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Immigrant and Minority Business Association Gains Momentum

By Galen Hull, Co-founder of TIMBG



**Ms. Nonye Ejiofor, Publisher of the New American Times
Chair of the March 20, 2014 TIMBG Panel**

NASHVILLE — On Thursday, March 20 from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m., the Tennessee Immigrant and Minority Business Group (TIMBG) will host its fifth meeting at the Wang Vision Center, Palmer Plaza, 1801 West End Ave, Suite 1150. Parking is available in the garage building behind Palmer Plaza. The event will feature a panel of women entrepreneurs, all of them originally from Africa, representing very different types of businesses.

Nashville's Female African Entrepreneurs

The convener and chair of the group is Ms. Nonye Ejiofor from Nigeria, Publisher and CEO of "The New American Times" newspaper (TNAT), a multicultural community publication with distribution in Middle Tennessee. TNAT coverage promotes the integration of New Americans into American society. Nonye began TNAT because there was no newspaper in the African community, which made it difficult to communicate with the people she represents. She serves as a member of Mayor Karl Dean's New American Advisory Council and also served as a commissioner for 12 years with Metro Human Relations Commission of Davidson County, appointed by Mayor Bill Purcell and Mayor Karl Dean. Nonye has also served as a team leader with Department of Children Services and is a member of the Leadership Nashville Class of 2006. *(Visit the TNAT website at: www.TNATNews.com)*

Ms. Gina Inkum, originally from Ghana, started Gateway2Africa with her husband Chris over a decade ago. She has a proven track record of business development and is a CPA and a managing partner with Hoskins & Inkum, LLP, with over 15 years of experience in accounting and auditing. Gina started her career in corporate accounting, working for IBM and Nissan. For the past 5 years, she has worked in public accounting with Hoskins & Company, the largest and oldest full service minority CPA firm in Tennessee. Gina has extensive experience working with clients who represent various industries including various state and city departments, financial institutions, churches, non-profit and for-profit organizations. Gina was referenced in a recent article in "The Tennessean" at the recent grand opening of her Hoskins & Inkum accounting services branch office in the Global Mall. *(For more information on Gina, visit: <https://www.facebook.com/hicpas>)*

Ms. Martha Lupai, born in Ethiopia of Sudanese heritage, moved to the United States in 1995 with her parents and three brothers. She graduated from Tennessee State University in 2000 with a B.S. in Social Work. In 2007, she opened S&E Hair Braiding, a boutique salon and the leading African hair braiding stylist in the greater Nashville area. Located on Jefferson Street in Nashville, S&E specializes in braids of all types for men, women and children. Ms. Lupai is also the creator of Neta's Natural hair care and body care products. *(Visit the S&E website at: www.braidsnweavesbyse.com)*

A Forum for Minority and Immigrant Business Owners

Over 80 attendants gathered for the inaugural TIMBG event on September 26, 2013, held in the offices of co-founder Dr. Ming Wang. The stated mission of the new organization is to establish a forum for the promotion of communication and interaction among immigrant and minority business owners. The monthly seminar meetings enable immigrant and minority business owners to market their services and products, and to discuss topics of general interest. Membership in TIMBG is open to all business entrepreneurs, immigrants and minorities, as well as those interested in interacting with them.

The first meeting successfully brought together a disparate mixture of people from various geographic, cultural and professional origins. They included accountants, educators, doctors, publishers and public officials. The second TIMBG meeting was hosted by Mr. Quincy McKnight of WorldPay Bain Capital at the Nashville City Club downtown on October 22. Quincy addressed the subject, "How do you reduce your payment processing fees in your business?"

The third meeting, held in the Global Community Center of the Global Mall in Antioch on November 21, was hosted by Ms. Neera Bahl, an immigration lawyer whose firm is headquartered in Atlanta (with offices in Nashville). She was assisted in her presentation on immigration procedures by Eben Cathey of the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition (TIRRC). Several women visiting the Mall dropped in out of curiosity, joining in the discussion and the excellent Indian feast. One woman who had been in the United States for twenty years told of her struggles as an undocumented resident making a living in the shadow economy. Also in attendance was Dr. Rajesh Aggarwal, the Global Mall owner, and Ravi Shetkar, the Mall manager.

Tony Roberts, who currently works with Reliant Realty specializing in residential and commercial real estate, hosted the February TIMBG event where explained how to purchase a home. Moncrief Williams, a mortgage loan officer with the Southern Community Bank in Murfreesboro, assisted in the presentation and outlined the steps required to obtain a home loan.

The second portion of these evenings consists of two-minute “elevator talks.”Marketing — in particular the role of social media — has been a hot topic. Most in attendance remained well past the designated 8 p.m. closing, a tribute to the animated exchanges. TIMBG hopes more in the community will join the next event on March 18.

For more details on the event, visit: www.diverseculturevents.com