

**Keynote Address Delivered by Dr. Samuel Ewusi Kale at the 16th Annual Fako
America Convention in Dallas, Texas – June 26, 2010**

The Board Chair of Fako America: Mola Edwin Ndoko

His Excellency, the President of Fako America: Mola Dr Henry Njie

The Chapter Presidents

Special Guests here present

Ladies and Gentlemen

My brothers and Sisters

EYOLE NI NYO.

Delivering a keynote address in a Fako America convention in the beautiful city of Dallas is a huge responsibility. But not only that, the most improbable and unthinkable thing about it is that, it is delivered by me. Why do I say so? Let's face it, One would expect it to be done by someone from the normal established names or families or visiting politicians. I do not fall in any of those categories. Therefore my selection was highly unlikely. As a young Bakweri man who has gone through the valley of the shadow of poverty, my presence here to deliver a keynote address would have been a dream. If it is, that dream has come true. So What I offer to you and all those who are not here is peace. Because what we need is Fako is peace.

I also deliver this address in the presence of my senior bakweri brother – Prof Nganje William whom I have looked up to since the days of primary school in Buea. He could not escape my radar especially after he married my primary school benchmate. I am also grateful to meet Mola Dr Matute again after our meeting in 2007 at OIC Buea with the Lord Mayor of Buea who requested us to assist young Bakwerians to further their education.

The question to my mind today is why was I selected to deliver this address? At one point I thought that maybe the multifarious conflicts within the Fako Nation at home and abroad influenced the selection of a person whose job is to assist organizations to resolve conflicts in

Africa. However I prefer to view my selection as a loud and unequivocal statement that, we ARE BEGINNING TO GO BEYOND stereotypes, where established names, established political leaders tell us the same thing day in day out, year in year out and most times to cover up the mess they've made of our people.

Over the years we have still seen these people use the full might of their name and age to frighten and bully a younger generation into submission, forgetting that, some of us did not qualify to be a Lazarus in the rich man's gate. Against this backdrop, I would like to say two things. First and foremost "I Thank you" The Board Chair and the President for the opportunity. Not only has this Fako America Board and Executive given me an extraordinary honor and privilege but what Fako America has done this day, at this place and at this time is an indication that in spite of all the problems, in some things, they have the potential to depart from stereotypes.

At another level, although my 7 years as a lecturer, has always prepared me to speak in front of a huge audience, today is my first opportunity to speak to a huge mopke audience of this nature. Thinking of it, my initial feeling of nausea and stage fright endured at the thought of speaking to this great congregation of my people caused me some insomnia. After today, I will go to bed knowing that I have been given an opportunity to change the perspective for good for at least one person in the Fako Nation.

Mola President

We are gathered here today for the 16th Convention of Fako America. It provides all of us both an opportunity to enjoy ourselves as one big family but also to take stock of what it means to be a member of the Fako nation and how to chat a new destiny for our people.

Therefore on an occasion like this, we should perhaps start from the beginning. So let me begin.

I speak here on behalf of a generation; my generation whom I believe has borne the brunt of years of neglect, years of indecision, years of titanic battles amongst self appointed elites and both political and traditional leaders of the Fako Nation. Our generation has come to communicate an unequivocal message which says that.

The Fako Nation demand of all of us who claim to be their hope, that we tell them and others like them elsewhere in our villages whether we still remain committed to the undertaking we made when we left our homes that tomorrow will be better than today. And that we are ready to tell the generation before us that, it is time to buckle up and take responsibility or ship out.

As I sat down to collect my thoughts on the challenges confronting our people it dawned on me that the Fako nation is buffeted by strong cross winds both at home and abroad that makes it especially difficult to foresee where we will be tomorrow. To capture the essence of the reality confronting us I am reminded of the well known words with which Charles Dickens opened his novel- A Tale of Two Cities. I quote

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way - in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only”

You will ask whether I agree with this assessment, whether I too believe that we have entered an era of confusion, in which all of us cannot but lose our way, unsure of our steps, unsteady on our feet, fearful of the future!

My answer is a definite YES. THE FOLLOWING ILLUSTRATIONS MAY BE HELPFUL

1. Recently, a group of Chiefs under the leadership of Chief Molinege of Muea, organized a reception for two newly appointed Fako sons.
 - An adviser at the Presidency and
 - A Director of a research institute.

We have moved from a point where we had – A Prime Minister, A Secretary General at the Presidency, A University Rector, A University Registrar, a General manager of CDC all at the same time to what where we are now. THIS SPEAKS VOLUMES.

