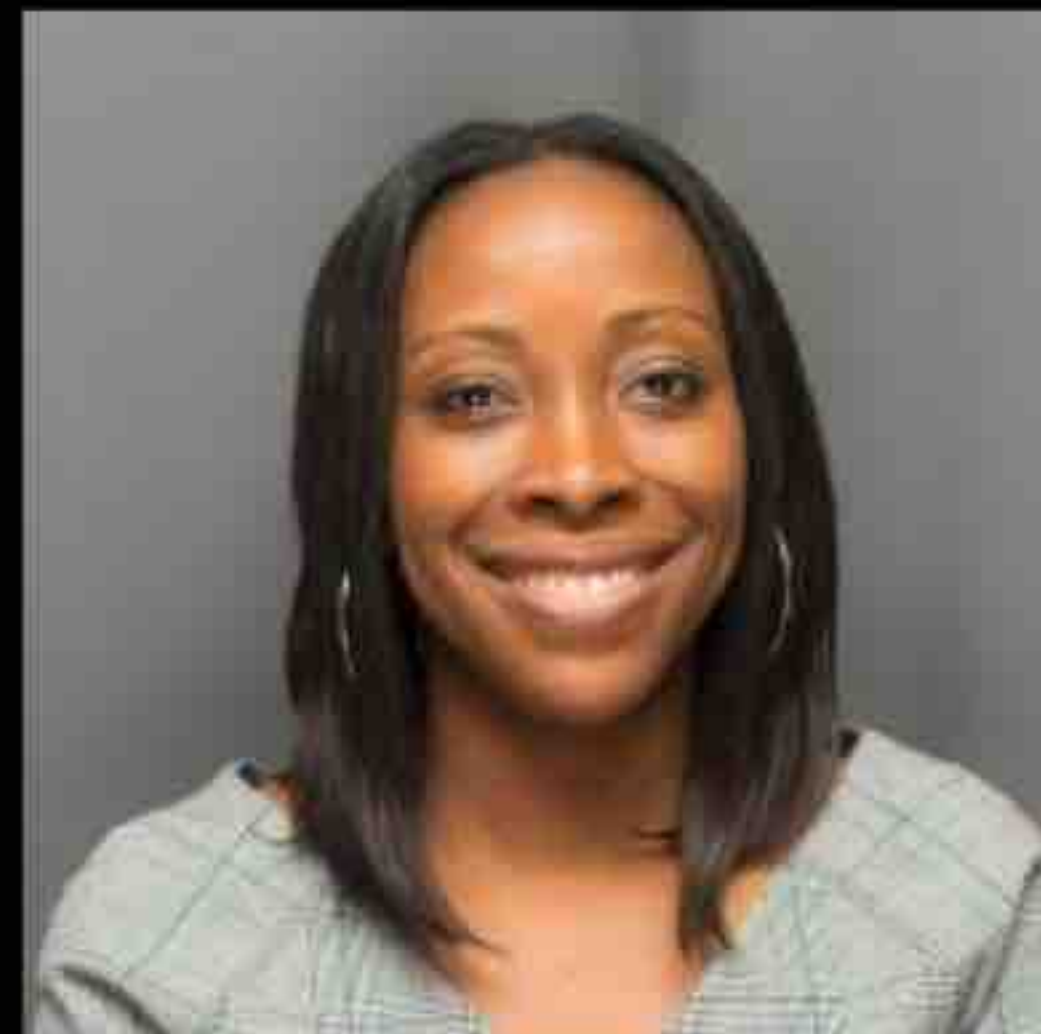
Amaka Onyereri

Co-Founder & Board Member, Program Advisor: Programs & UIU Igbo 101



Ijeoma Emeka

Co-Founder & Board Member, Program Advisor: UIUTourism



Uche Ndefo

Co-Founder & Board Member, Program Advisor: Public Relations & Marketing



Onyinye Igbokwe

Co-Founder & Board Member, Program Advisor: UIUCares



Chinedu Okpukpara

Co-Founder & Board Member, Program Advisor: Chapter Development



Njideka Anadu

Co-Founder & Board Member, Program Manager: UIUCares

Leadership

UIU Board



Chimaobi Nwankwo

Board Member, Program Advisor:
Membership



Obinna Achareke

Board Member, Program
Advisor: Sponsorship, Grants,
& Fundraising



Adaora Okoro

Board Member, Program Advisor:
Membership



Ejikeme Okoroha

Board Member, Program
Advisor: Legal Advisor



Nkem Nwankwo

Co-Founder & Board Member,
Program Advisor: UIUCares

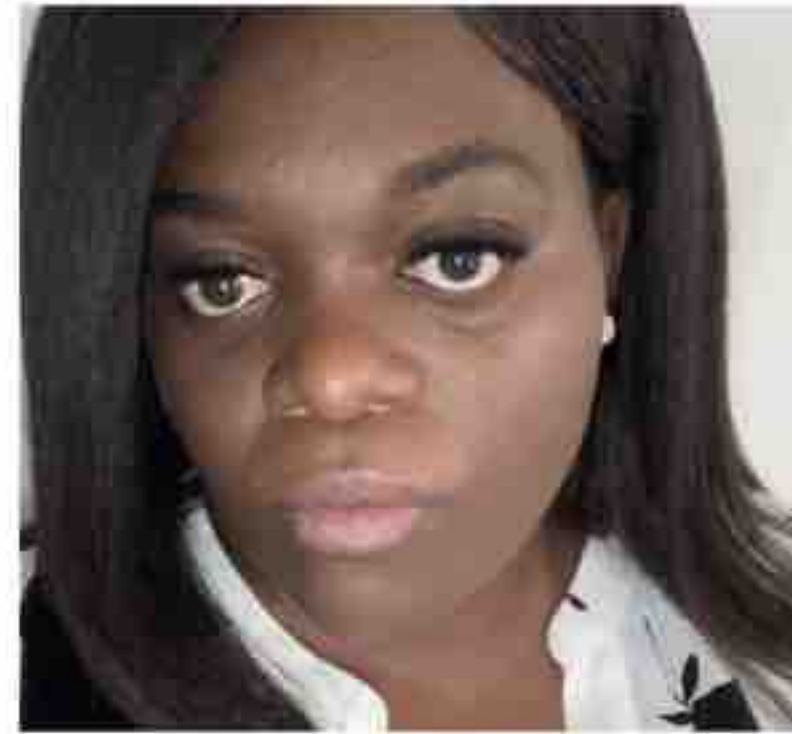


Chukwuma Ekwueme

Board Member, Program Advisor:
Growth Strategy

MEET THE CONVENTION PLANNING TEAM

Programming



Stephanie Acho

Programming Lead

US location: Dallas, TX

Nigerian Origin: Abia

"I am passionate about serving others!"



Ogochukwu Adogu

Programming

US location: Brooklyn, NY

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

"I am 'Igbo excellence' because that's the only option."



Chilee Agunanna

Programming

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"I am Igbo pride."



Ndidi Amadi

Programming

US location: Ontario, CA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"My favorite hobby is dancing."



Daniel Anadu

Programming

US location: Oklahoma, OK

Nigerian Origin: Lagos

"I joined UIU because I want to meet people culturally inclined."



Solomon Nwoche

Programming

US location: Berkeley, CA

Nigerian Origin: Abia

"I joined UIU because somebody has to share the Jollof."

MEET THE CONVENTION PLANNING TEAM

Programming (cont'd)



Jessica Obilom

Programming and
UIUConnects

US location: Los Angeles,
CA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

*"My 5-year goal is to win
both an Oscar and Emmy
award for best actress."*



Barbara Okafor

Programming

US location: Boston, MA

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

*"I am very passionate about
helping, serving and
connecting. I also enjoy being a
leader and giving back to my
community."*



Fortune Onwuzuruike

Programming

US location: Atlanta, GA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

*"I joined UIU because I saw it
as an opportunity to connect
with Igbos all over the world
and be apart of the giving
back to the our people in Igbo
land."*



Kingsley Ufere

Programming and
UIUConnects

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Imo

*"My role model is my
amazing mama!!"*



Chinwendu Umeh

Programming

US location: Nashville, TN

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

*"My 5-year goal is to start a
Nashville chapter."*

Not Pictured

Belinda Nwanguma

Programming

US location: Baltimore, MD

Nigerian Origin: Imo

*"I joined UIU because I
wanted to give back to my
wonderful community."*

MEET THE CONVENTION PLANNING TEAM

Marketing



Desirée Anyasodo

Magazine

US location: Atlanta, GA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"My 5-year goal is to build and operate a free health clinic in my mother's village, Mbieri."



