



African Advocate

Voice of African Immigrants & Refugees In Illinois



May 2009

Volume 2 Number 2



Chicago Summit on African Immigrants & Refugees

Cheryle Jackson of the Chicago Urban League Keynotes Historic Summit

Gloria Havyarimana

Chicago - The 3rd Chicago Summit on African Immigrants and Refugees will take place on Saturday, May 30, 2009 at Malcolm X College, located at 1900 West Van Buren, Chicago.

The summit is a public education and organizing program of the United African Organization (UAO) aimed at raising awareness about the state of the fast growing African immigrant and refugee community in Illinois, as well as providing a panoramic view of contemporary Africa and US foreign policy. Towards this purpose, it is an integral part of a series of groundbreaking initiatives of the UAO to promote dialogue and coalition building for social justice.

The theme of this year's summit is *"From Hope to Empowerment: Perspectives on Africa and the African Experience in the US."*

This year's summit, free and open to the public, will have two main plenary sessions that will share perspectives on civic engagement and community development; Black-Brown coalition and the politics of immigration reform; inventory on Democratization, Security, Trade & Development, Health and Global Migration in Africa; and the need for re-engagement of U.S. constituencies for effective Africa policy advocacy. There will also be cultural performances and a luncheon. The summit will be an all-day event beginning with a continental breakfast followed by registration from 8:00a.m-



Cheryle R. Jackson

8:45a.m. The program will end at 6:00p.m.

Panelists and attendees for the summit will include community-

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Commentary

Somalia: Pirates or Patriots of the Sea?

Alie Kabba

It is disheartening, once again, to see the butchery of truth by an oversimplification of complex phenomena in a place that has become a metaphor for the grave ills of post-colonial Africa – Somalia. As we say out here, don't believe the hype! Or, as Bob Marley and the Wailers succinctly put it, half the story has never been told.

Let's get through the debris of Gaza, the wasteland of Eastern Congo and the blighted plains of Darfur to get to the facts about Somalia and the Great Pirate Threats to Western Civilization as we know it.

First, the Good News: Somalia is not the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Somalis, struggling to hold on to the last trappings of sovereignty, don't have nukes or threats of nukes or long range missiles to police their waters. Yes, the country has fallen on hard times, very hard times since 1991, when a brutal dictatorship imploded and the Somalis chose fragmentation over national unity.

Second, the Cold Fact: Like Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Angola, and other places that have witnessed civil wars and collapse of all institutions of governance, greedy armies of foreign corporate interests saw the chaos in Somalia as an opportunity to loot the natural resources of this warring nation. It was blood diamonds in the case of Sierra Leone, timber and gold in the case of Liberia, and enormous amount of mineral wealth in the case of the Congo. It's the old law of the jungle: You fall on your back, the vultures soon land for a good meal.

Somalia has no diamonds, gold, oil and other strategic minerals ready for easy exploitation on land. What it does have, however, is the open sea with fish...tons of fish - for European markets.

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Struggles & Legacies

UAO and Allies Remember Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Through Community Dialogue

Brianna Smith

On April 4, 1968, forty-one years ago, the world lost an invaluable soul – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. On April 4, 2009, members of the African and African American communities united at the Jacob C. Carruthers' Center for Inner City Studies, located in Chicago's Bronzeville neighborhood, to honor his legacy. While he is well known for the strides he made in the struggle for civil rights in the US, Dr. King did not just limit his scope to national problems. In his 1965 speech, *Let My People Go*, he stated, "The struggle for freedom forms one long front crossing oceans and mountains. The brotherhood of man is not confined within a narrow, limited circle of select people. It is felt everywhere in the world, it is an international sentiment of surpassing strength and because this is true when men of good will finally unite they will be invincible."

As we reflect and commemorate the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King, it is very clear that the world is a much different place than it was 60 years ago. The policies of segregation and Jim Crow no longer govern the United States; and the countries of Africa are no longer under colonial rule. These feats did not come without much hard work. It was a long and arduous struggle for both Africans and African Americans. Their respective fights, however, would not have been possible without support from their distant brethren. It is without question that there was a strong connection between the fight for African liberation and struggles for civil rights in the US.