Some may say we still have a Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, A Grand Chancellor of National orders. In their best, both positions will help make laws and the other will give us more medals.

2. The first Anglo-Saxon University was established in Buea- our town famously called 'I WAS' not because of the English but in recognition of the ability of the people to speak the Queens language, with the two most powerful positions under our belt- A Vice Chancellor and the Registrar. But 17 years into its existence, out of a total of more than 300 academic staff, we can only boast of 6. That is about 2%. What we have in abundance at UB Bakweri security guards and cleaners. Statistics don't lie.
3. As a kid growing up in Mokunda we were led to believe that, the late Chief Gervacious Endeley was the paramount Chief of the Bakweris. This presupposes that, rightly or wrongly there was a Paramount chief for the Bakweris . But in the recent past that title has evaporated into thin air us leaving us without a single leader under which the entire tribe can rally round to articulate a vision and what has emerged is a putrefying environment of mistrust and ego driven conflicts amongst the Chiefs who jostle for preeminence. This environment has affected every facet of the life of the Fako man and woman. From the area of education to employment to the burning issue of land. While the Chiefs and self appointed elites fight amongst themselves and with themselves, we are all losing in politics, in education, in land. Even more confusing is the fact that, our chiefs have eschewed our traditional dress code and now dress like Nigerian Chiefs. I do not know whether, the change in chieftaincy titles has to do with government regulations or the change in dress code has to do with the proliferation of Nigerian movies.

Today, as a people, instead of facing these challenges head on, on the contrary, we keep an audible silence about those missteps of leaders of the generations dead and alive, fearful to admit and confront the horror of those deeds, seeking to obliterate from our memories, a cruel occurrence which, in its remembering, should teach us not and never to be foolish to ourselves and our people again.

Factionalism at home and here in Fako America on issues of where in Fako we come from is the order of the day. It is time for us to stand up and shout from the top of mount Fako, that, there is no lower bakweri or upper bakweri. There is no lower Fako or upper Fako, there is only one bakweri, there is only one Fako. We have a common destiny, we have a common purpose, WE ARE ONE PEOPLE.

However, in the midst of all that has befallen us and all that continues to befall us, all is not lost because my mind tells me that Fako America can change this. I say this because the resourcefulness, the intelligence that I see within Fako elements in America tells me that you are conscious that gloom and despondency have never defeated adversity. Trying times for the people of Fako such as these need courage and resilience. Our strength as a people is not tested during the best of times. As we know, we should never become despondent because the weather is bad as it is with the Fako nation now nor should we turn triumphalist because the sun shines. Our hope as a people rests with those of us in the diaspora. Those of you in America. I am aware that more often, we have fallen into the same myopia that has characterized our people and our elites for generations. This lack of perspicacity in the direction of our people is responsible for the path we have taken so far. Our ability to fight one another, denigrate each other, insult each other, criticize each other without presenting alternatives is legendary. Disagreements between personalities, families, disagreements within and between villages, disagreements between the often mentioned upper bakweri and lower bakweri and arguments on how different we are the order of the day. LET ME PUT IT SUCCINCTLY SO THAT EVERYBODY WILL UNDERSTAND. **We should be known in Fako land by the assistance we give to each other here and back home rather than through internet articles. If you are a Bakweri chartered accountant, we should know you based on the number of other Bakweri chartered accountants you have mentored, If you are a Bakweri Professor, we should know you by the number of other Bakweri children you have assisted to get into your University and complete their studies, if you are a Bakweri Lawyer, we should know you by the number of other Bakweri people you have assisted to become lawyers and the list goes on and on. We should**

not be known only through postulations on the internet which have nothing to do with the ordinary Fako child in the streets of my village Mokunda.

My education has taught me that, there is nothing wrong with having disagreements; there is nothing wrong with conflicts. On the contrary disagreements are a good thing. Conflict can be beneficial. We are a naturally liberal people with the consequence that we will always disagree on one thing or the other. Let me share a few perspectives on the goodness of conflict.

Andrew Bernstein says about conflict: "Nothing is given to man on earth - struggle is built into the nature of life, and conflict is possible - the hero is the man who lets no obstacle prevent him from pursuing the values he has chosen" Who is our hero?

The question is have we made the conflicts between us be an obstacle to pursuing the values we SHARE as a PEOPLE? My answer is YES.

John Dewey says: "Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates to invention. It shocks us out of sheep like passivity, and sets us at noting and contriving"

My question then is have the conflicts in the Fako Nation stirred us to beneficial thought, beneficial memory? Have they instigated us into inventing solutions for our people? Have they set us up to noting and contriving?