Kelsey Chine

Marketing

US location: Los Angeles, CA

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

"My 5 year goal is to be married, have multiple houses, and to be a multi-millionaire."



Eejay Enekwa

Marketing and
Programming

US location: Atlanta, GA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"I am passionate about continuing to explore my creative genes."



Winifred Igbokwe

Marketing

US location: Brooklyn, NY

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

"I am 'Igbo excellence' because I strive to break records and set the bar higher."



Chidera Nicole Nwanna

Marketing and Volunteers

US location: New York, NY

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

"I am 'Igbo excellence' because I am my ancestors' wildest dreams."



Laura Onyeneho

Marketing Lead

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"My proudest achievement was when I completed my first multimedia news assignment in Nigeria."



Ebere Osemele

Marketing and Sponsorship

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Delta

"I joined UIU because I wanted to make more connections with individuals that grew up like me and share a love for the Igbo culture."

MEET THE CONVENTION PLANNING TEAM

UIUCares



C. Crystal Enekwa

UIUCares

US location: Atlanta, GA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"My favorite hobby is curling up on a comfortable couch with a good book."



Ifeoma Kamalu

UIUCares

US location: Boston, MA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"My favorite hobby is playing basketball."



Ijeoma Nwankpa

UIUCares

US location: Dallas, TX

Nigerian Origin: Abia

"I am passionate about educating our people on advocating for their own health and wellness."

MEET THE CONVENTION PLANNING TEAM

Admin, Finance, Legal & Registration



Ijeoma Adaku Husfeld

Finance

US location: Denver, CO

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"My proudest achievement is giving birth to my two little girls."



Chiamaka Nwafor

Registration

US location: Springfield, MA

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"I am passionate about Biafra, issues affecting all Black ethnicities, and issues regarding Black women."



Ogechukwu Nwankwo

Admin, Legal, and Logistics

US location: Wheaton, MD

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

"I am passionate about knowledge."

MEET THE CONVENTION PLANNING TEAM

Sponsorship & Vendors



Jennifer Obiofuma

Sponsorship

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Delta

"I joined UIU to become more connected with the Igbo culture and meet people in Houston!"



Judith Ngozi Obiofuma

Sponsorship and Programming

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Delta

"I joined UIU to find my village of Igbo friends who became family when I moved to Houston in 2019."



Ogechi Okwara

Vendor Marketplace Lead

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Anambra

"My role model is my mother because she is so hard working and is very determined! I love her drive!"



Elizabeth Opara

Sponsorship, Executive Admin, and Programming

US location: Houston, TX

Nigerian Origin: Imo

"I am passionate about nonprofit work and helping people back home in Nigeria."

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UMU IGBO UNITE
NATIONAL CONVENTION



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on their 17th anniversary!

Igbo Kwenu!

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Our Purpose

UIUCares

UIUCARES PARTNERS WITH ORGANIZATIONS IN IGBOLAND, TO PROVIDE FOOD, CLOTHING, HEALTHCARE, EDUCATION, AND VOCATIONAL PREPARATION FOR THE UNDERPRIVILEGED. WE WILL CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY AND HELP THOSE IN NEED THROUGH YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT.



UIUCares Update

In 2020, the national chapter of UIUCares provided care packages including food, cleaning supplies, and hygiene products to people in 5 states in Nigeria: Anambra, Delta, Enugu, Imo and Lagos. We provided the packages to 60 people per state serving a total of 300 families. We spent \$500 dollars in each state, and we are grateful to you, our sponsors, for making this possible.

At the last in-person convention in 2019, Mrs. Ndidi Nwuneli challenged us to donate books to the Children's library at the Center of Memories in Enugu. We are proud to report that the mission was accomplished, and we wish to thank the wonderful UIU members and sponsors for their generous donations. If you are in Enugu, please pay them a visit at the Center of Memories.

Since 2017, we have awarded \$1000 scholarships to 27 international students of Igbo descent who are attending college and/or universities here in the US. The \$27,000 dollars of aide provided so far would not be possible without your donations and the generous support of our sponsors.

Please watch a testimonial video from one of our recipients.



UIUCares Update

UIUCares also partners to create access to education in the Eastern region of Nigeria. Parents of Bridge Nigeria, an elementary school and a UIUCares initiative, have expressed their gratitude to Bridge for the support they provided. With cost of living increasing in Nigeria and businesses struggling as a result of the pandemic, Bridge has been a relief for a lot of the recipients' parents as they do not have to worry about their children's school fees.

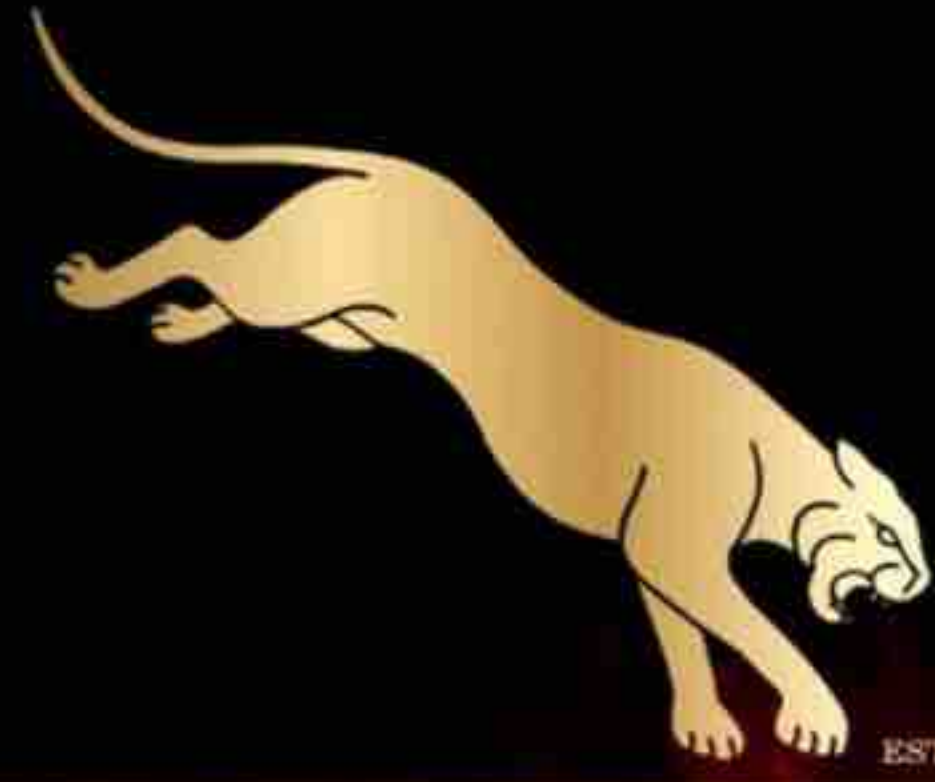
We are incredibly proud of the work that each UIU chapter is doing in their communities, your spirit is commendable, and each idea and project continues to move the needle forward to positive change. Thank you for taking an interest in all our projects back home and creating new relationships with structured organizations in Nigeria. We are incredibly proud of the work that each UIU chapter is doing in their communities, your spirit is commendable, and each idea and project continues to move the needle forward to positive change. Thank you for taking an interest in all our projects back home and creating new relationships with structured organizations in Nigeria.

UIUCares would not be possible without our amazing team members who volunteer their time, efforts, and resources to engineer and execute these wonderful programs. Come join the team and create and solve the problems that are facing us here and back home in Nigeria.

You can support UIUCares by visiting www.UmulgboUnite.com

Thank You!

