

ICOB-Boston 2010  
August 26<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup>, 2010  
Westin Waterfront Hotel  
Boston, Massachusetts

ICOB-Boston proudly hosted the 8th Annual International Community of Banyakigezi Convention. Over 300 Banyakigezi and friends descended upon the luxurious Westin Waterfront Hotel in downtown Boston, Massachusetts from August 26<sup>th</sup> through August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Delegates hailed from all over the world: the USA, Canada, the UK, Rwanda, Kenya, and a significant contingency from our newly established ICOB-Uganda chapter. They started arriving on a rainy Wednesday evening, but the clouds soon cleared to reveal warm autumn weather that was enjoyed throughout the rest of the convention.

Much to the delight of the organizers, the Governor of Bank of Uganda who is also President of ICOB-Uganda, Professor Emmanuel Tumusiime Mutebile and his wife Mrs. Betty Mutebile graced the 4-day event as **Guest of Honor**. Bank of Uganda played an additional pivotal role as generous major sponsors of this ICOB 2010 convention. Invited as **Keynote speaker** was former Ugandan Minister of Finance Dr. Ezra Suruma, currently a Distinguished Visiting Fellow on Global Economy, Development and Africa Growth Initiative at the Brookings Institute, Washington DC. Uganda's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda along with his wife Mrs. Jocelyn Rugunda dignified the convention as an **Honored Guest**, as did Permanent Secretary to the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda, Hon. Pius Bigirimana and his wife Mrs. Elizabeth Bigiramana, and Uganda's former Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Adonia Ayebare and his wife.

Delegates from various cultural groups were also in attendance: President of the Ugandan North American Association [UNAA], Mr. Moses Wilson along with other UNAA key members; the president of Boston Twegaite, Mr. Andrew Mwase who came with a significant contingency of key members of Twegaite; the Chairman of the Banyakitara Association, Dr. Michael Kitembo and a delegation of key members of Banyakitara; the Chairman of UADA, Mr. William Ssenkumba accompanied by key UADA representatives.

**Thursday:** Stationed in the hotel lobby, ICOB-Boston's welcome committee greeted and registered guests all evening, then the action moved on to a more formal welcome reception at the hotel's Sauciety

lounge. Here, old and young alike gathered. There was a sense of excited anticipation in the air as the stage was set for four full days of camaraderie.

**Friday:** The exhibition area opened, where colorful tables manned by vendors, artists, sponsors and special interest causes lined the foyer. Conventioneers were handed ICOB convention packets that included an ICOB logo bag, an ICOB folder, the official conference handbook with program, an ICOB-Boston pen, a map and guide to Boston's local attractions, a copy of Omwami Kataratambi's book "Gira Obwengye Nk'omunyakigezi", and a pamphlet written by Mr. George Kamuhanda: "Ebyafayo Omuri Kigezi".

In the main conference room, the ICOB-Boston Chairperson Ms. Ruth Ndyabahika gave a conference overview. She welcomed ICOB President Dr. Frank Byamugisha to the podium. He officially opened the convention, and introduced keynote speaker Dr. Ezra Suruma to give his keynote address entitled, "Conserving Community Self-Identity While Transforming the Economy", based on his observations and experiences growing up in Kigezi. He posed the question, "What can be done to improve the lives and prospects of the Banyakigezi and to break the colonial designation of Kigezi as a labor reserve?" and noted that many of the delegates present had broken this grip through education. Many young Banyakigezi still look to education to escape poverty in Kigezi. He commended the efforts of ICOB's Kigezi Education Fund (KEF) that focuses on this need. On another sober note, he put out an appeal to Banyakigezi to address the moral issues of excessive alcohol consumption and indulgence in promiscuous sexual activities, both of which, he noted, have severely and catastrophically affected individuals, their families and our community's reputation. This keynote address moved and resonated with the audience, inspiring immediate and ongoing feedback throughout the convention.

Simultaneously, the youth program was going on. Highlights were a field trip to the Museum of Science, a birthday party, Arts & Crafts and Rukiga singing alongs spearheaded by Mrs. Maureen Bikangaga and Miss Irene Kyeswa.