The Swahili Institute Cultural Group at the Forum

It was this sentiment that was echoed at the forum, co-sponsored by the United African Organization and the Jacob Carruthers' Center for Inner City Studies. The attendees represented many different age groups, as well as many different ethnicities. The title of the forum was, "Struggles and Legacies: African Liberation and the Civil Rights Movement". The program began with a drumming performance by the Swahili In-

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Upwardly Global in Chicago

Non-Profit Provides Immigrant Professionals with Career Boost into Upward Mobility

Like so many immigrants from around the world, Francis Youmsi says he came to the US to pursue the American Dream. When he first arrived in the US he was excited to start a new life, to meet new people, and to learn a new culture different from his own. "I was impressed by the size of the roads, the cars, the buildings and the food," says Francis. "Everything is bigger than in Europe. It reminded me of all the American movies I had watched in France." Once in the US the images from American movies came to life for Francis. However, despite his initial hard work and determination, the iconic American Dream remained elusive. Initially, like many highly skilled immigrant professionals, he found it difficult to break into the American professional job market. Now with the support of a national, award-winning non-profit organization, Upwardly Global, that fabled dream is within his grasp.

Originally from Cameroon, Francis immigrated to France at the age of 14 to continue his academic studies. Eventually he completed a B.S. in Electronics and a M.S. in Information Systems Engineering and began a successful career as an Information Technology Consultant. A natural leader, he launched his own consulting firm and began working with a large multinational corporation, France Telecom, as a project manager. At the age of 31 he was doing well in his professional life and had a bright future ahead of him. He had never dreamt of moving to the US and calls the story of his immigration a stroke of fate.

Francis explains, "My brothers-in-law were playing the Green Card Lottery and they asked for my assistance at sizing the picture to meet the requirements. That's how I also decided to play, just for the fun." Given his initial non-chalance, he was surprised to receive a notification from the US Immigration Department in April 2007 informing him that he was the lucky winner of a Green Card. "I think you are more likely to win when you don't expect anything," says Francis.

As a young man with no family constraints, Francis saw immigration to the US as an opportunity to broaden his career. Francis explains, "Compared to France, the US represents a land of opportunities where there is no limit if you work hard." He also cites segregation of minorities and a rigid job market that does not allow for career changes as barriers to his professional growth in France. Francis believed that moving to the US would provide him with the international exposure necessary to market himself in today's global economy, but his efforts to rebuild his professional career here in the US were met with a whole new set of unexpected challenges.

According to the Migration Policy Institute, at any given time there are nearly 1 million immigrants in the US who have the legal right to work and hold a BA/BS degree or above, yet they remain vastly underemployed. Immigrants comprise 23.6% of the working poor earning less than \$19,800 annually versus 7.6% for native born residents with the same education level. In Illinois, the number is even higher, with 34.6% of educated immigrants working in unskilled, low-wage jobs. Latino immigrants and African immigrants like Francis face disproportionately steep downward mobility.

Each of these new Americans face barriers to economic integration, including unfamiliarity with the American job search process and customs, lack of a professional network, and employers who lack resources to understand and evaluate internationally-gained degrees and experience. Further exacerbating their situation is a gap in services available to new Americans, which tend to focus on low-skilled, low-wage employment instead of reintegration into the professional workforce. Upwardly Global was created to fill this gap by helping immigrant professionals to move beyond the margins of poverty into economic security. Since its inception in 2002, Upwardly Global has worked with more than 1,300 immigrant professionals from over 100 developing countries. More than 450 of these jobseekers are working in their professional fields in the United States today.

In partnership with the State of Illinois Office of New Americans, Upwardly Global has launched a new office here in Chicago, joining offices in San Francisco and New York City. The foundation of Upwardly Global's jobseeker program in Chicago is a two-day Career Summit that focuses on the American job search, resume writing, interviewing skills, and on building the professional network so invaluable to landing that first professional job in the US. The Career Summit is hosted by Upwardly Global staff and draws on the strength of American professionals who volunteer their time, lending their expertise in specific career fields. Francis attended the first Career Summit hosted in February, which included 40 immigrant professionals from around the world, as well as over 100 volunteers.

As a new immigrant, Francis was very concerned about getting a job in the increasingly competitive US job market. He felt he was an outsider and struggled with improving his communication skills. Still, he was confident that with his strong education and experience in the IT field he would land a job. Although he did manage to

get many interviews, oftentimes they were for positions below his level of experience and did not lead to placement. Francis learned of Upwardly Global when he first arrived in the US through an old



Francis Youmsi

family acquaintance, but the Chicago branch had not yet opened. He thought he would find a job before the Chicago branch opened, but many months later, still underemployed and frustrated with his job search, he signed up for the program.