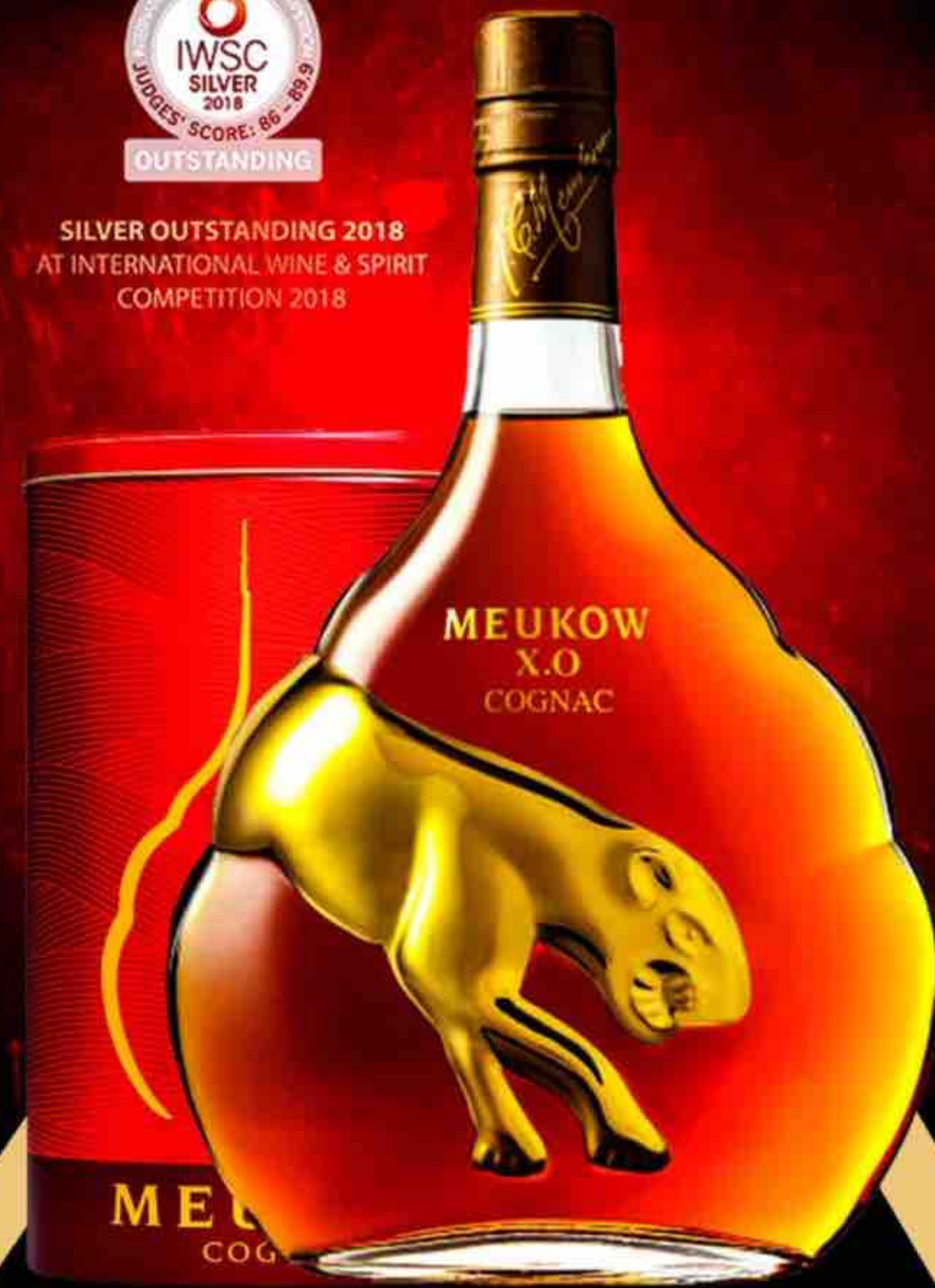




MEUKOW
Cognac



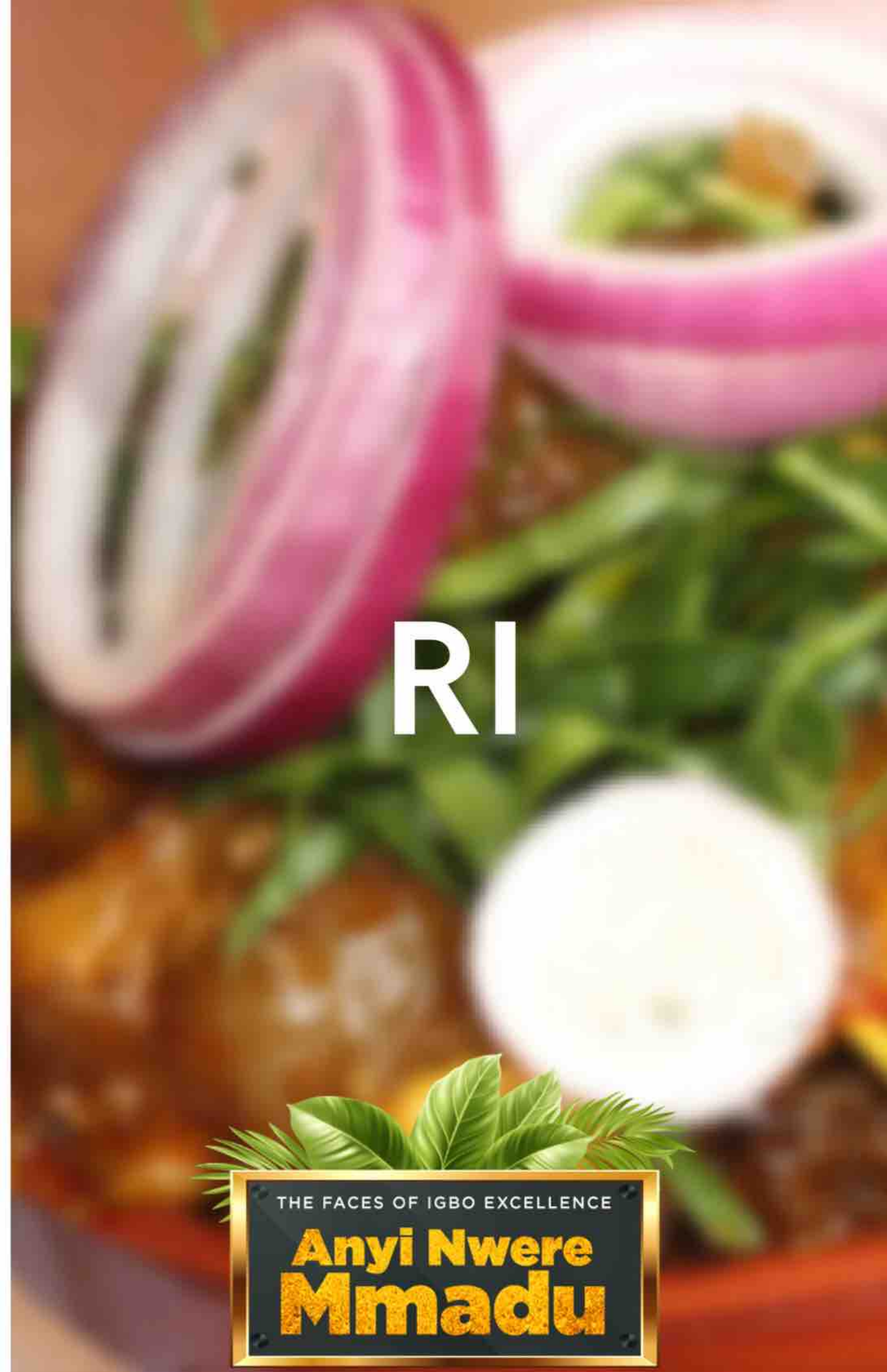
SILVER OUTSTANDING 2018
AT INTERNATIONAL WINE & SPIRIT
COMPETITION 2018



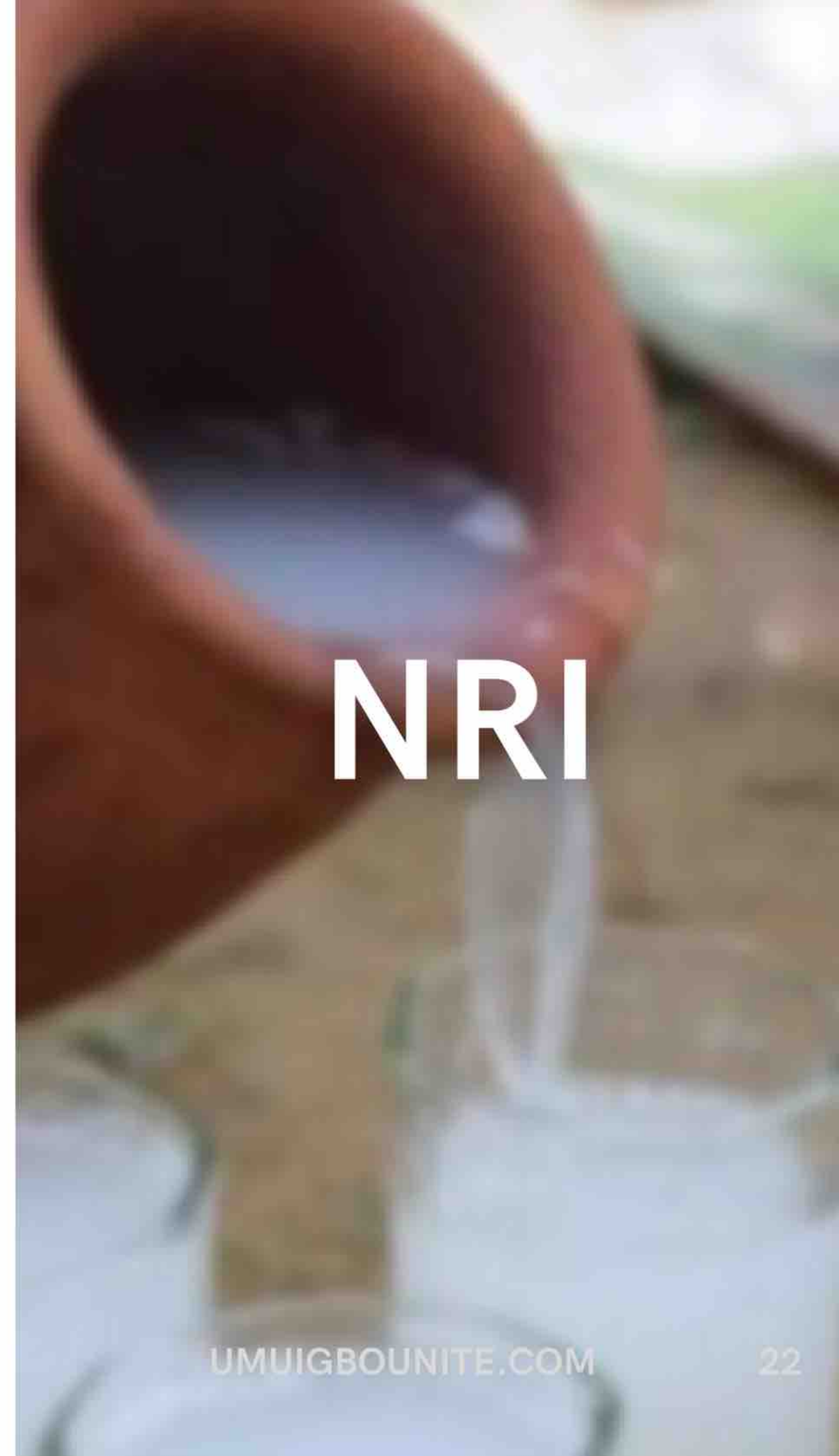
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BIA



RI



NRI

Oven-Grilled Suya

Difficulty: Average


Ingredients

- 3-4 Chicken Legs (thigh/drum)
- 1/2 cup of Suya Pepper Spice
- 1/3 cup of Oil (vegetable preferably) 1 Habanero Pepper
- 1 tbsp of Garlic Powder
- 1 tbsp Onion Powder
- 2 tsp of Paprika
- 1/2 tsp of Hot Pepper (Cayenne or Cameroon) 1/2 Green Bell Pepper
- 4 stalks Green Onion
- 1 tbsp fresh ground Ginger
- 5 cloves Garlic
- 2 Maggi or Knorr Cubes
- 1/2 Red or Yellow Onion
- 1 tbsp of Thyme
- 2 tsp of Curry Powder
- 2 tsp white pepper
- Salt to taste
- Black pepper to taste



Directions

- 1) Thoroughly wash and dry your chicken pieces; Cut 3-4 slits vertically in each piece of chicken, so the marinade can penetrate the meat; Place chicken in a bowl
- 2) Blend all ingredients (except for the black pepper); You can add more oil if the mixture is too thick; Taste the blended marinade mixture and add more salt/seasoning cubes to your liking 3) Thoroughly coat the chicken pieces in the marinade, and MASSAGE the mixture very well into the slits on the chicken pieces; Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and then the cover; Place in the refrigerator and marinate at least 4-24 hours (the longer, the better)
- 4) Remove chicken from refrigerator; Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees
- 5) Use an oven grilling pan OR a wire baking rack; This will ensure that the chicken gets crispy on both sides; Coat the pan or rack with a light layer of oil
- 6) Place the chicken on the pan/rack, skin-side up; Sprinkle each chicken piece with more suya spice, stock cube, and black pepper (do not go overboard); Use a silicone cooking brush or a spoon to coat each piece of chicken with oil
- 7) Place the grilling pan on the center rack in the oven, and bake about 20 mins 8) Remove the pan from the oven, and quickly baste the chicken with the oil from the pan; Place chicken back in the oven and bake another 20 mins
- 9) Remove the pan again, and repeat the basting outlined in step 8
- 10) Bake another 10 mins; Change the oven setting to BROIL, and move the grilling pan to the highest rack in the oven; BROIL the chicken for about 5 mins, but keep an eye on it and check on it because it may take a shorter amount of time and you don't want to burn it; BROIL until the chicken skin is crispy/slightly charred
