



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Goes on Medical Mission to Nigeria / Seeks to Strengthen Relations between Africa and Southeast Queens

JAMES SANDERS JR. May 12, 2017



State Senator James Sanders Jr. (D-Rochdale Village, Far Rockaway) held a press conference on Friday in front of St. Clement Pope Church in South Ozone Park to discuss his recent trip to the country of Nigeria on a medical mission of mercy conducted in conjunction with the When In Need Foundation.

"Here in this district, as we grow, we believe in giving to those who have less," Sanders said.

"We are a generous district and we believe that we are our brother's keeper."

Sanders was joined at the press conference by African dignitaries - Kate Igbodike, consul in charge of information, culture and education for the Nigerian Consulate General in New York; and Oheneba Boakye, the younger brother of the President of Ghana, his Excellency Nana Aakuffo Addo.

Igbodike stressed the importance of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in helping the "downtrodden," and expressed her gratitude to Senator Sanders and the WIN Foundation for their good work.

Boakye said he knows first hand how a lack of access to medical facilities with functioning equipment can lead to fatalities. "In Africa in general and as a whole, we need help and we need people to speak, because if you're quiet, no one is going to hear about it."

Sanders and WIN brought 30 doctors along with them to Nigeria as well as medicines to combat illnesses like malaria, typhoid, cholera, diabetes and high blood pressure. They also provided eyeglasses to those who had visual impairments, in addition to helping those suffering from blindness and glaucoma. Over 3,000 people, ages 18 to 96 were given medical examinations. More than 600 children also received care.

"These people are living in rural areas where they do not have access to medical centers, and they are not able to pay for medical assistance," said Chetachi Nwoga-Ecton, president and executive director of WIN. "I call them the forgotten ones."

Ecton explained that many of the people didn't even have access to aspirin and some had never been examined by a doctor in their entire lives, therefore preventable diseases and illnesses were left to worsen and spread.

In addition to trying to improve health, Sanders met with Nigerian leaders to discuss how to strengthen relations between the two countries, even though Nigeria is already an ally of the United States.

Sanders also viewed the visit as a time for personal growth and development regarding other cultures and felt warmly adopted by the Nigerian people. Sanders was even given the title of chief by four kings there.

Sanders was proud to work with the When In Need Foundation on the Nigerian mission. WIN provides grants for students and young professionals to continue their education. They support schools, orphanages and various hostels that assist the less fortunate. WIN also organizes health and education fairs.

Part of continuing the mission of giving, Sanders said moving forward he will be collecting unwanted school books from public schools and sending them to the youth in Nigeria.

"What America wastes, could actually feed the world," Sanders said. "The American people are a blessed people, and we need to act on those blessings."