My answer is an unequivocal NO. We have refused to benefit from the goodness of disagreements and conflict.

What we have harvested is a benign cancer of disunity, irrelevance and if we continue on this path, we shall reap what Mola Fike Monono wrote on fakonet in the debate on 'mola and sango'- I quote

"... Without the manifest of cohesive unity, the Fako Nation will remain on the pedestal of being the greatest losers of this re-unification quagmire"

But the American philosopher and psychologist William James provides us with a solution to this unending and destructive conflicts amongst us. He says

“Whenever you're in conflict with someone, there is one factor that can make the difference between damaging your relationship and deepening it. That factor is attitude.”

In fact when you disagree with your brother or sister, don't extend it to the kids, when you disagree with your uncle or aunt don't extend the enmity to your cousins. When your parents disagree amongst each other, if you cannot fix it, don't own it, because you didn't break it.

AND, IF YOU DISAGREE with a member or group of members of Fako America be it executive members or not, DON'T leave the organization. You should never leave an organization because you don't like someone's face, someone's voice, or someone's deeds or misdeeds. Apathy has never been the solution to any problem. By showing apathy you take responsibility by omission.

In disagreements, in conflicts, adopt a positive attitude by staying within because you can only be what you are. When you stay and adopt a positive attitude, it may not solve all your problems but it will annoy and surprise enough of your adversaries to make it worth the effort as Oscar Wilde puts it succinctly, 'If you don't get everything you want, think of things you don't get, that you don't want'

WE BELONG TOGETHER.

Mola President, wonyamoe

A vacuum has been created in the Fako Nation. A Vacuum has been created in our Nation. It was not created overnight. Slowly but steadily we have seen the pendulum swinging. We have seen the rise and fall on the graph. We are approaching our lowest ebb. Therefore someone has to do something. To my mind, Fako elements in America are the only ones with the ability to fill that vacuum.

This is what Fako America can do.

1. Wealth creation by and amongst the Fako people. Fako America can create the next generation of Bakweri Entrepreneurs. You have the resources to underwrite loans for serious Fako people who are interested in going into business and provide the know how to prosper in the business. Mola Menyoli should not be the only successful Bakweri business man. We can do better.
2. Encouraging Relevant education: We all know how irrelevant our educational system is to today's world. Our educational system denigrates people from technical and vocational schools. We should encourage our people to attend vocational schools and assist them to set up shop in the chosen trade.
3. Revolving Assistance: There should be no Fako America scholarship. It should be a Fako America student loan Scheme. The study loans should be geared towards vocational education with the possibility of the graduates benefitting from Fako America collateral to set up shop in their vocations. In this way the loans will be repaid and money made available to future generations.
4. Providing leadership: Fako America can occupy that political leadership vacuum. This can be done by forming an effective pressure group, to bring pressure to the powers that be on issues affecting our tribe.
5. Finally we can form Corporate entities in education, investments as I will allude in my case study.

The attitude of selfishness which has eaten deep into the fabric of our people cannot disappear overnight. As a people we know those who are selfish. We must stop listening to them. We must stop giving them a platform. We must muster the courage to tell them politely that enough is enough. ***A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a people, long deceived, finds utterance. The youths of Fako have been deceived for far too long. We are inheriting enmities whose origin we cannot even imagine, some born out of accusations of witchcraft even to those who do not believe in witchcraft, some born out of quarrels whose origin might be beer parlor squabbles, or lecherous encounters even to those who do not drink or are not lecherous. The enmities have evolved over time and developed new causes. Today as a people***

we live in a poisonous environment of suspicion, deceit, pretence, browbeating without a common vision and a common purpose. That time has come and our generation will not allow this evil to continue because for evil to triumph all that is necessary is for good people to do nothing. Those of us in the Diaspora must make this happen.

THE NEW JOURNEY

As we gather here today we must acknowledge that the future of the Fako nation should not be one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we must take today. The pledge we must take today is to unite even if we disagree, to unite even if we do not like each other, to unite even if our parents were enemies. Unity is what we need.

In fact that journey must begin today. And in doing that, we must approach our problems rationally.

First of all we must learn from others. Because there is nothing we can do that has not been done before. Let me share this with you.

