

AWKA  
Union  
Los Angeles  
California

2013

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# The Constitution

## **The Preamble**

We, the indigenes of Awka Town, Anambra State, Nigeria, who currently reside in Los Angeles and its environ:

Conscious of the fact that peace, unity and harmony are essential elements for the progressive development of our town;

Conscious of our responsibility to harness the natural and human resources at our disposal in the cause of the total advancement of the welfare of our town;

Inspired by the common determination to promote understanding among our people and cooperation among our villages in response to our aspirations for brotherhood and solidarity, in larger unity, transcending clannish differences and interests;

Convinced that in order to translate this determination into dynamic and meaningful force in the cause of progress, conditions for peace and economic development must be established and sustained;

Determined to work in alliance with all people of goodwill to ensure continuous development of Awka town;

Dedicated to work for the preservation of our cultural heritage and the conservation of our physical environment;

Resolved to facilitate the cause of peace in our town and between our town and its neighbors;

Committed to the general welfare of all Awka People domicile in Los Angeles and its environ in California, USA;

Convinced that it is the inalienable right of Awka People to control their destiny;

Have agreed to the charter of the Union as set forth in this document

## **Article 1 Name, Purpose and Principles**

### **Section 1: Name**

The name of this Union shall be Awka Union, Los Angeles, California, hereafter referred to as the Union.

### **Section 2: Purposes**

The Union shall have the following purposes:

- a) To promote the unity and solidarity of Awka indigenes resident in Los Angeles and its environ;
- b) To promote peaceful co-existence of Awka and its neighbors;
- c) To work for the positive socio-economic and political conditions in Awka;
- d) To act as catalyst in influencing public policy as it relates to the development of our town and the maintenance of its infrastructure;
- e) To encourage the preservation of our cultural heritage;
- f) To harness our individual resources for the realization of our collective objectives;
- g) To promote the welfare of all Awka people resident in Los Angeles and the environs;
- h) To be guided by the spirit of love among ourselves in pursuit of those objectives and to leave such legacies for the future generations.

### **Section 3: Principles**

All members of this Union, in pursuit of the purposes stated in **Section 2**, solemnly affirm and declare their adherence to the following principles;

- a) The equality of all members;
- b) The right of each member to express himself/ herself freely without fear of reprisal;
- c) Respect for the rule of law and the universally accepted democratic principles in the course of all discourse, pertaining to the activities of the Union;
- d) Peaceful settlement of disputes by negotiation and conciliation among members;

- e) Respect for decisions of the Union and all its properly constituted governing bodies;
- f) To be objective in all deliberations of the Union

## **Article 2: Membership**

Membership of the Union shall be opened to the following categories of persons 18 years of age and above and domiciled in Los Angeles and the environs.

- a) Any indigenous Awka man or woman
- b) Any non-indigenous Awka woman married to Awka man
- c) Any Awka woman married to non-Awka man provided she has the consent of her husband to do so
- d) Any person born by a single parent who is an indigene of Awka town
- e) Any son or daughter of Awka female married to non Awka indigene ( Nwadi-ana)
- f) Any non-indigenous person adopted by Awka man or woman
- g) Any member living with his/her parent(s) for more than 6 months shall officially register such parent(s) as member(s)
- h) Any member who moves back to Nigeria or anywhere outside US for more than 12 months stretch shall cease to be a member

## **Section 1: New Members**

Anyone, as specified in Article 2, wishing to join the Union shall complete “Application for Admission Form” with a non-refundable fee of \$50. The application process is deemed complete only if the applicant is present with his/her application form and \$50 application fee during a general meeting. The new member shall be eligible for benefits and simultaneously earn the right to run for an elective office after a 6 month probationary period as a member.

## **Section 2: Classification of Membership**

There shall be 3 categories of membership

- a) Active member: Any member who has attended at least 3 meetings and met all financial obligations in any fiscal year

- b) Financial member: Any member who has paid all financial obligations but attended less than 3 meetings in a fiscal year
- c) Any member who has attended all the meetings but has not paid all or any of his/her financial obligations shall be considered on a case by case basis
- d) Inactive member: Any member who has not met (a) and (b) above.

### **Section 3: Out of Los Angeles Member**

- a) Shall, as matter of obligation, attend at least two meetings in a year;
- b) Such member shall be given the opportunity to host a general meeting if he/she meets all his/her financial obligations in a fiscal year
- c) Such member shall host the meeting in a location within the Los Angeles environ

### **Section 4: Transferred Membership**

When a member transfers his/her membership from another state where he/she was an active member, such member is required to abide by the new member's admission process outlined in Article 3. Such member becomes automatically eligible for benefits when a clearance letter is tendered and verified by the state where he/she moves from, showing that he/she was in good financial standing. However, such member shall have 6 months probationary period before becoming eligible to run for an office.

