

## **2015 TAG Editorial**

# **Upholding Our Legacy of Goodness (Bonitas)**

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Surprisingly, the trajectory that took our association from its founding in 1997 to this day, seem to have covered just a brief time capsule. Fleeting as it is, we are again gathered in San Francisco for the 19th General Assembly of C. K. C. Onitsha Alumni Association in the Americas (CKC-AAA). My recollect of every moment and of all past conventions ~ safe for the three I missed ~ remain very nostalgic as they are vivid. So too were the serious talks; conviviality, genuine bonhomie and jiving (njakiri). This year, we return to California for the fourth time, expectant. We thank the host Chapter and the LOC. This year's convention theme speaks eloquently to what we do individually and collectively; and both in our private and public lives. We are called to be good, to do good and to uphold goodness in all its ramifications. But goodness might seem very abstractive. It also risk being evaluated as subjective. Then, when you do good, see good and benefit from goodness, you know it instantly. Goodness sells! Nevertheless, goodness like all virtues is oftentimes hard to engender and practice. This is why we must uphold goodness in all we do. It also speaks to what makes us different from students of other schools, who feel no sentiment or attachment to their college values and motto. David Brooks in his recent seminal op-ed piece for *The New York Times* titled, "The Moral Bucket List" wrote about values of goodness from a rather revealing and introspective dimension. Brooks said: *"About once a month I run across a person who radiates an inner light. These people can be in any walk of life. They seem deeply good. They listen well. They make you feel funny and valued. You often catch them looking after other people and as they do so their laugh is musical and their manner is infused with gratitude. They are not thinking about what wonderful work they are doing. They are not thinking about themselves at all. When I meet such a person, it brightens my whole day. But I confess I often have a sadder thought: It occurs to me that I've achieved a decent level of career success, but I have not achieved that. I have not achieved that generosity of spirit, or that depth of character."*

Every CKC Onitsha alumnus can find a bit of himself in that opening paragraph, if they look hard enough. For some of us, such a search need not take long -- since others will readily testify to our being "deeply good" and "not thinking about ourselves at all." In our midst, we know those who give selflessly of their time and resources, and yet are the first ones to express appreciation for the opportunity to give. Then there are many, especially our elders and very seniors, who have "achieved a decent level of career success" but with all humility do the yeoman's job for our association and college, in hope of serving our common cause and sustaining the great legacy bequeathed to us. However, all said, the most striking line in Brook's piece, is for me and I suspect for most readers, his admission that "I have not achieved that generosity of character". That singular point resonates for me. I suspect it will similarly resonate for many of my CKC college brothers.

So what is it that is being asked of us? To continue "Upholding Our Legacy of Goodness (Bonitas)" regardless of where we find ourselves. What makes this compelling is that we do so for our alma mater, in the full knowledge that our kids, who are mostly born in the U.S., will never attend CKC Onitsha. Several generational line are already broken. Most of those who followed their fathers' footsteps to CKC Onitsha cannot enjoy the privilege of bragging that "My son of going to CKC Onitsha-the third generation in my family to do so." So why worry about the fate of the old school? We worry, because the goodness, discipline and knowledge imbued in us at the college has a universality that is incontestable. That universality spreads like a ripple and globally; shining like light wherever we go and in whatever we do. Moreover, were we to be able to uphold such goodness, then we would have succeeded. The truth is that our goodness acquired from CKC Onitsha, holds out infinite possibilities -- all positive -- for our humanity. In the body of his piece, David Brooks writes about a "calling within the call" to goodness, to wit: "We all go into professions for many reasons: money, status, security. But some people have experiences that turn a career into a calling. These experiences quiet the self. All that matters is living up to the standard of excellence inherent in their craft. "Even if as callow lads we entered CKC Onitsha not qualified as "good"; I know that almost all of us left that school in good grace, good standing and good spirit. We were charged to go forth and do good. Moreover, I believe we have the moral obligation to do good.

Although CKC is not a university, we can draw from a prevailing parameter for a moral university. So in upholding our goodness, let us bear in mind the words of Jeff Sachs about what constitutes a moral academic institution in the 21st century. His words: "My message, colleagues, is that morality counts. It counts for our intellectual purposes; it counts for our souls. As Aristotle thought of his beloved polis, we should think of our beloved university. This is our community and a vital source of our meaning as individuals and professionals. What we do here matters, for each other, society, and ourselves. Morality matters, because otherwise we succumb to social dilemmas that foment distrust, corruption, and ultimately violence. And as the great sages from Buddha to Aristotle to Jesus, taught us, morality is ultimately the path to a life worth living. "Nothing more needs to be added or said in this context, except, May the fame of or college last forever. BONITAS! [TAG]

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