At the Upwardly Global Career Summit Francis was able to expand his professional network and make new friends with immigrant professionals who shared similar experiences to his own. He learned about the culture of the American job market, transferable skills, and how to effectively market himself. His resume received an American-style overhaul and he was able to make some valuable contacts with American professionals otherwise inaccessible to him.

Following the two-day Career Summit, Francis continues to get support from the organization. He receives ongoing coaching in targeting his job search, finding job opportunities and interviewing skills. An Upwardly Global Job Search Advisor assists him with cover letter revisions and building his job search strategy. "They really support us in these difficult times where we can easily become discouraged," says Francis.

In addition to their ongoing support, Francis cites Upwardly Global's strong professional network as an important advantage for him in today's competitive marketplace. "With this economic downturn, companies are receiving tons of resumes. If our resumes were to follow the normal process, it is more likely that they would end up in the trash. Upwardly Global passes our resumes directly to hiring managers, and we all know that sending the resume to the right person is a key element of the job search." Currently Francis has a good job in the Business Intelligence industry. Since working with Upwardly Global he has experienced a greater response to his resume and landed more in-person interviews. Next week he is looking forward to an interview with a Fortune 500 company for a position well-matched to his level of skill and experience. After working with Upwardly Global, Francis feels confident about his future in the United States. "I am con-

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Editor-in-Chief

Alie Kabba

Editors

Kelley Johnson
Haidara Cherif

Assistant Editor

Albertine Scray

Graphics & Layout

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Public Relations

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Rosemarie Tamba
Nancy A. Addae
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IBé Kaba
Bobby Gboyor
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Interns

Brianna Smith,
Policy Research & Advocacy
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Events Coordinator

Advisers

Gaye D. Sleah, Jr.
Erku Yimer, Ph.D.

Comments, feedback or submit articles, call

312-949-9980 or email

Editor@UniteAfricans.org

African Advocate

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**United African Organization,
3424 S. State Street, Suite
3C8-2,
Chicago, IL. 60616**



Chicago Urban League & UAO Form Historic Alliance

Cheryle R. Jackson

Just as our African American forefathers and mothers migrated north from the rural south in pursuit of their dreams a century

Americans could create powerhouse firms and thousands of jobs. Imagine joint investments in banks, construction firms, trans-

By forming an alliance, the Chicago Urban League and United African Organization have set out to rewrite the script for how U.S.-born Blacks and African immigrants combine and use our strengths and shared experiences for the greater good.

ago, throngs of African immigrants have come to America's shores in search of a better life.

Africans now make up a fast growing percentage of the Black population in the U.S. An estimated 100,000 are living in metropolitan Chicago. I believe this burgeoning population represents an awesome opportunity for people of African descent to bolster our collective economic and political power, and strengthen the shrinking Black middle class.

Toward that end, the Chicago Urban League has formed an alliance with the United African Organization to economically empower our constituents through entrepreneurship and strategic partnerships.

It is time to tear down the wall that has separated us for far too long. By forming an alliance, the Chicago Urban League and United African Organization have set out to rewrite the script for how U.S.-born Blacks and African immigrants combine and use our strengths and shared experiences for the greater good.

For years, we have forfeited opportunities partly because African Americans view themselves as different from Africans. But our commonalities are far greater. Like African Americans, African immigrants have struggled with discrimination in countries in which they are the minority. Like African Americans, African immigrants, to counter discrimination, are starting their own businesses at a rapid rate.

Imagine the power of African American, African and Caribbean Blacks all working together. The benefits could be enormous! By building political coalitions, Africans and African Americans could become a legislative force to be reckoned with. By sharing businesses, Africans and African

portation companies and more.

History has shown what can happen when people with similar struggles come together. The Great Migration of southern Blacks to the north was a game changer both politically and economically for Blacks in America. Their sheer numbers could not be ignored. Today, the same is true of Africans who are migrating to the U.S. at a rate of about 50,000 per year. They are coming from faraway places such as Ghana, Senegal, Ethiopia, Botswana and Nigeria.

Seeing ourselves as one people, sharing networks and forming bonds of friendship will empower us to unlock the untapped potential in our communities.

