



# **THE 2003 CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE COMMUNITY OF OWE PE OPLE ABROAD (COPA).**

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## **PREAMBLE**

### *WHEREAS:*

We recognize our common ancestry and cultural heritage;  
We understand the richness of our culture and traditional Owe value orientation;  
We recognize the need to pass to our children the positive aspects of Owe culture and values;  
It is imperative not only to unite Owe people abroad, but also to provide a platform for the next generation to build on this unity for the betterment of Owe people everywhere and Oweland in particular and for the long-term;

### *IN THE BELIEF*

That Owe people abroad accept their sacred responsibility to transfer their culture and values to the next generation, most of who might make their lives here abroad,

That the OWE community in the United States in particular have decided to come together to promote among other things, our cultural heritage, economic, and educational development of ourselves, common good and unity among its people, and more importantly to encourage, counsel and guide our children as they mature through life, and.

That the CONVENTION OF OWE PEOPLE ABROAD, was inaugurated in 2002 as an umbrella association of Owe people and organizations in the United States in recognition of the above stated convictions,

*NOW THEREFORE*, we the Owe people resident in the United States of America do proclaim the following Constitution.

## **ARTICLE 1**

### **1.0 NAME AND STATUS**

1.1 The name of the association shall be known, called and addressed as the CONVENTION OF OWE PEOPLE ABROAD, NORTH AMERICA hereinafter referred to as COPA.

1.2 COPA shall be a nonprofit umbrella organization of Owe organizations and people resident in North America and shall seek to maintain a tax-exempt status.

1.3 Nothing in Article 1.2 precludes COPA from establishing for-profit subsidiary organizations for the economic benefits of COPA or its members provided that such subsidiaries shall be registered as separate legal entities.

1.4 COPA may cooperate with other organizations at home and abroad with similar interests, or for a common cause.

1.5 This constitution may be cited as The 2003 CONSTITUTION OF THE CONVENTION OF OWE PEOPLE ABROAD.

## ARTICLE 2

### 2.0. MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

- 2.1 To unite, encourage and promote friendship and understanding among the people of Owe descent and others who identify with Owe people and culture abroad and at home for the promotion of Owe culture, ideals and development.
- 2.2 To promote cultural, economic and educational development of Owe  
abroad.  
indigenes
- 2.3 To promote the educational and cultural development of OWELAND.
- 2.4 To project the image of OWELAND and preserve the cultural heritage of her people.
- 2.5 To provide expertise, educational, moral, financial and material support (within our resources) towards the development of Owe community.
- 2.6 To assist members and their families, when the need arises within the limit of our resources.
- 2.7 To encourage, counsel, and guide our children as they mature through life in their growth to adulthood.
- 2.8 To promote cooperation among Nigerian, African and other organizations in host countries.
- 2.9 To participate in voluntary and charitable activities in host countries and communities
- 2.10 To encourage its members to abide by the laws of host countries.

## ARTICLE 3

### 3.0. MEMBERSHIP:

- Membership of COPA shall be open to any Owe person by birth, marriage or by adoption of Owe ethnicity, who embraces and endorses the set goals and objectives of the organization. Membership shall consist of the following categories: (i) general member, (ii) local chapter or affiliate member and (iii) associate member.
- 3.1 Affiliate Organization or Chapter
    - 3.1.1. For the purpose of this Constitution, the term “Affiliate Organization and Chapter shall have the same meaning. An affiliate organization or Chapter shall be an Owe organization duly registered in the host state or province and admitted to COPA.
    - 3.1.2. The founding chapters and founding chapter presidents that have come together to form COPA includes the following chapters: New York / New Jersey/ Connecticut (Foluso Ladeinde), Maryland/DC/Virginia (Isaac Megbolugbe),

Midwest (Indiana, Tennessee, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan, etc.) (Femi Ojo), West and Northwest (Washington, Oregon, California, Arizona) (Simon Senibi), Southeast (Florida, Georgia) (Emmanuel Olowodola), The Carolinas (Victor Oyinbo), Texas (Jide Baiyeri), Canada (Dapo Bolaji) and the UK chapter (Raphael Adebola).

