

THE HISTORY OF N.B.A. NNEWI BRANCH (THE BIRTH OF THE FAMILY BAR)

FORMATION

Before the year 1989, lawyers practising within the territorial limit of the then Nnewi Judicial Division (made up of the present Nnewi and Ihiala Judicial Divisions) of the High Court of Anambra State were members of the Onitsha Branch of the Nigerian Bar Association (N.B.A.). From the middle of 1987, lawyers practising within Nnewi Judicial Division began making moves for the formation of Nnewi Branch of the N.B.A. This move was championed by late Barrister A.C. Obiefuna, an Nnewi based legal practitioner who previously was practising in Jos.

On the 23rd day of September, 1988 a meeting of the proposed Nnewi Branch held at No. 13 Owerri Road Nnewi where the said A.C. Obiefuna Esq. was nominated and unanimously approved to be the protem chairman while K.O. Onwuekwe Esq was also nominated and unanimously approved as protem Secretary. Before then, in 1987, a formal application was made to the National Executive Committee (N.E.C.) of the N.B.A. for the registration of Nnewi Branch of N.B.A.

At the subsequent meetings of 28th October, 1988 and 16th December, 1988, B.E. Nwangwu Esq. and R.O. Ezenagu Esq. were appointed protem Treasurer and protem Financial Secretary respectively. Then at the National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting of the NBA held at Onitsha on the 27th day of January, 1989, the formation of Nnewi Branch of the N.B.A. was formally approved by N.E.C. A census taken by Okey Udegbunam Esq. at the direction of a general meeting showed that lawyers practising within Nnewi Judicial Division at the time of formation of Nnewi Branch stood at 56.

In pursuance of the approval accorded the Branch, the National Secretariat of N.B.A. sent a letter received on 11/3/89 to Nnewi Branch requesting her to indicate interest on whether the Branch would be ready to host the 1989 Annual Bar Conference of N.B.A. The members of the young Branch at the meeting held on 11/3/89 humbly declined to host.

Subsequently on 13/5/89 the Branch received a letter reference No. NBA/NEC/3 of 13/4/89 conveying the approval of N.B.A. NEC in writing for the formation of Nnewi Branch. On the same date, 13/5/89, the protem officers of the Branch were confirmed as substantive Branch officers to serve till the end of year. Okey Udegbunam Esq. was added to the list as provost on 8/7/89. Also on 13/10/90, Dr. J.C. Ikenga Metuh was recognized formally as Leader of the Bar in Nnewi Judicial Division.

One significant impetus to the young Branch was hosting of meetings/treats by senior members of the Branch. Such meetings held at the offices and homes of some members. These were A.C. Obiefuna Esq. on 28/10/88; J.B.C. Megwa Esq. on 10/6/89; B.A. Nkemjika Esq. on 8/7/89; B.E. Nwangwu Esq. on 9/9/89; L.A. Mbaso Esq. on 13/10/90; and P.N. Okuma Esq. on 10/11/90. These motivated attendance to and participation in meetings of the Branch by lawyers.

On 9/2/91 Branch officers of the Association were elected as follows:-

- (1) P.N. Okuma Esq - Chairman
- (2) N.C. Ughanze Esq - Vice Chairman
- (3) G.O. Osuigwe Esq - Secretary
- (4) E.E. Egbunonu Esq - Ass. Secretary
- (5) U.F. Anyigbo Esq (Mrs.) - Treasurer

(6) C.A.C. Uzoegwu Esq - Financial Secretary

On the said day the draft By-law for the Branch was submitted to members in a general meeting by D.N. Umeobika Esq. who was among those appointed earlier to draft some.

On the 8th day of May, 1993, new officers were elected at a general meeting as follow:

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| (1) | B.E. Nwangwu Esq | - | Chairman |
| (2) | B.S.U. Ucheagwu Esq | - | Vice Chairman |
| (3) | G.O. Osuigwe Esq | - | Secretary |
| (4) | Ike Obeta Esq | - | Ass. Secretary |
| (5) | C.A.C. Uzoegwu Esq | - | Financial Secretary |
| (6) | R.O. Ezenagu Esq | - | Treasurer |
| (7) | O.A. Ubachukwu Esq | - | Publicity Secretary |
| (8) | I.V. Okeke Esq | - | Social Secretary |

At the Branch general meeting held on 15th December, 1995, the Branch executive committee was dissolved and the Leader of the Bar, Dr. J.C. Ikenga-Metuh was appointed the Sole Administrator for the Branch pending the holding of an election. On the same day, B.S. Nwankwo Esq. provided lunch for the members at the meeting.