### **Section 5: Provisional Membership**

- 1) The status of provisional membership shall be accorded to any Awka indigene who is on a temporal visit to the US who chooses to participate in the meetings (and other such events) of the Union during his/her visit.
- 2) Such member can participate as an observer in meetings or events sponsored by the Union
- 3) A provisional member cannot cast a vote on any matter of deliberation
- 4) Provisional member may be allowed to inform the Union in its meetings or events about the matters relating to the welfare of the Union and Awka town

## **Section 6: Withdrawal of Membership**

- a) Any member who desires to renounce his/her membership shall forward a written letter to the president with a full payment of all his/her outstanding dues. If this letter is not withdrawn after 60 days, the charter shall cease to apply to the said member who shall then cease to belong to the Union
- b) Anyone who renounces his/her membership but wishes to be readmitted into the Union shall pay any outstanding money owed to the Union and in addition comply with Article 3 of this charter.

## **Article 3: Rights & Duties of Members**

All members pledge themselves to observe the principles outlined in Article 1c of this charter. All members have equal rights and responsibilities. In addition,

- a) Every member shall uphold the laws of the United States of America.
- b) Shall have the right to bring up and partake in any discussion in general meetings;
- c) Shall conduct self in a manner that positively promotes Awka culture and tradition as well as the image of the Union;
- d) Shall not indulge in any conduct(s) that subverts the interest and progress of the Union or threatens its existence;
- e) Shall actively recruit new members;
- f) Shall support the President and the leadership of the Union;
- g) Shall not use the name of the Union for personal gain;
- h) Shall not misappropriate the Union's money or property;
- i) Shall pay dues, levies, fines, etc. in a timely manner;
- j) Any member who is delinquent in dues, levies or fines in the amount less than \$100 shall have the right to vote on any issue **except** in an election;
- k) Any member who is \$40 delinquent in dues, levies, fines shall not vote or be voted for in an election;

- l) Any member who owes \$100 or more in dues, levies and or fine shall be considered an inactive member and shall not be entitled to any benefit;
- m) Any member who owes up to \$250 in dues, levies and fines shall cease to be a member and from that point, his/her membership dues cease to accrue;
- n) Anyone who ceases to be a member as a result of outstanding dues/levies/fines, as stated in (i) above may be readmitted into the Union only upon payment of all outstanding money owed to the Union. Such person will not be entitled to any benefit until a probationary period of 6 months;
- o) If an active member owes any money to the Union, the said amount will be deducted from his/her benefit in the event of death, marriage or such other events as covered in the membership benefits;
- p) Every member shall pay a monthly due of \$5;
- q) Vote by proxy on any issue shall not be allowed

#### **Article 4: Suspension & Fines**

A member shall be suspended or fined on any of the following grounds;

- a) Embezzlement of the Union's funds. In the event of this, the Union shall use any means necessary to recover its money;
- b) Engaging in physical fight with a fellow member. If a member engages in a physical fight, he/she shall pay a fine of \$200 the first time. A repeat of such act will attract 3 months suspension;
- c) Constant disobedience to the provost;
- d) Unrestrained defiance to rules at a general meeting or event. If a member is unruly the first time, he/she shall receive a verbal warning; a repeat offense will attract a fine of \$20 and a third offense will attract suspension up to 3 months;

Suspension of a member shall require a 2/3 majority vote of financial members present at the general meeting. A suspended member shall be barred from participating in the activities of the Union for not more than three months. Such member however, is still obligated to the Union all his dues, levies and fines.

## **Article 5: Benefits**

### **Section 1: Condolence**

#### **Sub-section 1: Death of an active member:**

In the event that an active member of the Union dies, the Union shall observe the following;

- a) Organize Wake- keeping for the deceased member
- b) Levy every member the sum of \$250;
- c) Arrange to take the body of the deceased member home in Nigeria in compliance with Awka Union USA & Canada;
- d) Any money left after all expenses shall be handed over to the family

#### **Sub-section 2: Death of a financial member**

In the event of death of a financial but non active member, the sum of \$1,500 shall be given to the next of kin of the deceased member. The Union shall also participate in wake-keeping for deceased member if the family organizes a wake-keeping

#### **Sub-section 3: Death of Spouse/ Parent(s)/ Child**

In the event of death of spouse of a member who has been active continuously for at least one year prior to being bereaved of his/her spouse, the Union shall give the bereaved spouse the sum of \$1,500.

