

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN SOCIETIES, USA
INAUGURATED IN DENVER, COLORADO.

(Denver, CO) The National Council of Women Societies, USA was inaugurated in Denver, Colorado on Saturday, February 27, 2010. It was inaugurated amidst pomp and substance. It was also an opportunity for Nigerian and African American women to get together to discuss issues of common concern.

The National Council of Women Societies was founded in 1958 as an instrument to fight for the empowerment of women in Nigeria. This is the first overseas branch to be inaugurated.

The well organized and classy event was attended by hundreds of women from all over the United States, as well as representatives from the city of Denver, state of Colorado and the Nigerian government. The significance of the event was not lost on the City of Denver and State of Colorado, which appropriately proclaimed February 27, "the National Council of Women Societies, USA day".

"This is a historic occasion", enthused lady Jane Frances-Echeozo, President of the organization. "for the first time, Nigerian and African American women are getting together to discuss issues of common concern. As a non-partisan, non-political organization, we will continue to work for the empowerment of women and building coalitions across national, racial, ethnic and religious lines",

she said.

Professors Chris Arthur, Eileen Thomas, and Patricia Frye of Jackson State University, University of Colorado and University of Mississippi respectively agreed with Lady Echeozo. "This is an initiative whose time has come. We look forward to collaborating with NCWS USA to improve the health care situation in Nigeria, while building links with Nigerian universities", stated Professor Arthur who is a specialist in health sciences. Ms. Chaer Robert, Executive Director of the Denver Women's Commission also brought greetings and good tidings from the women of Denver. Mr. Darius Smith, Director of Denver anti-Discrimination Commission also expressed his happiness at the launching of the organization in Denver. "This reinforces the image of Denver as an ethnically, racially and culturally tolerant city", he stated.

The Nigerian government was represented by Mr. Martin Cobham, Consul at the Nigerian consulate in Atlanta, GA. He expressed satisfaction at the quality of the program and presentations and tasked the organizers to continue to work for the interest of Nigeria in particular and humanity in general.

The event featured several workshops ranging from breast feeding to Hiv/Aids. The most dramatic moment came during the presentation of Ms. Catherine Morley, President of WOMEN, a Nashville based hiv/aids organization. Her narrative of how she contacted the disease was

enthralling, riveting and passionate. "As an African American woman living in the south, its not easy dealing with the disease. I lost everything and had to start all over again", she stated. She condemned the stigmatization of women with the disease in Nigeria, and looks forward to working with NCWS, USA in enlightening women in Nigeria about the disease.

The brain drain of medical practitioners, particularly nurses from Nigeria was brilliantly addressed by Dr. Agatha Afoma, a Pharmacist and Dr. Mercy Obamogie, Director of Greenbelt Medical Clinic in Maryland. Some of the reasons given for the brain drain include poor salaries, bad roads, poor security and most importantly, lack of modern equipments to work with. The issue of equipments was addressed by Dr. Douglas Jackson, President of Project Cure, a non profit organization that has been sending medical equipments to Nigeria for the past six years. He stated that the problem was not just lack of equipments, but the proper servicing and maintenance of equipments that are already in use. He suggested that the solution lies in the establishment of technical institutions in Nigeria where personnel can be trained locally to service and maintain hospital equipments. This will be cheaper than sending them overseas to be trained.

Given the fact that majority of women who live in rural areas of Nigeria are financially disempowered, the issue of micro credit financing was given prominence. The issue was expertly

tackled by Ms. Theresa Kennedy, Green Jobs Coordinator for Earth Matters of Nashville, TN and Dr. Leonard Madu, President of the PanAfrica Conference and Africa Chamber of Commerce. The controversy surrounding the issue of breast feeding also manifested itself in the hall. The participants were evenly split on the advisability of breast feeding. "One of my children resisted being breast fed after the doctor gave him the bottle. I prefer to breast feed my children, instead of giving them the the bottle", stated Ms. Theresa Kennedy. Ms. Lola Ogunmodede who gave a compelling presentation on the topic, states that the verdict is still not in on the issue. Ms. Ogunmodede is a Public Health Nurse at the Tri County Health Dept in Aurora, Colorado.

" I have learnt a lot from these workshops. I am glad I came and looking forward to collaborative ventures with our African American sisters", stated Ms. Jennifer Okhagbare, a nursing student at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

A banquet and gala complete with Nigerian dances and and eclectic Nigerian cuisines brought a perfect, enjoyable and informative event to an end.