

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF BANYAKIGEZI

Report for the 7th Annual Convention held in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The seventh annual ICOB convention was held at the Riviera Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, during the weekend of July 23 - 27, 2009.

Thursday saw the arrival of some 83 registered delegates, including Kigezi's own Ndugu Ruhakana Rugunda. A good number headed straight for the slot machines even before checking into their rooms. The evening was left open for the conventioners to explore the famed Sin City and its allure.

The conference kicked off Friday morning with welcoming remarks from the organizers, followed by a report by the president, Frank Byamugisha, on the state of ICOB. Thereafter, the young banya Kigezi headed to the Riviera's Skybox # 206, where Maureen Bikangaga and her dedicated team held them spellbound listening to stories from their ancestral lands. Jackson Twesigye gave a presentation on educating children in Kigezi today, and was followed by Michael Akampurira who spoke about opportunities for housing financing in Uganda. The delegates were treated to a luncheon, and later heard Fred Ruhakana's presentation on the role of technical training in generating employment opportunities. As the afternoon wore on, delegates were invited to participate in an open panel discussion on topical issues affecting abanya Kigezi. Maureen Bikangaga moderated the session as others who included Ruth Ndyabahika, Judie Nkusi, Fred Ruhakana, Douglas Bujara, George Kamuhanda, and Marjorie Betubiza engaged in passionate exchanges of ideas. The evening culminated in a cocktail social followed by a dance to Phoenix's own DJ KayDee.

Activities resumed on Saturday with the annual general meeting. After a break, Peter Bikangaga led a panel discussion on the future of ICOB, in which Benedicta Tumwesigye, Henry Bagazonzya, Michelle Byamugisha, Johnson Mujungu and Frank Byamugisha were active participants. In the evening, delegates were joined by locals and friends from as far away as Salt Lake City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco for a Kigezi Education Fund fundraising dinner, after which they danced away first to Kigezi traditional dances and into the morning to DJ KayDee's African selections.

Sunday started off with a worship service led by Apolo Ndyabahika. In the afternoon, delegates boarded luxury buses for a tour that took them to Lake Meade and the Hoover Dam. They returned to the Riviera in the evening and had free time to roam the Vegas Strip and the casinos that line it.

The convention ended Monday morning as long-faced delegates checked out of their rooms to await ICOB '10.

ICOB Vegas '09 organizing committee: George Kamuhanda, Douglas Bujara, Ben Birungi, Margaret Kazinduka, Judie Nkusi, Henry Bagazonzya, Andrew Katarikawe.