3.1.3. The registration conditions and obligations of local chapters to COPA shall be formulated as an amendment to this constitution later and applied to future chapters that seek to join COPA.

3.2. Upon admission of an affiliate organization or chapter, individual members 21 years of age or older shall be deemed as general member of COPA and shall be entitled to the personal benefits listed elsewhere in this constitution.

3.3. A member of an affiliate organization or chapter is also recognized as an affiliate or local chapter member, subject to the constitution and bye-laws of the affiliate or chapter organization.

3.4. An associate member shall be individual who is neither Owe by birth or marriage but who has voluntarily adopted Owe ethnicity and culture.

3.5. All categories of membership shall not be limited to sex, ethnic background, religion, educational background or geographical location.

3.6. The benefits of an Affiliate organization shall include,

3.6.1. The right to a copy of COPA's constitution upon admission.

3.6.2. The right to be represented by its president or chairperson on the COPA's Board of Trustees.

3.6.3. The right to make suggestions and propose projects or actions to the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee

3.7 A general member of COPA shall be entitled to the following personal rights and privileges:

3.7.1 The right to be nominated and voted for an office of the COPA.

3.7.2 The right to make suggestions and propose projects or actions to the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee

3.7.3 The privilege to attend Board of Trustee and Executive Committee meetings provided the Board and Executive shall reserve the right to exclude non-members of the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee from certain sessions or meetings for good reason.

3.7.4 Non-members of the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee attending Board or Executive meetings may speak at any such meetings at the pleasure of the

- Board or Executive committee but shall not have the right to vote on issues at the meeting.
- 3.7.5 The right and opportunity to participate in investment and/or benefit plans of the COPA.
- 3.8 All members of COPA must be in good standing to exercise any and all of the benefits, privileges and rights outlined in this constitution.

#### ARTICLE 4 BOARD OF TRUSTEES

- 4.1 The supreme authority of COPA shall be vested in the General Membership but shall be delegated to the Board of Trustees which shall be responsible to the General Membership.
- 4.2 The Board of Trustees shall be made up of the presidents or chairpersons of Affiliate Organizations, the President-General, the Secretary-General and the Treasurer.
- 4.3 The Board of Trustees shall designate one of its members as Chairperson of the Board provided that it shall not be the President-General, the Secretary-General or the Treasurer.
- 4.4 The Secretary-General shall act as the Board Secretary at the Board of Trustee meetings
- 4.5 One third of the members of the Board of Trustees shall constitute a quorum provided that one of such members shall be a member of the Executive Committee.
- 4.6 Voting at Board of Trustee meetings shall be by simple majority.

#### ARTICLE 5

##### 5.0. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- 5.1 COPA shall elect its Executive Committee which shall be responsible for
- a. Implementation of set policies
  - b. Direction and coordination of all activities and projects.
- 5.2 The Executive Committee shall be made up of the following elected officers:
- a. President-General
  - b. Vice President-General and Director of Membership Development and Welfare
  - c. Secretary-General
  - d. Assistant Secretary-General and Director of research and Culture
  - e. Director of Publicity
  - f. Treasurer
  - g. Financial Secretary
  - h. Social Secretary and Director of Development
  - i. 2 Ex – Officio members whose duties shall be determined by the Executive Committee.

4.A.3. Each member of the Executive Committee shall have one vote.

4.A.4. A Legal Counsel shall be appointed by the Executive Committee to serve as an advisor to the organization.

4.A.5. The Legal Counsel shall be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.

#### 4.B. ELECTED OFFICERS AND THEIR DUTIES

##### 4.B.1. PRESIDENT

- a. Shall be the Chief Executive and spokesperson of COPA.
- b. Shall be vested with powers to call meetings and appoint special committees.
- c. Shall preside over all general meetings.
- d. Shall appoint a successor to any vacant position until election is held.