Back on the adult side, the rest of the day was filled with more exciting and informative plenary presentations and discussions, pertinent to the enlightenment and progress of Banyakigezi:

**Myths and Facts on Immigration** clarified by Boston's #1 immigration lawyer Mr. Joshua Goldstein

**Impact of Kigezi's Development on the Economic Development of Uganda** by NCAA Hall of Fame-r, author and Sage College, NY Professor, Dr. Joseph Rukanshagiza

**The Plight of the Batwa** by filmmaker Ms. Brenda Phillips, who is an avid advocate and volunteer for Global Batwa Outreach

**Building Sustainable Solutions for Kigezi: The Nyaka Case Study**, illustrated by the Director of Nyaka and co-founder of the Human Rights Concerns in Uganda, Mr. Jackson Kaguri

**The Historical Growth & Impact of African Initiated Churches in Western Uganda**, expounded on by church historian and Professor at Africa University, Zimbabwe, Canon James Ndyabahika

Attendees left the sessions saturated and ready for fun. And fun they got! A charter bus transported the delegates in style to the waterfront, where Boston's premiere luxury charter boat *The Majesty* awaited the Banyakigezi and friends. Once aboard, all inhibitions were shaken off as young and old, regardless of creed or station, let loose to the popular sounds of DJ Clein as they sailed the Atlantic Ocean. A legend was created that night in Boston about Banyakigezi and their adeptness on the dance floor.

**Saturday:** The daytime program mirrored Friday's with relevant presentations and discussions, skillfully moderated by Mr. Apolo Ndyabahika and Mr. Cliff Musiimenta. Hon. Pius Bigirimana presented "The Role of Civil Society Organization in the Effective Development of Uganda". This gave way to Prof. Ken Miller from the Cancer Society USA and Mr. Kazinduka, who enlightened attendees on Cancer. Dr. Ezra Suruma ended the plenary sessions with "Exploring Tea Growing in Kigezi".

Then it was time for the historical moment everyone had been waiting for; elections. The great founding leaders of ICOB were passing the flame over to a new generation of leaders.

These were managed by Inspectors of Elections: **Ms. Peace Magabo, Mr. Moses Kalemba, and Dr. Michael Kitembo**, who were chosen in accordance with Article V (B) of the Constitution of ICOB, and monitored by independent observers: **Mrs. Theopista Kalemba, Mr. Jackson Twesigye Kaguri and Mr. Ed Kironde**.

Each candidate appointed an agent to monitor the process.

**Ms. Judie Nkuusi** for Dr. Rita Babihuga [candidate for secretary]

**Ms. Jane Katatumba** for Mr. Douglas Bujara Rutagwera [candidate for secretary]

**Mrs. Joan Kagumaho** for Mr. Cliff Musiimenta [candidate for treasurer]

Voting was by secret ballot. Both the voting process and the tallying of the votes went on without any incident.

Number of eligible voters present: 84

Votes cast: 72

After this exciting exercise, attendees were given a few hours to recollect and beautify themselves in preparation for the evening Dinner Gala festivities.

Dinner guests gathered in a reception area to mingle over drinks and hors d'oeuvres, before the dinner room doors were officially opened. There was a delay due to a sudden influx of dinner attendees. The room exceeded expected capacity by over 100! Adding extra tables, and creating a children's overflow room right next door quickly alleviated the crisis.

The banquet commenced with a prayer and dinner, followed by remarks from ICOB President Dr. Byamugisha who presented the ICOB Report and the Kigezi Education Fund (KEF) Report. The Guest of Honor Gov. Tumusiime Mutebile addressed the guests, captivating the delegates with a "Time Is Money" admonition, a phrase that quickly caught on as the catch phrase of the convention. ICOB Vice President Dr. Muniini Mulera took the floor to give a thought provoking presentation, "Born in Africa". Honored guest Ambassador Dr. Ruhakana Rugunda was invited to address the guests, then joined Governor Mutebile and Dr. Byamugisha in recognizing and handing an award to each distinguished outgoing ICOB Board member, as the new generation of leaders was announced, amidst much fanfare. These were the findings of the elections:

**Mr. Johnson Mujungu** - President of ICOB

**Ms. Ruth K. Ndyabahika** - Vice President

**Dr. Rita Babihuga** - Secretary General

**Mrs. Margaret Tumusiime Kazinduka** - Treasurer

**Dr. Frank Byamugisha** - Member, Board of Directors

**Mrs. Ann Karasanyi** - Member, Board of Directors

**Mr. Andrew Katarikawe** - Member, Board of Directors.

Previously elected to the Board of Directors during ICOB 2009 and retaining their seats: **Ms. Judie Nkuusi** and **Dr. Peter Bikangaga**.

Fundraising for Kigezi Education Fund soon followed, led by ICOB Treasurer Mrs. Ann Karasanyi and assisted by Twegaite Vice President Dr. Richard Mutyabule.

All this was punctuated with exciting cultural entertainment. The ICOB youth performed an adorable *Kikiga* rendition of *Nimpurira amatwengye omunda* and danced an enchanting *Intore*, followed by a fashion show showcasing the fine quality and beauty of East African design, from the elegant Omwenda and Gomesi to the Esuuka and Omushanana, modeled by Banyakigezi beauties and gentlemen. A cultural dance troupe led by Mr. Ansimira Rogers performed an energetic *ekizino*, and delegates unabashedly joined them in raising dust on the dance floor. Serenaded by the addictive sounds of international DJ Clein, Banyakigezi and friends let loose and danced the night away.

**Sunday:** Bright and early, smartly dressed Banyakigezi and friends were seen descending the escalator to the Ballroom, to attend an ecumenical service officiated by Rev. Canon Grace N. Ndyabahika and Rev. Father Simon Peter Kawooya. It was a joyful service, with enthusiastic clapping, drumming and hearty renditions of old-time favorite Runyankole-Rukiga choruses and hymns. For posterity, the congregation and clergy gathered afterwards for a group shot.

Later that afternoon, luxury charter buses took the delegates on a guided tour of the beautiful, historical city of Boston. A tour wouldn't be complete without a drive through the city of Waltham, aka "Little Kampala", named so after the many Ugandans who settled here and own homes, churches and businesses. A pit stop was made at Ugandan Restaurant *Karibu*, then the tour ended at Totten Pond, a spot fondly dubbed *Mitti* by the Ugandans who frequent it, named for the trees that cover its many beautiful hills. *Mitti* turned into Little Kigezi that afternoon, as over 200 Banyakigezi and friends gathered to barbeque, dance, play games and mix. At sunset, the happy Banyakigezi were bused back to the Hotel. A farewell cocktail and dance with music by DJ Izak was awaiting them in the Ballroom, a much-needed chance for that one last dance and one last conversation with the many old and new friends that had been made at ICOB-Boston 2010. What a night. A classic moment was at the end, when the hotel staff turned on the lights and the music stopped. But the Banyakigezi exhilaration couldn't be contained. Someone started *ekizino*, singing, clapping, drumming on tables - and it caught on. Shoes were kicked off as everybody rushed back to the floor, dancing with gusto and abandon!

**Monday:** A time for farewells, as delegates wistfully checked out of their rooms a little sleep deprived, exchanging hugs and promises to absolutely do this again the next year, at ICOB in London, UK 2011.

**The 2010 Boston Convention Steering Committees:**

**Chair:** Miss Ruth Ndyabahika

**Program:** Mr. Douglas Bujara, Mr. Moses Rwakiseeta, Mr. Edgar Mbabazi, Ms. Ruth Ndyabahika

**Finance:** Mr. Moses Rwakiseeta, Mrs. Margaret Kazinduka

**Marketing:** Mr. Apolo Ndyabahika, Mr. George Kamuhanda, Mr. Chris Kagumaho

**Youth:** Ms. Irene Kyeswa, Ms. Ruth Muhwezi, Mr. Douglas Bujara, Ms. Rachelle Bahika

**Transportation:** Mr. Chris Kagumaho

**Entertainment:** Mr. Andrew Mwase, Mr. Collin Byakwaga, Mr. Daniel Rwenzo