- 11) Remove from the oven, transfer to as serving plate, and your Suya Chicken is ready to chop!!! You can serve it with chopped onions, tomatoes, and/or green peppers and extra suya spice on the side

Submitted by: Chef Cyndy Obenwa |  @ChefCyndyO

Cajun Chicken and Waffles

Difficulty: Hard

Ingredients

For Chicken:

- 8 chicken wings or drumsticks
- 2 cups buttermilk
- 2 teaspoons hot sauce
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 egg, lightly beaten
- 2 cups All Purpose Flour
- ½ cup Panko bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons Cajun seasoning
- 1 teaspoon seasoned salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- Vegetable oil for frying

For waffles:

- 2 cups flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon of ground cinnamon
- 2 eggs
- ⅓ cup vegetable oil
- 1¾ cup milk
- 1½ tablespoons butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract




Directions

1. Mix together buttermilk, hot sauce, and egg in a bowl. Add chicken and stir to coat. Refrigerate for 1-2 hours.
2. In a separate plate, combine the flour, Panko crumbs, Cajun seasoning, seasoned salt, onion powder, and garlic powder.
3. Pour about an inch of oil into a cast iron pan or a Dutch oven. Heat oil to 375 degrees.
4. Remove the chicken from buttermilk mixture and coat in flour mixture. Fry in oil for 10 to 12 minutes***, flipping over halfway through. Fry in batches four at a time to avoid overcrowding the pan and bringing down the temperature of the oil. Remove the chicken with a slotted spoon and place on a paper towel-lined plate.
5. To make the waffles, combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl.
6. Separate eggs and place egg whites in a bowl. Mix the egg whites with a mixer until frothy. Add the egg yolks, vegetable oil, milk, melted butter, and vanilla extract. Blend until mixed well. Pour into bowl with dry ingredients and stir until combined.
7. Make the waffles according to your waffle iron instructions.
8. Serve with maple syrup!

Notes

**Cook time of chicken may vary based on the size of the chicken pieces! Larger pieces will take longer to cook. My wings and drumsticks are usually done at about 10-12 minutes.

Submitted by: Evi Aki |  @EvsEats

Zesty Zobo

Difficulty: Easy

Ingredients

Per serving*

- 1 cup of Zobo/hibiscus/sorrel leaves
- 4oz pineapple juice
- 2oz orange juice
- 2oz white rum
- 1tbs diced pineapples
- 1tbs ginger
- 1/2 oz grenadine syrup
- 2 sliced oranges
- maraschino cherries for garnish