In the event of death of a child of an active member, the sum of \$1,000 shall be given to the bereaved member.

In the event of death of a parent of an active member, the sum of \$500 shall be given to the bereaved member. Funds for this purpose shall be raised as needed by levy from members and presented to the affected member. In the event that there is more than one member that meets the criteria, the family will decide who gets the fund.

If a financial but non active member is bereaved of his/her spouse, child or parent(s), the member shall receive half of what an active member is entitled to in such event(s)

For a non-financial /or inactive member, members shall give individual donation (uni) at the scheduled visit. A condolence record shall be kept by the secretary and filed accordingly.



### **Section 3: Social Visit(s)**

Following a formal invitation to the Union by an active member, the Union shall present the following monetary gift to the member.

- a) Marriage/Wedding: \$300
- b) Child birth/adoption/christening: \$100.

A formal invitation is defined as presentation of a bottle of liquor to the Union at a general meeting. The said member shall reserve a table for the Union at the occasion.

If the Union is invited by another organization, the executive in consultation with two non-executive members shall decide the nature and the cost of gift to be presented. The cost of such gift shall be limited to the sum of \$100. Any sum above \$100 shall be approved by the general meeting.

### **Section 4: Loan Assistance:**

Any active member of the Union who has need for bond assistance shall be duly assisted except in criminal cases. The Union shall levy members to raise the money for that purpose depending on the severity of the case

### **Article 6: Committees**

The Union shall have an executive committee, standing committee(s) and ad- hoc committees for a particular task(s)

#### **Section 1: Executive Committee.**

- 1) The executive committee shall comprise of all elected officers (President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Secretary, Provost and two non-official members.
- 2) Shall formulate policies governing the activities of the Union and welfare of its members;
- 3) Shall present the fiscal years' budget, projects and legislative policies for approval by a two-third majority of all financial members present at the general meeting;
- 4) Shall administer the Union budget and appropriate Union money.

**Section 2: Standing Committee.** Shall be established to organize and manage such programs that are continuous and shall cease to exist at the end of tenure of the

administration that formed it. The general meeting shall nominate active members to serve on the committee.

**Section 3: Ad-hoc Committee.** The president may appoint some active members to serve in an ad-hoc committee(s). Active members may volunteer to serve on the committee. Ad-hoc committee may be constituted for the following purposes; End-of-year parties, wake keeping for bereaved members, etc., etc. Ad-hoc committee shall be formed when the need arises and be disbanded at the completion

## **Article 7: Duties of Officers**

### **Section 1: President**

- 1) Shall preside over all meetings of the Union including the executive committee meetings and shall be ex-officio member of all committees except the Audit committee
- 2) Shall summon emergency meetings
- 3) Shall represent the Union in outside events after due consultation with members of the executive committee
- 4) Shall endorse all documents on behalf of the Union after conferring with members of the executive committee
- 5) In case of deadlock on any issue, the president shall have a deciding vote.

### **Section 2: Vice President**

- 1) Shall assist the president in his/her official routine
- 2) Shall act as president in his/her absence

### **Section 3: Secretary**

- 1) Shall, in consultation with the President, prepare the agenda for meetings
- 2) Shall record and read minutes at every meeting
- 3) Shall be responsible for the safe keep of all Union's records except the financial records, and provide such records on time at every meeting
- 4) Shall keep records and addresses of all members
- 5) Shall maintain a private local box number secured by the Union

#### **Section 4: Assistant secretary**

- 1) Shall assist the secretary in his/her official routine
- 2) Shall act as the secretary in his/her absence

#### **Section 5: Treasurer**

- 1) Shall be responsible for the safekeeping of all funds, inventories and securities of the Union
- 2) Shall render proper treasury account of the Union at every meeting (bank balances, deposits and cash withdrawals)
- 3) Shall be responsible for deposits and withdrawals
- 4) Must deposit all monies into the Union's bank account within 48 hours of receiving such monies
- 5) Shall endorse all payments with the president
- 6) There shall be 3 signatories to the bank account of the Union. 2 signatories will be required to withdraw money from the Union's account

#### **Section 6: Financial secretary**

- 1) Shall be responsible for the collection of all funds
- 2) Shall document all financial transactions of the Union
- 3) Shall hand over to the Treasury all monies collected within 48 hours
- 4) Shall be responsible for the Union's tax matters
- 5) Shall render financial reports to members at general meetings
- 6) Shall prepare payment vouchers with the approval of the President and issue receipts for all monies collected

#### **Section 7: Publicity secretary**

- 1) Shall be the chief organizer in all events of the Union

- 2) Shall be responsible for external and internal publicity of the Union's activities (circulars for meetings and publicity of events).
- 3) Shall keep record of addresses, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses of all members for the purpose of contacting members for meetings and events
- 4) Shall be responsible for membership drive, ensuring that any Awka person who moves to Los Angeles and environs is informed of the existence of the Union,
- 5) Shall be responsible for contacting members who have been absent for two consecutive meetings

#### **Section 8: Provost**

- 1) Shall recognize speakers at all meetings
- 2) Shall impose and collect fines on unruly members after verbal warning
- 3) Shall collect fines for lateness at meetings.