On 21/6/96, the Leader of the Bar conducted an election during which the following Branch officers were elected as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----|---------------------|---|---------------------|
| (1) | I.E. Onuchukwu Esq. | - | Chairman |
| (2) | Ike Obeta Esq | - | Vice Chairman |
| (3) | C.A.C. Uzoegwu Esq. | - | Secretary |
| (4) | Sam Onyia Esq | - | Ass. Secretary |
| (5) | K.O. Onwuekwe Esq | - | Treasurer |
| (6) | D.U Umeobika Esq | - | Financial Secretary |
| (7) | G.O. Osuigwe Esq | - | Publicity Secretary |
| (8) | D.O. Amuta Esq | - | Social Organizer |

On the 9th day of July, 1998, the executive committee was dissolved and the following officers were elected in a general meeting of the Branch:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|---|---------------------|
| (1) | Ike Obeta Esq | - | Chairman |
| (2) | Mrs. A.O. Uzodike | - | Vice Chairman |
| (3) | C.A.C. Uzoegwu Esq | - | Secretary |
| (4) | Mrs. N.J. Nwankwo | - | Ass. Secretary |
| (5) | C.E. Odiegwu Esq | - | Financial Secretary |
| (6) | S.C. Onyia Esq | - | Treasurer |
| (7) | D.O. Amuta Esq | - | Publicity Secretary |
| (8) | Mrs. T.O. Igwegbe | - | Social Organizer |
| (9) | A.O. Ubachukwu Esq | - | Auditor |

On 3/11/2000 the Executive Committee was dissolved by virtue of expiration of tenure and new officers were elected as follows:-

- | | | | |
|-----|-------------------|---|----------------|
| (1) | G.O. Osuigwe Esq | - | Chairman |
| (2) | Mrs. A.O. Uzodike | - | Vice Chairman |
| (3) | C.A.C. Uzoegwu | - | Secretary |
| (4) | C.O. Akoje Esq | - | Ass. Secretary |

- | | | | |
|-----|----------------------|---|---------------------|
| (5) | C.C.O Echendu Esq | - | Financial Secretary |
| (6) | K.O. Onwuekwe Esq | - | Treasurer |
| (7) | T.O. Igbwegbe (Mrs.) | - | Social Organizer |
| (8) | P.U. Onuora Esq. | - | Publicity Secretary |
| (9) | Offor Ogueji Esq | - | Auditor |

After he was appointed president of Ozubulu Customary Court, it became consistently difficult for K.O. Onwuekwe to be present in Bar meetings and activities. So on 28/9/01, B.S.U. Ucheagwu was chosen to replace K.O. Onwuekwe Esq. as the Branch Treasurer.

On 6/12/02, a motion to extend the tenure of the Branch Exco by one year was moved at a general meeting and was duly adopted.

On 31/10/03, the Executive Committee of the Branch was dissolved in a general meeting and new officers were elected the same date as follows:

- | | | | |
|-----|--------------------------|---|---------------------|
| (1) | C.A.C. Uzoegwu Esq. | - | Chairman |
| (2) | F.C. Nwankwo Esq. | - | Vice Chairman |
| (3) | Emeka Okuma Esq. | - | Secretary |
| (4) | A.U. Abonyi Esq. | - | Ass. Secretary |
| (5) | A.O. Uzodike Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Treasurer |
| (6) | C.C.O. Echendu Esq. | - | Financial Secretary |
| (7) | P.C. Ugwuanyi Esq. | - | Publicity Secretary |
| (8) | J.N. Obi Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Welfare Secretary |

When it became clear that C.C.O. Echendu Esq. could no longer act as the Financial Secretary of the Branch because of his appointment as President of a Customary Court as well as other reasons, the Branch in a general meeting chose N.J. Nwankwo Esq. (Mrs.) as the new Financial Secretary for the Branch.

At a General Meeting held on 28/04/06, a Five-Man Electoral Committee made up of Chief G.O. Osuigwe (Chairman), O.J. Okeke Esq. (Secretary), Ike Obeta Esq. (Member), T.O. Igwegbe Esq. (Mrs.) (Member) and C.A.C. Uzoegwu (Ex Officio) was set up to conduct the Branch General election.

