



Forward

“We should write our own history” is not just a mantra but an ardent belief and passion of Dr. Jane Kani Edward. Upon joining the leadership of ESSCA-USA in 2011 as Secretary of Women and Youth Affairs, Dr. Edward conceived the idea of documenting the history and activities of the association. As a historian and sociologist interested in preserving history and understanding societal dynamics, Dr. Edward brings a lot of acumen in teaching and research from her work at the Department of African and African American Studies at Fordham University, New York, to bear on her role in the leadership of ESSCA-USA. First elected President of ESSCA-USA in September 2017, and re-elected for a second term in September 2019, Dr. Edward made writing the history of the association one of her main priorities in the 2017-2019 strategic plan of the organization. She quickly embarked on implementation of the history project by putting together a taskforce to review all available data and to solicit any relevant information where available. The work of the taskforce marked the beginning of documentation of a coherent narrative of the history of ESSCA-USA from its humble beginning to date. Dr. Edward happened to be my colleague in undergraduate school, and we have remained good friends since and collaborated on many projects over the years. Being privileged to know the person and the work ethic she brings to the table, it is no surprise to me that the written history of ESSCA-USA has today become a reality with the manuscript due for publication in 2021, courtesy of the leadership of the dedicated educationist, Dr. Edward, and the history taskforce.

The resettlement of Equatorians and South Sudanese in general in the United States started in the 1990s and with it began the making of ESSCA-USA history. Many Equatorians arrived in the US at different time points and their recollections of the genesis of the community organization or their personal involvement vary. The same goes for understanding the purpose of ESSCA-USA as many individuals may have not seen, leave alone read, the constitution and bylaws of the organization. As ESSCA-USA continues to grow, it is important and imperative that an accurate history of the organization is written and made available to its members and younger generation of budding Equatorian-Americans. Such a publication would provide an important educational tool and one-stop shop for understanding the role of ESSCA-USA in historical context and to inform improvements in the organization going forward. The research and documentation taskforce was appointed in late 2017 and it endeavored to piece together the facts on the founding of the organization; leadership changes over the years; the constitution and its revisions; content of conferences and resolutions; ESSCA-USA engagements within and without the US; and the achievements and challenges of the organization.

The history of ESSCA-USA should make for an interesting reading and source of information on understanding the purpose why the community was organized in the first place and the evolution of the interests of the organization over the years. The overriding goals of the community at the beginning centered on the unity of the Equatorians; preservation of cultural heritage; and promotion of the socio-economic wellbeing and development of the community. The liberation struggle and suffering of the people in South Sudan also impacted the thinking of the movers in the formative years of ESSCA-USA to consider ways of how to help alleviate the suffering of the people in refugee camps especially in Uganda and to promote the cause of the liberation struggle. Details on the evolution in purpose of the organization can be tracked through changes in the constitution and bylaws from 1995 through 2017. The first constitution ever was that of the Equatorian community in Minnesota known as “The People.” The constitution of what formally became known as ESCA-USA (later ESSCA-USA) was first adopted in 2003 and followed by major revisions in 2012, 2017 and 2019. The purpose of ESSCA-USA as stipulated in the latest version of the constitution that can be summed up as: promotion of the socio-economic wellbeing and development, and the preservation of the cultural heritage of the Equatorian community in the US.

Kudos to the president of ESSCA-USA for launching the history project and to all those who made the history itself and transformed ESSCA-USA to what it is today. Now that the history of ESSCA-USA is an open book, it is hoped that the community will double its effort to promote and sustain the organization and make it a more vibrant and productive institution in the best interest of the Equatorian Community in the United States of America, going forward.

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