#### **Article 8: Election & Impeachment of Officers**

##### **Section 1: Election**

- a) All offices shall be held for a two-year term;
- b) Any member who is in good financial standing and who has attended at least 3 meetings in a year can run for office;
- c) Election shall be conducted at the general meeting proceeding the last general meeting of election year;
- d) Voting shall be by show of hands or by any other means as determined by the committee set up for that purpose;
- e) Any member who has held an office for two consecutive terms will only be eligible to run for the same office after one-term absence from that office;
- f) Members of election committee shall be appointed by financial members present on election-day

## **Section 2: Impeachment**

- a) An officer(s) may be impeached from his/her office on grounds of gross and obvious dereliction of duties, negligent of his/her office, lack of care for the Union's activities, fraud within or outside of the Union, misuses of his/her office, or other forms of irresponsibility detrimental to the Union's objectives
- b) Article of impeachment must be introduced in writing by any financial member at a general meeting
- c) An impeachment becomes final upon approval by 2/3 majority of financial members present at a general meeting
- d) Election will be held as soon as possible to replace the impeached officer(s)

## **Article 9: General Meetings/ Dues**

### **Section 1: Meetings**

- a) General meeting shall be the supreme body of the Union and shall be held on the 3rd Saturday of every other month.
- b) The meeting shall commence at 4:30 PM, except in special cases
- c) Quorum is formed when there is in attendance, at least 3 executive members, including the President or the Vice President or the secretary and 3 non-executive members.
- d) There shall be a 30 minutes grace period for lateness, after which a fine of \$1 shall be imposed.
- e) A fine of \$5 shall be imposed on any unexcused absence. In case of parents with children, if any of the parents is present, the other parent shall not be subject to this fine.
- f) Notice of meetings shall be sent to members through text messages, email, phone calls or a combination of all by the Publicity Secretary **at least 3 weeks** before the said meeting. A reminder emails or text messages may be sent to members also.

### **Section 2: Monthly Dues**

- a) Every member shall pay monthly dues of \$5
- b) Returned checks shall be subject to \$20 penalty

### **Article 10: Audit**

- a) The books of the Union shall be subject to audit every 2 years. The audit shall include the records of the Treasurer, Financial secretary and the Provost.
- b) The audit shall also include records of wines, liquors, beer, drinks, all gifts and other properties belonging to the Union
- c) The Audit committee shall be formed at a date determined by the general meeting. The chairman of the committee shall read the report of the committee at the general meeting proceeding the election month
- d) The Audit committee shall comprise 3 non-executive members.
- e) The Incoming and the Outgoing officers shall reconcile the records of the months that are not covered by the audit.

### **Article 11: Dissolution of the Union**

If at such a time when a **2/3** majority of financial members vote to agree that the objectives of the Union are clearly unattainable, or that its purposes have been overtaken by other events, or that the existence of the Union is no longer in consonance with opinion of majority, or that circumstances present or foreseen will or may hinder the continuity of the Union, a 5 member panel shall be constituted with the mandate to liquidate the liabilities of the Union. The balance of assets of the Union, if any, shall be handed over to Awka Union USA and Canada. The decision of the panel shall be voted upon by members before implementation.

### **Article 12: Amendment**

- a) This charter may be amended if a member(s) makes a written request to the president stating the article(s) or section(s) or subsection(s) he/she wishes to amend with the proposed amendment(s)
- b) The proposed amendment(s) shall be tabled before the general meeting and be discussed. The article(s) or section(s) or sub section(s) shall be deemed amended if ratified by at least 2/3 majority of financial members present at the general meeting.

The contents of this charter were debated and adopted as official document governing the Union at the general meeting held **July, 13 2013**. The constitution becomes effective immediately. This is attested to by the signatures of the President and the Secretary

Signed

President

Secretary

Members of the Constitution Drafting Committee are;

- 1) Azuka Daniel Anene- **Chairman**
- 2) Godwin Ibe
- 3) Eunice Chine