Directions

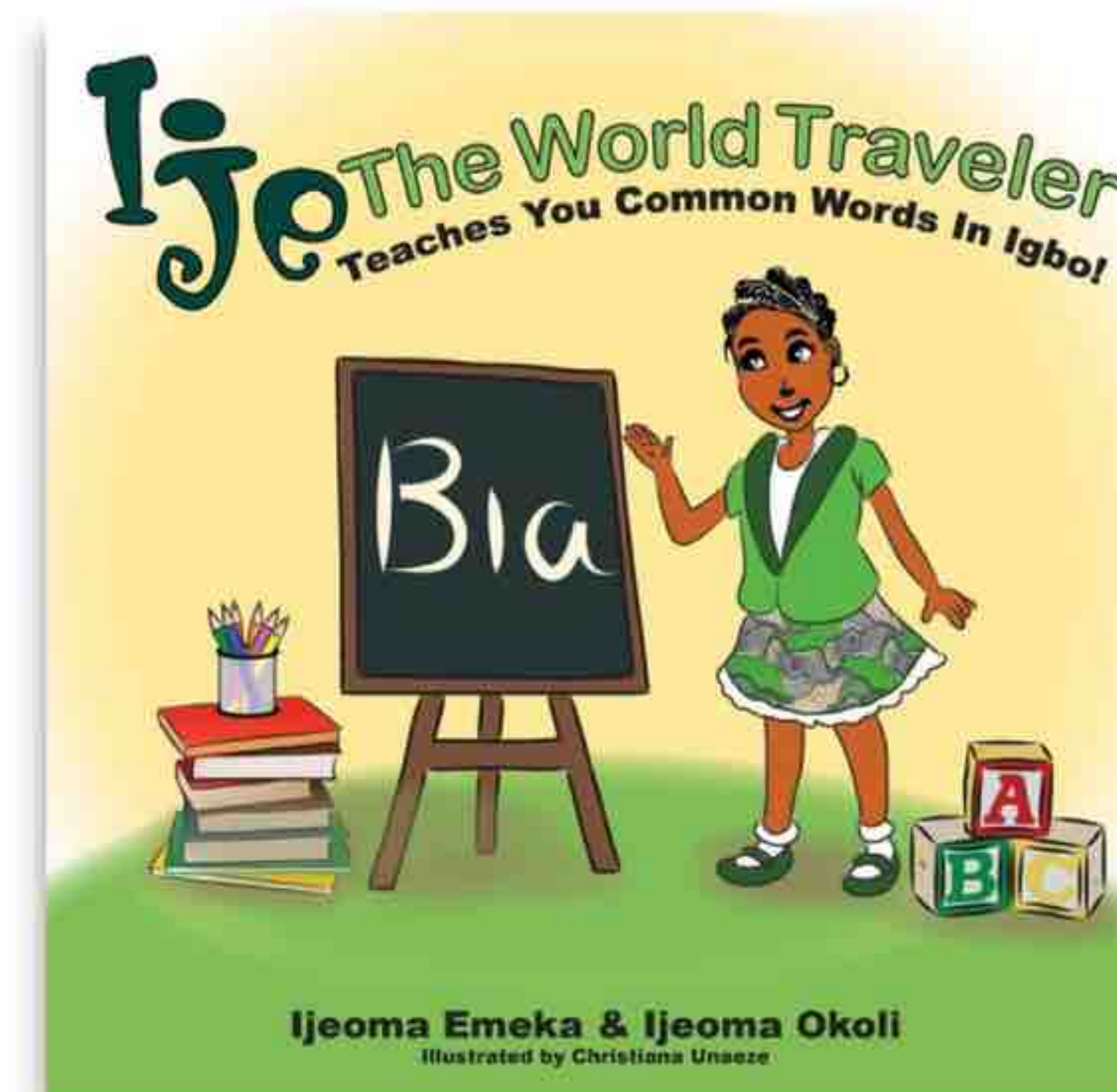
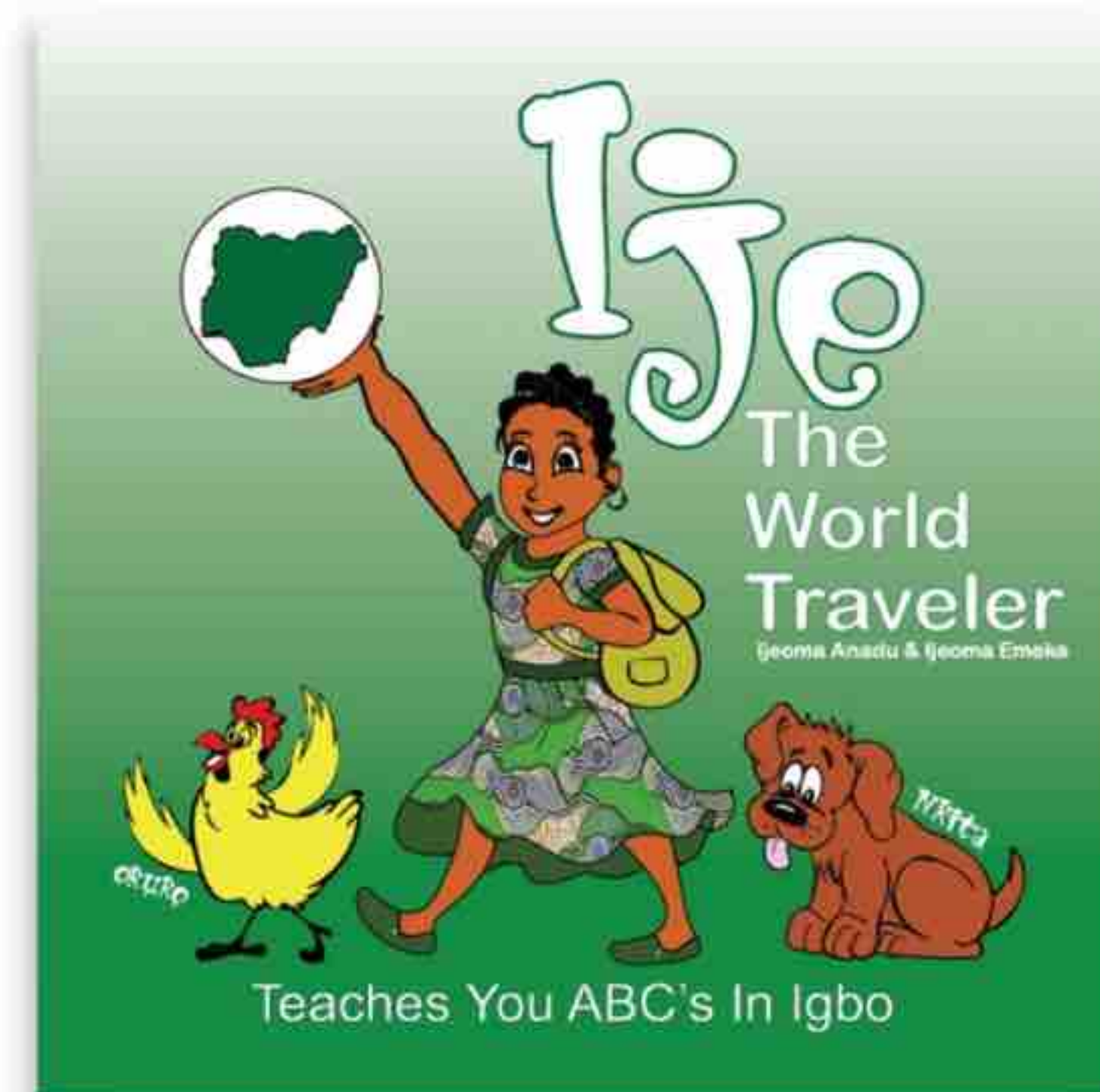
1. Wash zobo leaves with warm-hot water and boil in a covered pot with ginger, diced pineapples, and orange slices for 20 minutes; let cool
2. Fill a highball glass with ice
3. Add rum
4. Add orange and pineapple juice
5. Add cooled zobo mixture
6. Stir until one colour
7. Add grenadine syrup
8. Garnish with cherries and other fruit

Submitted by: Ndukka Nwafor

Photo Courtesy of: Nigerian Lazy Chef



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MAKA

2021 UMU IGBO UNITE MAGAZINE



OMENA



THE FACES OF IGBO EXCELLENCE

**Anyi Nwere
Mmadu**



ALA

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26



ZORO

GETS CANDID

What does Igbo excellence mean to you?

I think “Igbo excellence” is self-explanatory. Igbo culture is a lifestyle, it’s a movement, and for it to be called what it is called, it is excellent already. Seeing to all the reasons of why you’re Igbo, is Igbo excellence for me. From our hustle to our culture, money moves, the way we take care of our families, how we carry ourselves, etc. Igbo excellence is embracing being Igbo and everything that makes you Igbo if you are blessed to be Igbo.

Igbo-English fusion is becoming more popular. Why is it important to include traditional Igbo sounds in your music?

Making music in Igbo started off as something that was really easy for me and enjoyable in the early stages of my career. As I grew older, I started appreciating my culture more, and I as I delved deeper, it gave me the hunger to want to put our culture out there. So, I started consciously putting it in my music. I want people to see how beautiful our language is and how it can sound on songs. It’s like giving people insight on how it feels and what it’s like to be Igbo. I speak English and Igbo, but I speak in different dialects of Igbo (Aba, Owerri, Onitsha, Nsukka and Enugu dialect).