Incidentally, only Emeka Okuma Esq., the outgoing Branch Secretary, indicated interest as directed by the Electoral Committee, for the office of the Chairman of the Branch. Few others indicated interest in some Branch offices, while the office of the Branch Secretary and many other offices remained vacant. On 28th April, 2006, therefore, Emeka Okuma Esq. took over as the Branch Chairman of N.B.A. Nnewi Branch. Sam Onyia Esq. later came on board as the Secretary of the Branch.

It was during his tenure that the Branch Chairman, Emeka Okuma Esq., nicknamed “the Family Bar”.

In April 2010, new branch officers of NBA Nnewi Branch were elected as follows:-

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|---|----------------|
| 1. | Chief E.E. Egbunonu | - | Chairman |
| 2. | Chike Okafor Esq. | - | Vice Chairman |
| 3. | O.J. Okeke Esq. | - | Secretary |
| 4. | Ebele Ofodeme Esq. (Miss.) | - | Ass. Secretary |

- | | | | |
|----|--------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 5. | M.M. Emecheta Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Treasurer |
| 6. | Chinyere Osy Okoye Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Financial Secretary |
| 7. | K.P. Awuka Esq. | - | Welfare Secretary |
| 8. | P.C. Ugwuanyi Esq. | - | Publicity Secretary |
| 9. | Rita Amaduche Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Auditor |

Dr. J.C. Ikenga-Metuh continued to be the leader of the Bar.

These active Branch officers were in April 2012, succeeded by new Branch Officers at the Branch Annual General meeting where new officers were elected as follows:-

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | O.J. Okeke Esq | - | Chairman |
| 2. | P.C. Ugwuanyi Esq. | - | Vice Chairman |
| 3. | Nze A.U. Abonyi Esq. | - | Secretary |
| 4. | R.H. Wonu Esq. | - | Ass. Secretary |
| 5. | E.E. Ngene Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Treasurer |
| 6. | N.P. Nsofor Esq. (Mrs.) | - | Financial Secretary |
| 7. | E.E. Ofodeme Esq. (Miss) | - | Welfare Secretary |
| 8. | K.G. Abonyi Esq. | - | Publicity Secretary |
| 9. | Ifechukwu Dan Jacobs Esq. | - | Auditor |

Hon. L.A. Mbaso was formally recognized as the Leader of the Bar following the death of the former Leader of the Bar, Dr. J.C. Ikenga-Metuh.

The burial of the former Leader of the Bar took place on 3rd August, 2012 and the Branch featured actively at his funeral, mounted guard of honour for him with members fully robed and a tribute presented during the burial, though no court session was held for him as decided by the family.

In April 2014, new Branch Officers were elected as Follows:-

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|---|---------------------|
| 1. | P.O.C. Ebubedike Esq. | - | Chairman |
| 2. | A.M. Achukwu Esq. | - | Vice Chairman |
| 3. | R.M. Asogwa Esq | - | Secretary |
| 4. | C.A. Nwachukwu Esq. (Mrs) | - | Ass. Secretary |
| 5. | Loveth Ani-Nnaka Esq. (Mrs) | - | Treasurer |
| 6. | E.E. Ngene Esq (Mrs) | - | Financial Secretary |
| 7. | P.N. Chukwudumogu Esq | - | Welfare Secretary |
| 8. | I.D Jacobs Esq | - | Publicity Secretary |
| 9. | O.N. Ubah Esq. | - | Auditor |

The year, 2015 ended on a sad note for the Branch with the death of the immediate past chairman of the Branch, O.J. Okeke Esq. His death drew the entire Nigerian Bar Association to Nnewi as the court session held in his honour at the premises of High Court Numbers 3 and 4 Nnewi was attended by the National President of NBA, Chief Augustine Alegeh SAN as well as several other National officers. It was a time of mourning indeed for the Family Bar.

The mourning continued in early 2016 with the demise of Hon. (Sir) Linus Anwasia Mbaso (KSQ), the former Leader of the Bar. A court session was held in his honour on 26th April, 2016

at the premises of High Court Numbers 3 and 4 Nnewi. Equally the Branch faced a crises situation as the branch general election could not hold due to some challenges.

In view of that, at the expiration of the tenure of the Branch Officers, a three-man Caretaker Committee to steer the affair of the Branch from 30th April, 2016 till a new Exco is elected in June, 2016 was set up as follows:-

1. Chief G.O. Osigwe
2. C.A.C. Uzoegwu
3. Sam Onyia

The committee sat and chose Chief G.O. Osuigwe as the Caretaker Committee Chairman and Sam Onyia as the Caretaker Committee Secretary while C.A.C. Uzoegwu remained a member.