##### 4.B.2. VICE-PRESIDENT

- a. Shall assist the President in the execution of his/her duties.
- b. Shall immediately assume the duties of the President for the rest of his/her term in the event the office of the President becomes vacant as a result of death, resignation or removal.
- c. Shall perform such other duties as may be assigned by the President.
- d. Shall assume all duties of the President in the absence of the President.

##### 4.B.3. GENERAL SECRETARY

- a. Shall coordinate the organization's secretariat.
- b. Shall keep accurate minutes of the proceedings of all general and Executive Committee meetings.
- c. Shall keep custody and control of all the official records of COPA, except those for which it is otherwise provided herein that the custody and control shall be the responsibility of another officer.
- d. Shall be responsible for the official correspondences of COPA.
- e. Shall maintain a record of all members and publish a directory of members and distribute to each member annually. The Secretary shall not use the office to release any member's personal records under his/her possession without prior consent of the member concerned.
- f. Shall bring to each meeting a copy of the constitution, by-laws and the standing rules of the organization, together with a list of the members of all standing committees.

##### 4.B.4. ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

- a. Shall assist the General Secretary in the execution of his/her duties.
- b. Shall assume the role and responsibilities of the General Secretary in his/her absence or incapacitation.

#### 4.B.5. PUBLICITY SECRETARY

- a. Shall be the official spokesperson of the organization on the direction of the President.
- b. Shall be responsible for all publications of the organization.
- c. Shall be responsible for promoting and projecting a positive image of the organization and the Owe community.

#### 4.B.6. TREASURER

- a. Shall have charge of and be responsible for the proper safeguard of all monies, funds, and securities of the organization.
- b. Shall be responsible for depositing the organization's funds in an approved COPA bank account.
- c. Shall deposit all funds of COPA received by him/her within five (5) business days of such receipts.
- d. Shall disburse COPA funds upon written orders signed by the President. The Executive Committee shall approve any amount which is less or equal to two thousand dollars (\$2000.00). All other expenditure more than two thousand dollars (\$2000.00) shall be approved by members, with a two-third majority vote cast.
- e. Shall coordinate, with the Financial Secretary, to prepare financial statements and shall render same to the membership annually and whenever the need arises.
- f. Shall plan and direct all financial activities of the organization.

#### 4.B.7. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

- a. Shall be responsible for the collection of member's dues, levies, voluntary donations to meet certain obligations and fines.
- b. Shall keep accurate record of the organization's finances.
- c. Shall coordinate, with the Treasurer, to prepare statements.

#### 4.B.8. SOCIAL SECRETARY

- a. Shall be responsible for the planning, execution and/or conduct of all social activities.

### ARTICLE V

## 5.A. AD-HOC COMMITTEES

5.A.1. Ad-hoc committees shall be appointed by the Executive Committee for specific duties.

5.A.2. Such committees shall report to the Executive Committee.

5.A.3. Such committees shall be dissolved upon completion of their task.

## ARTICLE VI

### 6.A. NATIONAL CONVENTION

6.A.1. The national convention shall be the General Assembly of COPA.

6.A.2. Shall be held once a year for two days or as determined by the Executive Committee.

Commit

6.A.3. Preliminary agenda for such meetings shall be made available to members at least ninety (90) days before the National Convention, and a final agenda at least thirty (30) days.

### 6.B. QUORUM

6.B.1. A majority of the number of voting members at a National Convention shall constitute a quorum of any meeting of the general membership.

6.B.2. Decisions taken at the National Convention shall become valid only if at least half (1/2) of all the voting members are present.

### 6.C. SPECIAL MEETING

6.C.1. Shall be called by the President in case of emergency whenever the need arises. or

6.C.2. Shall be summoned by a two-third (2/3) majority of active members present at the General Assembly.

6.C.3. Decisions taken at the special meetings shall be binding.

## ARTICLE VII

### 7.A. TRUSTEES

7.A.1. The trustees of the organization shall be:  
a. The President.