What is your opinion on the music scene in Nigeria? West Africa?

My take on the music scene in Nigeria is a huge thumbs up. The way we’ve grown in the past five years is astounding. There’s no genre that we don’t have. From amapiano to zanku to Ghanaian kpom kpom, rap, dancehall, etc. The Nigerian music industry is the most versatile in my opinion. However, I would want to change the way fans celebrate our artists. There are people doing a lot of work but aren’t acknowledged unless a body of work or project goes viral. I want fans to be more flexible, as it would be easier for everyone to be heard. A

What advice can you share with aspiring Igbo artists?

It would be helpful to know Igbo language well and to be able to fluently write it, as it gives a needed edge. Knowing dialects like Izugbe and Olumba would be very helpful too. Additionally, you can play around with the language and add your own slang-- make it your own. For one to become an international star, it starts with your flow.

Think about it. How does someone that does not understand Igbo enjoy what you’re saying? It is all in your flow. Use catchy and easy-to- pronounce hooks and play around with beats. Do not limit your work to the way the language is supposed to sound. Broadening it will help you break international barriers.



“ Igbo excellence is self-explanatory.
Igbo culture is a lifestyle. ”



Ogene, Ijele, Echolac, and Gbo Gan Gbom are still as popular today as when newly released. Did you anticipate this success?

Not exactly but I was very intentional with songs like Ogene and Echolac. The purpose of Ogene was to give the average Igbo village man a voice on a mainstream platform. With Echolac, I used the bounce that I heard from American rappers on a deeply rooted Igbo beat. It gained the attention of people that enjoy listening to rap and trap music due to the bounce of the song.

What keeps you grounded as you continue to break barriers in your career? What would you define as your “foundation?”

My days of struggle and knowing where I come from, as well as the fear of going back, keeps me grounded. My foundation is built on God. God is the reason why I believed that I could do what I am doing today. I was very confused about my purpose at a point, so I spoke to God about it. I prayed and asked Him to give me a sign to know which direction to take. That was around the time that a song I did with Wizboy called “Owu Sa Gi” blew up and that was the very sign I needed. When the going gets tough, I look back and say God, you are the reason why I am doing this.

“ *I love that our Igbo people abroad have given so much meaning and love to our culture...* ”

How would you define your legacy? How do you want the world to remember you?

I know for sure that I will be remembered for bringing Afropop and Igbo cultural music mainstream. I'd love to be remembered as the person that tried to put Igbo culture in the places that nobody thought could be put in.

A message for your fans?

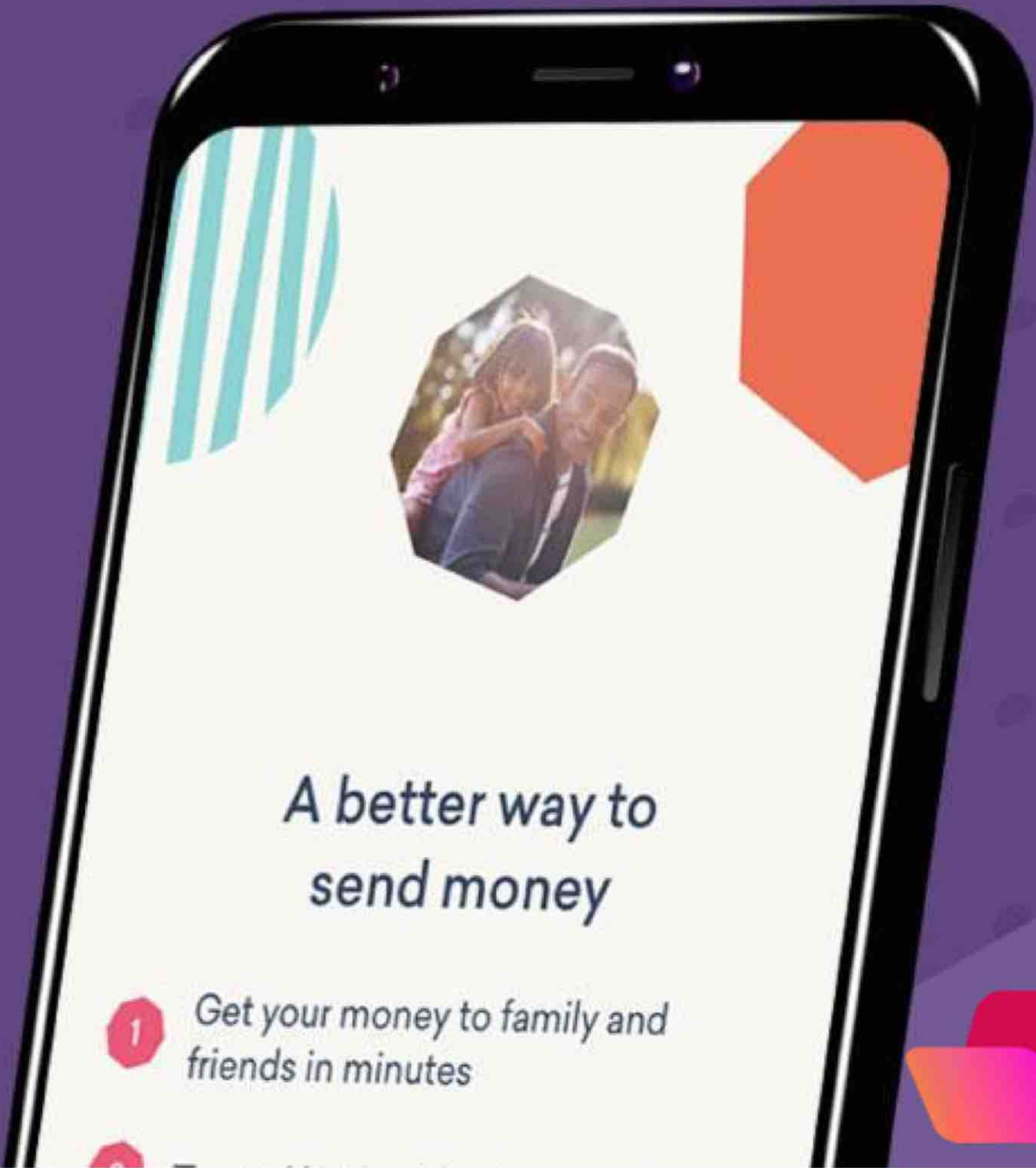
I love them. They are the reason why I have gotten to where I am today, and they are the reason why I will continue to do what I am doing. I ask for patience when they see directions that I try to go and support even when they don't completely understand, because that is how I got them to enjoy my craft.

I'd like to say a very big thank you to all of my supporters in America. You guys were the ones that "blew up" my music first. I remember when I released Ogene, I sent it to my friend JKrunk. He played it for a few of his friends and a week later, he sent so many videos of people dancing to the song. Posting them on social media helped to get more people on the vibe.

I also want to say a very big thank you to everyone that has contributed to the success of this movement and continues to contribute. I'll try as much as I can to make sure that I do not disappoint them. I love that our Igbo people abroad have given so much meaning and love to our culture. May God continue to give them strength, energy, inspiration, and wisdom to put Igbo culture where it is truly meant to be while removing the stereotypes and limits.



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The History Nigeria is Fighting to Erase

Chibuihe Obi Achimbo

“A war once fought never comes to an end,” my mother said. “The wounds crust over, but rarely ever heal.”

It was Nov. 2016, and I was visiting home to interview my parents and a few other relatives for a writing project I was working on — an essay about my family's experience during the Nigeria-Biafra war, a conflict which ended this month fifty years ago with an estimated three million deaths, most of which were non-combatant civilians and children. What was intended to be a four-page essay snow-balled into a quest to find Nigeria's hidden history and locate the story of my family which, unbeknownst to me, is intricately tied to it.

Biafra seceded from Nigeria on May 30th, 1967, after shockwaves of massacres in Northern Nigeria sent Easterners, mostly the Igbos, scampering back to their ancestral homelands across the River Niger for refuge. But the killings followed them into the new republic when Major-General Gowon, Nigeria's military Head of State, declared war in July of 1967 against the breakaway state. Overpowered and internally weakened by a blockade, Biafra territories began to fall gradually to the federal troops. By the end of the second year, Biafra was already teetering at the edge of defeat with a displaced civilian population that its shrunken resources and territory could not contain.