Through applications for, and granting of waivers by the National President, a new Branch Exco was constituted as follows:

1. Chief Emmanuel Chigozie Chikaelo - (Chairman).
2. Kingsley P. Awuka Esq. as - (Secretary).

C.A.C. Uzoegwu was chosen as the NEC Delegate. By July, 2016 the Caretaker Committee handed over to the new Branch Officers

Subsequently, on 30/9/16 Egbuna Odiegwu Esq. and Ebere Akara Esq. emerged as the Vice Chairman and Ass. Secretary of the Branch and they were sworn in at the general meeting that held day by C.A.C. Uzoegwu Esq. Notary Public. On the same day, standing committees of the Branch were re-constituted and announced to members.

At the Annual General Meeting of 29th June, 2018, new Branch Officers were elected as follows:-

1. P.C. Ugwuanyi Esq - Chairman
2. E.E. Ofodeme Obadike(Mrs.) - Vice Chairman
3. E.C. Odiegwu Esq - Secretary
4. C.S. Agbom Esq - Ass Secretary
5. E.E Ngene Esq (Mrs) - Treasurer
6. P.N. Chukwudumogu Esq. - Financial Secretary
7. Francis Effiong Esq - Welfare Secretary
8. Ebere Akara Esq - Publicity Secretary
9. Okey Oduonye Esq - Provost

Some of the people indicated above were chosen later after due ratification by the National body of NBA. While those elected on 29th June 2018 were, after the election, sworn in by C.A.C. Uzoegwu, Notary Public, others who were subsequently ratified were sworn in after their ratification.

On 11/5/20 and 12/5/20 a requisition for Extra-ordinary General meeting of NBA Nnewi Branch was made to the Branch Chairman pursuant to Section 12(4) of the 3rd schedule, Part 1 of the NBA Constitution 2015 as amended by 56 members of the Branch. As a result an Extra-ordinary General meeting of the Branch held on Wednesday, 13th May, 2020 at the Ministry of Justice where an Electoral Committee was set up to conduct the Branch general election as follows:-

1. Chikodi Nwogwugwu Esq. - Chairman
2. U.C. Ezeugha Esq. - Secretary
3. T.O. Igwegbe Esq. (Mrs.) - Member
4. Ebele Igwilo-Okoye Esq. (Mrs.) - Member
5. J.N. Obi Esq (Mrs.) - Member

The Committee conducted the Branch election which produced the present officers of the Branch as follows:-

1. Kingley P. Awuka Esq. - Chairman
2. O.N. Ubah Esq. - Vice Chairman
3. Chinedu Igwegbe Esq. - Secretary
4. E.E. Onedibe Esq. - Ass. Secretary
5. Amara Okaro Esq. (Mrs.) - Treasurer
6. U.P. Igwe Esq. - Social Secretary
7. S.A. Ezugwu Esq. - Welfare Secretary

Subsequently, the General Meeting subsequently selected some members to fill the vacant positions as follows:

1. Kelvin G. Abonyi - Legal Adviser
2. Onyekachi M. Ede Esq. - Financial Secretary
3. Franklin C. Ofodeme Esq. - Publicity Secretary
4. C.E. Origbakpor Esq. - Provost

At a General Meeting of the Branch co-opted four members, to constitute the executive committee in line with the provisions of the Uniform By-laws of the Nigerian Bar Association, 2015 as amended. The co-opted members are as follows:

1. Nnamdi Chima Esq.
2. T.O Igwegbe Esq.
3. Chioma Nwachukwu Esq.
4. C. E. Okonkwo Esq.

In April, 2022 during the Branch General meet, Electoral Committee headed by Sam Onyia, Esq. was constituted to conduct election into the various offices of the branch. The committee conducted the election on the 24th of June, 2022 where the following persons were elected unopposed for a two years term;

1. Sir Ifeanyi David - Chairman
2. C.N. Onuigbo - Vice Chairman
3. C.S. Agbom, Esq., - Secretary
4. Nnedi N. Ewim - Welfare Secretary
5. M.P. Okon, Esq. - Publicity Secretary

At a General Meeting of the Branch, the following members were selected to fill the vacant positions;

