

Empowering women for success

Inaugural speech by Patience Edremoda
President, Warri Vanguard. North America

Agura Iwere Erun!! Madam chairwoman, Dr. (Mrs.) Oti Ayenbi; National President of Warri Ladies Vanguard, Mrs. Florence Onempkpe; President of Warri Ladies Vanguard, UK. Mrs. Emily Omagbitse; President of Ugbajo Itsekiri USA., Mr. Toju Etchie. Ladies and gentlemen, Aja Mo Kin Aghan. Good evening!!

When my sister and I talk about Warri Ladies' Vanguard, we talk about a group of very disciplined Itsekiri women, who for years met in the patio of our parents' home in Lagos to talk about progressive issues that can benefit the Itsekiri nation and its people. Secondly, Warri Ladies' Vanguard takes me back to childhood where we, some of the children of the Vanguard ladies managed the gate for invited guest at their (Warri Ladies' Vanguard) events. And then there are those memories of hiding in my room because I wanted to avoid seeing what we then referred to as 'those women.'

Ladies and gentlemen, if only my mom could see me now! I am now proudly one of **'those women.'**

Olaga Kporo, today as I stand before you and our distinguished guests, I humbly stand on the shoulders of women who once held the positions of president at different Warri Ladies' Vanguard branches. Women like Mrs. Jane Ogisi, founding member Warri Ladies Vanguard Lagos, the late Mrs. Remi Ayida, late Mrs. Queenete Irone, late Mrs. Roli Akele, Mrs. Ikomi and so many more. I cannot name them all. But the most important of them all, the steadfast shoulders of my beloved mother Mrs. Beatrice Ajemigbitse-esinmi Edremoda.

Once we decided to come together to start Warri Ladies' Vanguard North America, we were convinced that we needed to keep the mission **'Service to the Nation'** and the vision of the 65-year-old association alive.

We immediately hit the ground running and like our founding mothers, started talking about the projects we would be embarking on. Our desire was to start with a project that would be enormously beneficial not only in the short term but the long term.

We at Warri Ladies' Vanguard North America, have decided to take on a project that would allow us to empower Itsekiri women with pertinent life skills.

Empowerment of anyone in society is a multifaceted undertaking, which sometimes requires the involvement of communities, schools, family, and parental engagement and likewise, the ability to empower women with the knowledge and skills they need to be an integral part of society, is a task that must be done. A task, we at Warri Ladies' Vanguard North America decided to undertake

Our goal is to arm Itsekiri women and girls with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to excel in their communities. Our desire is borne out of the fact that, as women, we understand that women must be well equipped with the right knowledge, skills, and resources to thrive in today's world.

Our project is designed for the woman and or girl whose desire for a higher education was unattainable or stalled because of lack of financial support or in some cases community support. Warri Ladies' Vanguard North America is committed to serving these eligible and qualified women, if they can verify that they have a secondary school

diploma, and can demonstrate that they would like to acquire skills such as fashion designer, dress maker, chef, caterer, make-up artist, hairdressers etc.

We have since identified a resource person who will represent our cause in Warri, by identifying qualified candidates.

Ladies and gentlemen, empowerment of women and girls is the process of giving them the ability to live a happy and respected life in society. Empowerment therefore gives her, the tools, and skills she needs to thrive and become a decision-making authority in her community.

Empowering women and girls continue to be one of the most important drivers in any country's overall growth. A household in which both men and women work, and a country where men and women work, grows more quickly.

Empowerment of Itsekiri women and girls is more important now than ever, because when we equip our Itsekiri sisters and daughters with the tools they need to stand up for themselves, they become

independent and can never be victims of dependency.

Finally, at Warri Ladies Vanguard North America, our sisterhood is the vital force, which will empower Itsekiri women who desire to thrive.

In conclusion, I invite you to join us, for a win-win partnership of supporting Itsekiri women and girls, if you believe that women and girls can excel when they are equipped with the right skills. Together we can empower a generation of socially responsible daughters, mothers, sisters, wives, and community leaders.

Agura Iwere Erun!! Aja Mo KinAghan.