

COMMUNIQUE OF THE LANDMARK 20-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CONVENTION OF BONNY ISLAND FOUNDATION (B.I.F.), U.S.A. AND CANADA HELD AT THE SHERATON BALTIMORE WASHINGTON AIRPORT HOTEL, IN LINTHICUM HEIGHTS, MARYLAND, USA, FROM SEPTEMBER 1ST – 4TH, 2023.

The 20 -year Anniversary Convention of Bonny Island Foundation (BIF), with the theme “A time to Celebrate, Rededicate, and Empower” which was hosted at the Sheraton Baltimore Washington Airport Hotel, Linthicum Heights, Maryland, USA, from September 1st to September 4th, 2023, was impressive, colorful, and successful.

As is the hallmark of such BIF hosting, over 150 Ibani sons and daughters, delegates, and distinguished guests from North America, Europe, and Nigeria, graced the occasion, and were received with remarkable warmth, and hospitality by members of the Organization.

The 20 - year Anniversary Convention was officially declared open with an opening prayer by Pastor John Benstowe. It was followed by a welcome address by the Convention Planning Committee Chairman, Dr. Peter Hart, in which he thanked everyone for their dedication, diligence, support, and particularly noted the importance of the spirit of unity by all and emphasized the theme of this year’s landmark convention “A time to Celebrate, Rededicate, and Empower”.

In his welcome address, the President of BIF, Warisenibo Atedoghu Banigo, thanked everyone for coming, and used the opportunity to highlight some of his administration’s achievements during their five-year tenure. He emphasized that the 20th anniversary will be commemorated with the commissioning of the monument of the first African professional photographer, Mr. Jonathan Adagogo Green (1873-1905), who was born in Ayama village, Bonny Kingdom.

The keynote addresses were delivered by Chief (Dr.) O.R. Longjohn, BIF Deputy Grand Patron, and Chief (Dr.) E.T. Bristol-Alagbariya, BIF Patron. Goodwill messages from other special guests of honor were delivered, as well as a brief history of BIF by the Chairman, Board of Trustees (BOT), Dr. Leslie Green.

Highlights of the Convention include Youth forum on Bonny Heritage and Culture, Bonny cultural displays by BIF Women, and Men’s groups, Convention Banquet comprising Scholarship Fundraising including Raffle Draw, and Award ceremony, cutting of BIF 20-year Anniversary cake, and Gala night, as well as a Bus tour, and a Sunday morning Thanksgiving Service led by Pastor Inye Hart, and Pastor John Benstowe.

Resolutions:

At the conclusion of BIF’s 20th Anniversary Convention, and based on the theme “A time to Celebrate, Rededicate, and Empower”, the following resolutions were taken, that:

1. BIF celebrates its achievements as the first organized Ibani group in North America to successfully host many well attended conventions spanning 20 years in various cities in USA, and abroad.
2. BIF celebrates its 20-year long tenacity in showcasing Bonny’s rich cultural heritage through the beautiful and colorful cultural displays by BIF women’s cultural dance group (Eremina Ogbo), and the Men’s traditional masquerades group (Owu Ogbo) to the delight of Bonny indigenes, special guests, and other visitors at large.
3. BIF celebrates its achievement in the promotion of education by awarding forty-four (44) new tertiary bursary/scholarships to scores of Bonny students, in the fields of Medicine, Engineering, Technology, Law, and other notable fields of endeavor in academic year 2023.

4. BIF celebrates the establishment of three (3) Scholarship Memorial Funds, by three illustrious Ibani couples, Dr. & Mrs. Leslie Green (Amaopusenibo & Mrs. Spurgeon Green Memorial Fund), Dr. & Mrs. Peter Hart (Mr. & Mrs. Mini Hart Memorial Fund), and Dr. Iwarilama Ellis Wilcox (Mr. Ellis Wilcox Memorial Fund & Mr. Tonye Wilcox Memorial Fund), as well as Dr. & Mrs. Chamberlain Peterside (Mr. Sam Peterside Memorial Fund – a one-time support), and engendering the award of special scholarships to four (4) Bonny indigenes, three (3) of whom are in the field of Medicine, and one (1) in the field of Law.
5. BIF celebrates the work-in-progress in Bonny, of a tall monument of the first African professional photographer, Mr. Jonathan Adagogo Green.
6. BIF celebrates its successful medical mission in Bonny, and the donation of an Electrocardiogram (ECG) machine to Bonny General Hospital, as well as the donation of over 1,000 masks to all major Houses in Bonny to mitigate COVID-19 transmission in Bonny.
7. BIF celebrates its recognition and presentation of lifetime achievement awards to renowned Bonny indigenes in the fields of Medicine, History, Humanity, Education, Law, Community advocacy, and other fields of endeavors.
8. BIF celebrates its youths coming of age, and the establishment of a group for the youths - **BIF Youth Innovators** to build up and have a strong and consistent social media presence, promote, and run all BIF youth events on social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, and shall take up projects as suggested by BIF Executive Board.
9. BIF rededicates itself to its vision, and mission statements of fostering unity, and progress amongst all Bonny indigenes, promoting our rich cultural heritage and dialect abroad; build partnerships in education, through collaboration with other Bonny indigenes, and organizations in Diaspora, and abroad, the Bonny Traditional Council, and the Bonny Local Government Council, for improved funding, student performance, enhanced school resources, and community development.
10. BIF rededicates itself to advocacy and campaigns on issues that impact Bonny positively.
11. BIF rededicates itself to striving for the development and advancement of our hometown Bonny.
12. BIF rededicates itself to projecting Ibani Cultural heritage, language, and history, to promote unity and progress among the Ibani people.
13. BIF rededicates itself to partnering with the Bonny local government council in areas that will help to make Bonny prosperous, to make it become the gem it's supposed to be.
14. BIF empowers its teeming youth population, through continuing education on Bonny rich cultural heritage, and dialect; effectively engage them as BIF Youth Ambassadors, as well as the enlargement and enrichment of their roles to serve in BIF leadership positions. It is noteworthy that of the currently elected executive team, one of its members (P.R.O.) is of the BIF Youth Group.

Signed for, and on behalf of Bonny Island Foundation USA & Canada:

Engr. Norman Halliday (Incumbent BIF President) – Signed

Warisenibo Denton Banigo (Immediate Past President) -Signed

Dr. Peter Hart (Chairman, 2023 BIF Convention Planning Committee) - Signed

Mrs. Ala Halliday-Dosunmu (BIF General Secretary) -Signed

Dr. Leslie Green (Chairman, BIF Board of Trustees) - Signed