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My parents met in a refugee camp in Port Harcourt in 1969. And while the civil war was drawing to its end, they were hurtling into a hastily arranged marriage. My mother, an orphaned refugee, was barely fifteen. She had been forced to watch as a Nigerian soldier pumped bullets into her father's body while Aba, a commercial city in the Southeast, was captured by Federal troops. Her father, a divorcee civil servant, was raising her alone, along with a 13-year-old cousin. The boy went missing in the chaos that ensued during the invasion — either killed or kidnapped. On a single day, her world whacked off its axis, thrusting her into a lone adult life nothing had prepared her for. Sixteen months later she'd sign herself off to a marriage that held promise of family — a support system she would need to face an uncertain post-war future.

The Biafra war was fought in a tiny, landlocked rainforest region in West Africa, but it garnered massive international coverage owing to the works of photojournalists like Don McCullin who photographed the horrors of disease and mass starvation. Biafra became the first humanitarian disaster to be broadcasted on global television, and the images of severely malnourished children (known as “Biafra babies”) which came through TV screens into sitting rooms shocked the whole world and redefined modern humanitarian-aid. Those images and the reports that accompanied them are still as relevant as ever — they have over the years become a repository of memory and a reference point for the children of survivors who wish to understand a war that Nigeria has banished from its consciousness.

The people who lived through the war are shackled by their own trauma and five decades of paralyzing political fear. Growing up, the closest I came to learning about Biafra were from oblique allusions my mother made to it during conversations with her aunts. Twice or thrice she talked about living with nuns in a refugee camp, but none of those recollections registered as personal tragedies. In recounting them, she insisted on keeping them as impersonal as possible, wrapping her memory of horror with an emotional distance so palpable that the stories could have happened elsewhere and to people she didn't know. Like most Igbo people who survived the 30 months-long war, my mother believed it was not proper to speak of her experiences.

The History Nigeria is Fighting to Erase

Chibuihe Obi Achimbo

When she gave birth to her first child in 1972, one of the names my mother picked was Echefula, an Igbo name which means do not forget. But there was already an unprecedented pressure on the entire region (fueled by the “no victor, no vanquished” mantra) to quickly get over their experience of the war. So instead, my brother was named GladStone, a name as foreign to the Igbo language my parents spoke as it was to their recent experience — Igbo people often name their children to reflect a profound experience or defining moment in the family's history. A cousin born months after my brother would later take on the name, retaining the significance for the family.

The “no victor, no vanquished” was a post-war propaganda put up by the Gowon administration to impress the international community whose eye was trained on Nigeria. It not only earned Gen. Gowon's instant praise; it gave Nigeria an undeserved moral advantage in the historicization of that war. Igbo people were cast as rebellious troublemakers — a tag that has been repeatedly used by successive governments — who didn't deserve forgiveness but got it anyway. It stole attention from the pogroms of 1966, the massacre of 30,000 Easterners which led to the secession. It was a shallow and hypocritical approach to an issue that required deep remorse and honesty by a country too afraid to engage holistically with its own history. Where reparation, truth and reconciliation were needed, forgiveness was offered.

And, like all graces, forgiveness always come at a cost.

For fifty years, the Southeastern region has been paying the heavy price of being penitents. Their reintegration into Nigeria was contingent on how fast they brushed off the ashes of the war and severed emotional and philosophical ties to the short-lived republic. Recollections of injustices and demands for reparations were regarded as ingratitude and, sometimes, outright acts of treason. The Federal government also went to work, but surprisingly not to rewrite history as post-war nations are wont to do, but rather to uproot and erase it entirely from the national consciousness. The Bight of Biafra and Biafra Light — a coastline curve off the Atlantic coast and a high-grade crude oil produced around it — were renamed “The Bight of Bonny” and “Bonny Light oil” respectively.

Perhaps, the most bizarre of these gruesome attempts to erase memories of Biafra has been the erasing of Nigerian history itself from school curricula throughout the country.

The History Nigeria is Fighting to Erase

Chibuihe Obi Achimbo

It happened when calls were ongoing for the national archives of the war to be declassified. For a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria, where allegiance is often pledged along ethnic and cultural blocks, most people believe that engaging with Nigeria's collective history might be the only way to tease out a national story. But the atmosphere of hostility in which the government clamps down on opportunities for meaningful conversation makes such possibility increasingly unfeasible.

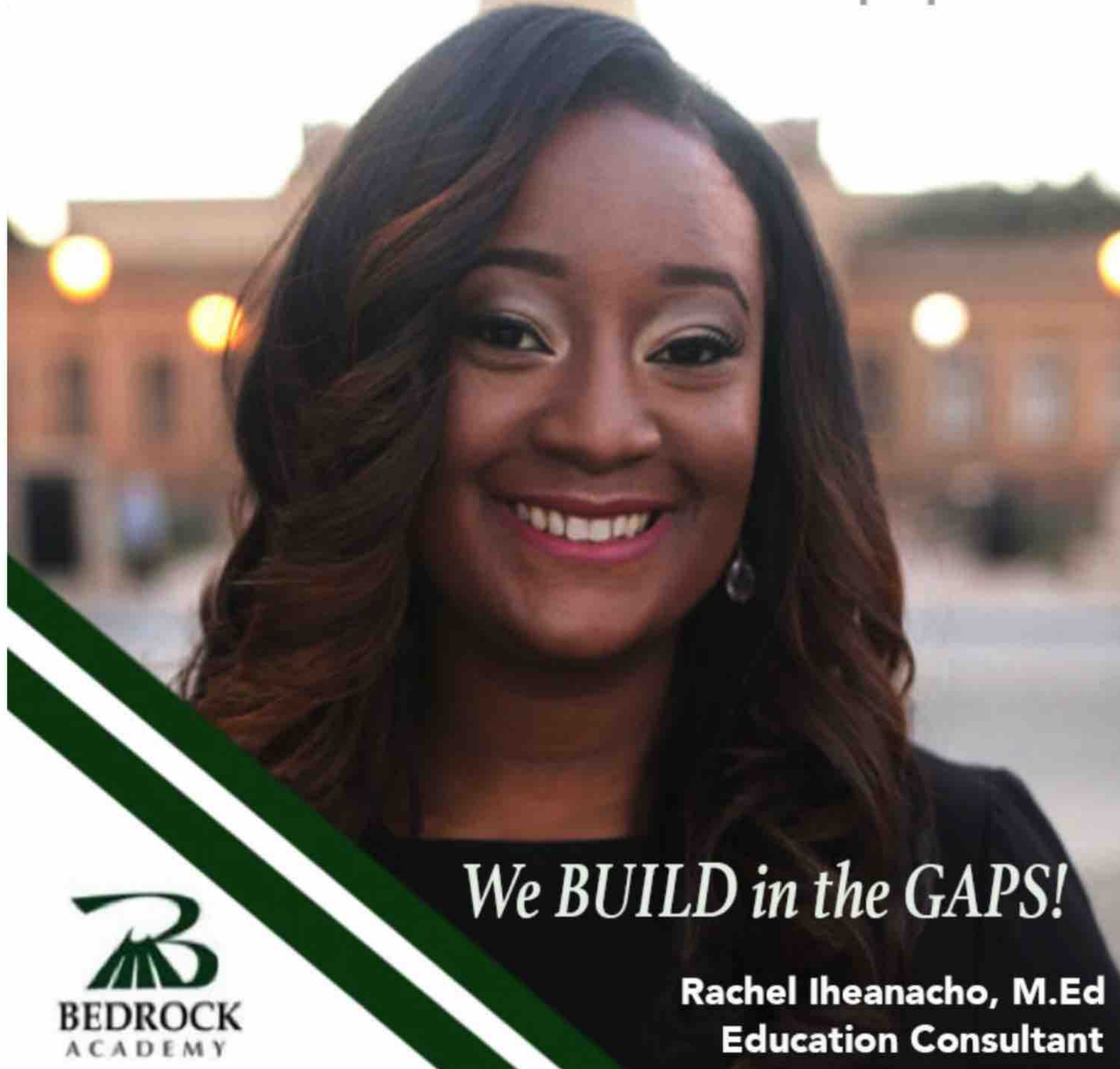
While traveling in a bus sometime in December 2017, a conversation between two passengers spiraled into a debate about the civil war. A woman begged that the topic be dropped. "Thess people might hear us," she pleaded, referring to the soldiers stationed every quarter mile on highways all over Southeast Nigeria. That week, an army battalion had mowed down unarmed civilians protesting the invasion of Umuahia by soldiers in a military operation called Python Dance. Apart from the region being heavily militarized, every year memorial services for the more than 3 million who perished in the conflict are raided and shut down by the government.