The first lesson we have to learn is from the Bafokeng people (Setswana speaking tribe) of the North West Province of South Africa. They came into prominence in 1995 when they demanded royalties from the mining companies operating in their area. The royalties are invested in both stakes and social services for their people. Today the Royal Bafokeng Nation holds stakes in a number of mining ventures as well as diversified investments. The Royal Bafokeng Nation now comprises a number of entities each of which has a crucial role to play in reaching the nations goal of a sustainable and self sufficient community, where their people have the skills and the support to reach their full potential. The entities include:

1. The Royal Bafokeng Holdings: An investment entity in Johannesburg which is responsible for overseeing the growth and maintenance of the income streams of the community
2. Royal Bafokeng Sports: Incharge of the Stadium and the Sports palace where the English World cup team is housed

3. The Royal Bafokeng Administration: A town Planning unit charged with service delivery and monitoring infrastructural development in their community
4. Royal Bafokeng Institute: Charged with education of their people.

There is no reason why we cannot replicate the above. There is only one reason why they have achieved that and we have not. THEY ARE UNITED and WE ARE NOT.

We have deliberately taken our eye off the ball of the greater good of the Fako Nation, concentrated on vendetta and petty arguments and consequently shown a red card to our land and our people.

Some would argue that, the future of our nation rests with resolving the land issue. We are aware that, the BLCC has been to Banjul and back for the land issue. Let me present my personal opinion about this issue.

In as much as I believe the BLCC is right in its fight, the most important factor they seem to have forgotten is the nature of the adversary. The BLCC can win in Banjul one hundred times and nothing will change on the ground. Winning in Banjul is for public relations consumption and has nothing to do on the ground. If anyone thinks that they can win in Banjul and that the Cameroon government will surrender land or pay royalties to the Bakweri, such a person is living in another planet. Since the establishment of the African Commission on Human and People Rights in Banjul and other international Human Rights Forum this is the record of the adversary.

1. In the case Kevin Ngumne and Others Vs Cameroon, the commission found that, the Republic of Cameroon had violated Articles 1,2,4,5,6,7 (1) 10, 11, 19 and 26 of the charter.
2. In 1994, the United Nations Human Rights Committee issued a land mark decision finding Cameroon guilty of violating Article 19 of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on civil and Political rights filed by Albert Mukong.
3. Likewise the BLCC case where it asserted that the Bakweri people have a strong case backed by History and Law.

Now instead of wasting precious resources and time going to Banjul, we need to unite first as a people and use all our available means to retrieve royalties from CDC as well as whosoever has invested in our land. For so long we have misused our God given resources to engage in unwinnable or irrelevant fights. ***As an iconoclast I would suggest that when negotiations fail, we have a resource that has been rarely used for our common good. That resource is Witchcraft. We should not witchcraft, Malay, Nganya to frighten people. If investors don't pay up, we can use our God given resource of witchcraft. We can bewitch the investors, we can bewitch their plantations, we can bewitch their children, we evoke elephants to teach them a lesson at night and bats to make them uncomfortable during the day. We can send them a plague if they don't fulfill our demands. We should not only use witchcraft to stop our children from making their exams, making them blind, causing car crashes. Witch craft is a resource we can use positively to not only retrieve our land but to extract benefits from our land. With that, we do not need contributions, or lawyers, or chartered accountants. Witches don't need money. They often live in dilapidated houses and are usually very old.***

If we do not take this path this time, we will be witnesses to all the baleful and withering consequences that must follow in not too distant a future. When we and our posterity shall see our lovely Fako Nation desolated by the demon of disunity, which this act of ours will inevitably invite and call forth: when our green fields of waving harvest shall be trodden down by those who know better and fiery disappearance sweeping over our land; our temples of intelligence will be laid in ashes; and the horrors and desolations of poverty and irrelevance upon us; who but the Fako people in the Diaspora will be held responsible for it? We must leave the chicken and the egg debate behind us.

The anguish and despair I have for the present predicament of the Fako Nation is reminiscent of that felt by Shakespeare's Macbeth when he hears of the death of his queen and the inevitable approach of his own. He utters these lines:

"Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle"

And so too might we descant after Macbeth, as we look through the processes of the transformation of the Fako Nation - tomorrow, tomorrow, and tomorrow, creeps in this petty pace from day to day...

But perhaps what we have gathered here to encourage in its journey of recreation should give us cause to escape the embrace of anguish, to discard the cloak of despair, because tomorrow has become today. The important work Fako America must do will make it unnecessary for you to say after Macbeth that all your yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death because they would have lit the way to a better Fako nation for all of us.

I thank you for the opportunity you have given me to participate in this important event and I am pleased to convey my sincere congratulations to you Mr Chair and Mr President as well as the people of Fako.

Thank you