- b. The Financial Secretary
  - c. The Treasurer
- 7.A.2. These three (3) officers shall be the only signatories to the organization's accounts and other financial transactions.
- 7.B. AUDITORS
- 7.B.1. Financial Auditor(s) shall be appointed when necessary by the Executive Committee to audit the organization's accounts.
- 7.B.2. Shall not be a member of the Executive Committee.
- 7.B.3. Shall be engaged at the end of each year to perform the following:
  - a. Prepare a financial statement of the organization in a manner consistent with the general accounting practice and principles.
  - b. Perform compliance examination in accordance with State laws and regulations relating to non-profit organizations.
  - c. Perform a review of internal control measures and recommend appropriate actions.
- 7.B.4. Findings of the Financial Auditors shall be reported to the Executive Committee and such report made available to members upon request.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **8.A. ASSETS AND LIABILITIES OF THE ORGANIZATION**

- 8.A.1. COPA shall own all assets and bear all liabilities.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **9.A. AMENDMENT**

- 9.A.1. This Constitution and by-laws are subject to amendment. The Constitution shall be subjected to amendments ONLY at the national convention of COPA.
- 9.A.2. Notice of the proposed amendment shall be made in writing to the Executive Committee through the General Secretary, at least one month to the general convention at which the vote shall be taken. The Executive Committee shall also make recommendations as they deem fit to amend the constitution. The proposed recommendations shall be made to pass through the same procedure of at least a month to the general convention at which the vote shall be taken.
- 9.A.3. Proposed amendments shall be carried with the approval of two-thirds of members present and voting at the national convention.
- 9.A.4. This constitution and its by-laws may be suspended by the Executive Committee and ratified by two-third (2/3) of the members present at the general meeting.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **10.A. DISSOLUTION**

10.A.1 The General Assembly is the only authorized body to dissolve COPA. In the event of a dissolution, all assets over liabilities shall be transferred to a legally constituted body or charity. These actions by members of COPA shall be carried by two-third vote of members present at the General Convention.

BY-LAWS:

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **11.A. ELECTIONS OF OFFICERS**

11.A.1. Election of officers shall be held every two years during the National Convention, except in the case of emergency.

11.A.2. Only paid-up members who have not absented themselves from the National Convention for two consecutive years can be eligible to contest and be voted into any of the offices.

11.A.3 All nominations shall be seconded or such nominations shall be invalid.

11.A.4. Members shall be allowed to be nominated in absentia as long as they

- a) are in good financial standing
- b) have not been absent from the National Convention for two (2) consecutive years.

11.A.5. All elections to the various offices shall be by secret ballot and each registered member shall be allowed one vote. All other voting shall be by show of hands. In the case of a tie, the President shall have a deciding vote.

11.A.6. Every officer shall be elected by a majority vote of COPA members present at the convention. In case of a tie, the voting shall be repeated.

11.A.7. Each elected officer shall hold office for a term of three (3) years, and for not more than two (2) terms in the same office.

11.A.8. A member can nominate himself/herself for an office as long as he/she is seconded by another member.

11.A.9. An electoral committee of not more than three (3) members shall be elected from the general body to oversee the electoral process, tabulate and announce results.

11.A.10. All outgoing officers shall relinquish the powers granted them as soon as the election results are announced to pave way for the incoming officers.

11.A.11. The newly elected officers shall be sworn in immediately following the announcement of the results.

11.A.12. In the case of a position requiring a Vice or an Assistant, the first runner-up wins the position.

11.B. TERMS OF OFFICE:

11.B.1. The Executive Officers of the organization shall be sworn in at the National Convention in which they are elected.

11.B.2. The term of office shall be limited to three (3) years.

11.B.3. The term of office shall run from July to June.

11.B.4. An outgoing officer shall become eligible to be nominated and be voted for the same office after three (3) years.

11.B.5. No elected member shall hold the same office for more than two (2) consecutive terms. Such members shall not be eligible to hold any other offices until after three (3) years.