Although the Nigerian government would rather believe otherwise, the civil war is not a thing of the past. Families still mourn their dead and nurse hopes of reconnecting someday with the missing. Like the 64-year-old woman I met in Frankfurt last July who still carries a picture of her missing twin sister. Several households hold space for their unaccounted relatives while drafting family wills and during land allocations. My mother's uncle, for instance, came home in 2008 — thirty-eight years after the war. From time to time, landmines and ordnances explode, reminding entire communities of their recent history. One such incident occurred last month in a school, with students sustaining injuries.

I was born two and a half decades after the war. As a millennial, I belong to the generation unable to study an expurgated history of Nigeria. I should therefore not be interested in Biafra. But instead, I've been researching and exploring it in my writing. In 2016 I visited the location where my maternal grandfather was killed in Aba, scooping and taking a handful of earth with me. I brought it, together with a miniature flag of the defunct republic, to the US. There are no monuments anywhere in Nigeria commemorating the civil war or honoring the memory of those who perished in it, rather survivors have been piled with guilt and shame for trying to remember loved ones, and grieve an event that altered their lives in tremendous ways. These personal mementoes I carry do not just point me to the stories of my family and the struggle that made me possible, they keep me close to history itself, reminding me how easily our lives and stories can be erased by politics.

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Rachel Iheanacho, M.Ed
Education Consultant



Stay Connected

- An opportunity to lead UIU initiatives
- Participate in grassroots community service
- Network with other Igbo young professionals
- Attend fun social events year-round

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Secretary, Chukwuma Nnebe-Agumadu
Events Co-Ordinator, Chidiebele Anaeki
Events Co-Ordinator, Chinyere Evulukwu
Public Relations Officer, Nneoma Igwedibie

2021 Highlight

- Organized two successful community service events that helped provide food and medication to vulnerable members of the Atlanta community

Contact the Chapter



President Amanda Sunny

Executive Board

Vice President, Stephanie Nnonye
Treasurer, Joy Anyanwu
Events Co-Ordinator, Ure Obioma
Events Co-Ordinator, Chiemeka Obi

2021 Highlight

- Successfully provided Igbo Classes for all learners, from very beginner level and separate advanced and conversational level

Contact the Chapter



President Oderah Obukwelu

Executive Board

Vice President, Wendy Unaegbu
Treasurer, Chinonye Okeke
Public Relations Officer, Frederick Alamba
Community Servicer Chair, Jennifer Onwuka
Secretary, Diana Onyeneho
Co-Event Coordinator, Ifeoma Okeke
Co-Event Coordinator, Yvonne Onumajuru

2021 Highlight

- Hosted various social activities including brunch, hiking, and paintball events

Contact the Chapter



President Gloria Frank

Executive Board

Vice President, Adaora Okeke
Secretary, Chioma Nkwocha
Treasurer, Emmanuela Ntamere
Public Relations Officer, Uchechi Nkwocha
Public Relations Officer, Sylvia Frank
Event Coordinator, Jennifer Okoro
Event Coordinator, Malachy Okeke
Provost, Nicole Oguike
Community Service Chair, Odera Ekeh
Sponsorship Chair, Jessica Nosike

2021 Highlight

- Successful Chota Love Speed Dating series with UIU Tristate, Boston, DMV, and Houston

Contact the Chapter



President Eric Hall

Executive Board

Treasurer, Chris Emesih
Secretary, Dilibe Offiah
Contributor, Ify Mora
Contributor, Kosy Mora
Contributor, Ngozi Nwoke

2021 Highlight

- Hosted fitness events throughout the year to support the health and wellbeing of members

Contact the Chapter



President Obianuju Obianwu

Executive Board

Vice President, Paul Iroezi
Treasurer, Miriam Nkechi Ofoegbu
Event Coordinator, Elizabeth Chinwe Ekpe

2021 Highlight

- Traveled to Imo State to hand-deliver donations from the chapter's COVID-19 Relief Fund

Contact the Chapter

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President Peter Uwalaka

Executive Board

Vice President, Judith Obiofuma
Treasurer, Paul Njoku
Secretary, Jennifer Obiofuma
Volunteer Chair, Blessing Adodo
Professional Development Chair, Nancy Okeke
Events Coordinator, Ogechi Okwara
Public Relations Officer, Samara Nwazojie
Cultural Chair, Chinwe Ononuju

2021 Highlight

- Hosted a health fair in collaboration with ANPA (Association of Nigerian Physicians in America)

Contact the Chapter



President Urenna Njoku

Executive Board

Vice President, Nonye Njoku
Treasurer, Uche Ofuonye
Secretary, Ugonma Ejiawoko
Event Coordinator, Didi Nduka
Event Coordinator, Favour Orji
Recruiting Coordinator, Confidence Orji
Recruiting Coordinator, Michael Ekwueme
Public Relations Coordinator, Onyie Chibuogwu

2021 Highlight

- Created and sold T-shirts to help fundraise

Contact the Chapter



President Kelsey Chine

Executive Board

Vice President, Obiageliaku Anusionwu
Treasurer, Daniel Okobi
Secretary, Prisca Anugom
Public Relations Officer, Britney Chine
Event Coordinator, Kelechi Nwokoji
Cultural Awareness, Uzoma Okeneme
Mentorship & Community Outreach, Davidson Ejimole

2021 Highlight

- Prepared 500 lunches and 250 care packages for community outreach at Skid Row to aid LA's food insecure

Contact the Chapter



President Michelle Wilson

Executive Board

Vice President, Tochukwu Ezeaba
Treasurer, Ogechi Alisigwe
Public Relations Officer, Obiora Ofodile
Community Outreach Chair, Charles Osuji
Event Coordinator, Chinonso Amaechi

2021 Highlight

- Hosted virtual activities to minimize in-person interaction

Contact the Chapter



President Ogochukwu Adogu

Executive Board

Vice President, Muna Nnebe Agumadu
Treasurer, Chisom Amalunweze
Secretary, Ugo Omeronyé
Membership Chair, Ifechukwukwulu Ogbo
Cultural Chair, Nina Dominic
Events Coordinator, Lina Agbai
Sponsorship chair, Irene 'Uju' Anibogwu
Advisor- Ugochi Azuaru

2021 Highlights

- Reintroduced New Yam Festival in Tristate with over 100 ppl in attendance

Contact the Chapter

JOIN A LOCAL UIU CHAPTER TODAY!

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Umu Igbo Unite community,

Welcome to the 2021 Umu Igbo Unite convention and thank you for reading the UIU magazine.

Umu Igbo Unite prides itself on being an organization that has a mission to promote cultural preservation and appreciation, professional development, entrepreneurship, and civic engagement among Igbos in the diaspora. If there ever was a time for us to heed this call, that time is now.

As an organization with a global footprint, UIU has a responsibility to bond, empower, and advance Igbo culture—and we are working each day to achieve that goal. I feel confident in my belief that each of us is our forefathers' dream and our future generations' blueprint. For 17 years, our pilgrimage to fellowship, celebrate, and learn more about our culture is likened to a homecoming where we can realign ourselves with what matters most. This year's convention theme is Anyi Nwere Madu: The faces of Igbo excellence, which perfectly encompasses why we do this. Through adversity, trials, and setbacks, Igbo people overcome and we rise.

Your prayers, contributions, and inclusion have catalyzed UIU to boast many achievements that were merely dreams when the organization was founded in 2003 including:

- Expanding its reach across the US to 16 local chapters and counting
- Continuing to ensure our efforts positively impact home in measurable ways such as completing more than 60 outreach projects
- Providing scholarships, grants and other financial aid for future Igbo leaders to continue to dream, think, and touch lives

As a member and supporter of UIU, we must advocate for each other because we are stronger united than divided. It is my hope that this convention re-introduces you to avenues that fulfill your purpose. We are here to learn, listen, connect, and of course, have fun. However, I implore you to not limit celebration of our culture to an annual event, but instead, a lifelong mission. Our people have come a long way and the strides we have made are evident, but this is just the beginning. Please accept my humble call to action and consider joining a local chapter or UIU initiative to stay connected with us year-round.

With immense gratitude,

Gold Okafor

President, Umu Igbo Unite Inc, National Chapter

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THANK YOU



Special thanks:
Mary Njoku
Nnedimma Nwoka



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