1. C.E. Origbakpor, Esq. - Legal Adviser
2. Onyekachi Micheal Ede, Esq. - Treasurer
3. Ivy Ufodike, Esq - Financial Secretary
4. M.O. Eze, Esq. - Provost
5. U. C. Ezugha, Esq. - Social Secretary

The Branch also co-opted four members, to constitute the executive committee in line with the provisions of the Uniform By-laws of the Nigerian Bar Association, 2015 as amended. The co-opted members are as follows:

1. C.A. Nwachukwu, Esq
2. C.O. Ugwuanyi, Esq.
3. J.O. Aghaji, Esq.

4. Echezona Okoye, Esq.

One unfortunate incident that happened to the branch was the death of the Branch Former Chairman P.O.C. Ebubedike, Esq. the branch was pained by his death as was one of the pillars of the branch. His burial in June, 2023 attracted bar leader both from the branch and national level. The branch also lost Rowland Onwuka and BSC Ucheagwu to the cold hands of death. Painfully too, the branch witnessed the kidnap of our member Jude Oguejiofor whose whereabouts since his kidnap in January 2024 is still unknown. Another sad incident was the gruesome murder of Awa P. Awa by unknown gun men in April, 2024. May their souls rest in peace. The branch witnessed the joyous conferment of the prestigious rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria on Chief G.O. Osuigwe SAN. Work has also seriously commenced at the Branch's Bar Centre sponsored by Emeka Etiaba SAN and Echezona Etiaba SAN, and we are hopeful that in a matter of little moment, the Bar Centre building will be completed.

The Branch also set up Electoral Committee at the end of Sir David Ifeanyi's administration that saw to the election of Hon. K. G. Abonyi as the branch chairman to pilot the affairs of the branch for the next 2 years. Aroh Ositadimma was elected the Vice Chairman, S.A. Ezugwu elected the General Secretary, C.E. Okonkwo; Welfare Secretary and Okoh Christopher Okechukwu; Social Secretary. It is worthy to note that the election especially the office of the post of the chairman was keenly contested. The new executives were inaugurated on the 28/6/2024 during the branch law dinner attended by high profile personalities including the Chief Judge of Anambra State at Grand Seasons Hotel Nnwichi Nnewi. The Young Lawyers Forum wing of the branch also conducted their election where EM Arinzechukwu emerged as Chairman while CJ Igwe emerged as Secretary. Others are Ezinne M. Aja as Vice Chairman, Uju Nzewi Mary J as Treasurer, CO Ekweh as Welfare Secretary, EC Nwankwegu as director of Social, SK Okafor, Legal Adviser, Daniel Nwakile, Financial Secretary. The branch 2024 law week/dinner was organised by Sir AA Igwebuikwe led Committee. Other members of the committee are Ebere Okoye-Igwilo, Esq; Alternate Chairman, Kingsley Awuka; member, Dr. C.E. Origbakpor; member, C.J. Igwe; member. Worthy of note is the efforts of the committee especially Sir AA Igwebuikwe who attracted sponsors for the law week/dinner and procurement of branch diaries that was shared free of charge to members of the branch. The 2024 branch law week and dinner became talk of the town; being the first ever FREE LAW WEEK/DINNER to be organized in the branch since inception. To organize a befitting 2025 law week, the branch in her January, 2025 meeting constituted 2025 Law week to be headed by Kingsley Awuka. The committee was saddled with the responsibilities of organizing 2025 law week and "homecoming" welcome party/reception of NBA President; Mazi Afam Osigwe, SAN who happens to be son of the soil and our great member. Other members of the committee are AC Edu,(alternate Chairman), C.A. Nwachukwu (Secretary), DC Egbuna (Alternate Secretary), Dr. C.E. Origbakpor (Chairman Diary and Publicity Sub Cttee). Other members are CS Agbom, CI Madukosiri, Maxwell Udeh, AA Igwebuikwe, UC Onwugamba, Ezinne M Ajah, Ebere okoye Igwilo, Uju Nzewi, OM Ede, EM Arinzechukwu, CJ Nnamani, Francis Effiong among others.

The Branch has lived beyond the challenges it faced, given birth to a new Branch (Ihiala Branch) and has done well to make Nnewi town a lucrative town for lawyers. It is for this bloom for lawyers that many lawyers under N.Y.S.C opt to stay back in the town after their one year of National Youth Service. Presently, there are over two hundred registered lawyers under Nnewi Branch of the N.B.A.