11.C. DUES:

11.C.1. A one-time registration fee shall be one hundred US dollars (\$100.00) per family or its equivalent per prospective single member of sixty US dollars (\$60.00)

11.C.2. Membership annual dues shall be one hundred US dollars (\$100.00) per family, and sixty US dollars (\$60.00) per single member. This amount shall be waived at the time of registration, but shall become effective in the ensuing year. It shall be paid not later than 1st of January of each calendar year. Increases in the annual dues shall be proposed by the Executive Committee and approved by the two-third majority of the General Assembly.

11.C.3. Failure to pay all dues and fees at the appropriate dates shall attract additional interest of 10% per month, up to a maximum surcharge of 30%.

11.C.4. Special levies shall be decided upon from time to time by the membership at the National Convention.

11.C.5. In emergency cases, the Executive Committee may decide on special levies, which shall be agreed by two-third of members of the Executive Committee.

11.C.6. For its various projects, funds will be raised by pledges and through fund-raising activities.

## ARTICLE XII

### 12.A. SUSPENSION, TERMINATION AND DISCIPLINARY ACTION

12.A.1. The Executive Committee shall be responsible for all disciplinary actions.

12.A.2. A member may be suspended in a meeting or from COPA on a charge of a grievous nature after he has been given a fair hearing or the opportunity to defend himself.

12.A.3. The process shall include the appointment, by the President, of a five- (5) member committee to review the incident in question and shall submit findings and recommendations in writing to the Executive Committee.

#### 12.B. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

12.B.1. A member shall be terminated if his/her behavior has become contradictory to the goals and objectives of COPA.

12.B.2. Membership may be terminated by any member after submission of a resignation letter and subject to acceptance by the Executive Committee.

#### 12.C. TERMINATION OF OFFICERS

12.C.1. An elected officer of COPA shall be terminated from office by the General Assembly of COPA members through a vote of no confidence against him or her, or through disciplinary action(s) instituted against him or her.

12.C.2. Termination shall be with the concurrence of a two-third (2/3) majority vote of members of COPA present when the request of termination is made.

12.C.3. Any officer may relinquish his/her office by submitting a resignation letter.

#### 12.D. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

12.D.1. Appropriate action shall be taken against any member for conduct unbecoming of a member of COPA. The conducts shall include misrepresentation of COPA, using COPA for self-interest activities without prior approval by COPA or the Executive, threatening another member, using profane language during meetings or other COPA sponsored activities or attempts to maliciously damage the image or reputation of another member. Activities designed to undermine the unity among all Owe people shall belong to this category and be subject to disciplinary actions and reprimand. Any one of these acts shall attract a minimum fine of One hundred dollars (\$100.00) which shall be payable within thirty (30) days of the incident. Failure to pay the fine shall result in the suspension from COPA meetings and activities until the fine(s) is/are fully paid. If the fine is not paid within sixty (60) days from the date the fine was levied, the member shall be dismissed from COPA.

12.D.2. A fine of Fifty dollars (\$50.00) shall be imposed on a member for a less grievous offense.

#### 12.E. GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

12.E.1. A Grievance Committee of five (5), appointed and headed by the President, shall be convened to hear and resolve issues between members. If the President is one of the

parties involved, the Vice President shall assume this role. The decision of the Committee shall be final, if all parties agree. However, in the case of disagreement any of the parties may choose to have his/her grievance heard during the next general meeting. At the general meeting the President shall present to COPA body the decision of the Committee and how the decision was arrived at. The dissatisfied member shall present his/her own side of the story after the President. COPA members shall then take a vote on whether to stay the decision of the committee or not. The decision of COPA body shall be final.

Though initiated in the United States, COPA membership shall not be limited to the United States. Membership shall include all Owe sons and daughters residing abroad.

COPA shall be incorporated as a non-profit organization, and shall solicit and enlist people of Owe descent for the purpose of encouraging, uplifting, and achieving the progress and growth of Owe people.

COPA shall promote and project OWELAND in a positive manner at all times.

COPA shall serve to assist and support members as at when necessary within its limited resources.