I invite the African immigrant community to take advantage of programs and services available at the Chicago Urban League's Entrepreneurship Center to help them grow bigger business and create jobs. I also look forward to demonstrating to the world that African Americans and our African and Caribbean brothers and sisters are united in mission and purpose this July when Chicago hosts the National Urban League conference.

Seeing ourselves as one people, sharing networks and forming bonds of friendship will empower us to unlock the untapped potential in our communities. Let's see where it takes us!

Cheryle R. Jackson is the president of the Chicago Urban League



Africans At G20 - "What You Get is What You See"

Rampholo Molefhe

What a farce? That an elite group of leaders of 20 countries that control an estimated 85 percent of the world's economy should seek celebration of their minstrel shows by the millions of peoples of the world - most particularly in the underdeveloped countries - who live in conditions of staggering poverty at less than US\$2 or P10 a day!

Their solutions to the gargantuan problems created by a handful of mean capitalists in America and Europe rely on that very group of mischievous executives to preside over the use three trillion US Dollars in capital injections to the international financial system, which means American and European banks and insurance companies, and vital industries in the developed countries.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF), together with the World Bank responsible for the prescriptions that have relegated the weaker economies of the underdeveloped world, and Africa in particular, to virtual vassals of the developed countries will get \$250 to expand their activities in the satellite economies of the South. The South Africans will be co-opted into that game through the appointment of the country's finance minister, Trevor Manuel, to a committee that is tasked with reforming the structures of the organization, presumably with the aim of accommodating the aspirations of the underdeveloped countries for greater representation on the organizations.

China, who put up \$40 billion towards the refurbishment of the IMF - outdone only by the contribution of \$100 billion by the combined European Union (EU) countries and an equal amount by the main culprits in this quagmire, the US - failed to secure concrete concessions from the leading 11 countries that hold true power at the gathering, for increased representation for itself and the Latin American, Asiatic and African countries.

The 'emerging economies' hold only nine seats at G20 summit, only one for all of Africa. Tiny Belgium holds greater sway at the World Bank and the IMF than the entire African continent. It will take some doing to break the traditional practice since the founding of those institutions, whatever Manuel's committee finds, that the Europe and America will share leadership of the organizations.

There will be effective regulation

of the markets to ensure strict observation of accounting systems, also doing away with tax havens. Subsequent reports revealed a list of about 42 'grey and black' countries that were identified as places that keep dirty and naughty money.

Nothing was said about putting in place alternative policies and rules for the operations of the institutions that would guarantee the underdeveloped countries a proportionate say in the way in which the money is used.

In effect, these reforms portend a change of a few of the faces behind the systems, practically leaving the real controls in the hands of the countries that will claim to contribute the most money. That does not change the fundamentals.

The G20 leaders, trapped in an unrelenting web of denial of the evident failure of the capitalist system to mitigate against greed at the top, continue to defer to the 'market' place as the most effective regulator of the economy, for fear of being accused of going the socialist way.

Obama told the British that during his tenure as senator of the state of Illinois, he proposed legislation that wanted a vote of the shareholders to approve exit packages or bonuses for the executive officers.

That is about as far as any leader of one of the G20 countries could go in mooted an alternative method of supervision of the activities of the company executives. The politicians rely on the executives for sponsorship of their campaigns.

In any case, oversight should not be done by the very people who produce the commodities that enrich the executives and the shareholders!

Implicit in the reference to the invisible hand of the market, therefore, is the assumed condition that there should be no change in the relations and ownership of the means of production. In other words, there should be no contemplation whatsoever, that the workers who produce the commodities that bring wealth to the world should in any way find their way into ownership of the companies for which they work, or the decision making organs of those enterprises so that they can effectively monitor distribution and enjoyment of the resources that the workers and the managers create together.

The critics of the G20 rightly

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stitute of Chicago. The performance included a tambiko or a pouring of libation.

The forum featured three panelists: Conrad Worrill, Yvonne Jones, and James Thindwa. Dr. Worrill has been director of the Jacob H. Carruthers' Center for Inner City Studies of Northeastern Illinois University since January 1, 2004. He has worked with NEIU since 1976. He places a strong emphasis on developing viable strategies and tactics to



Brianna Smith

advance the concept of African independence and self-determination at home and abroad. Professor Jones has worked at the Carruthers' Center as an instructor since 1998. She is also the director of the Kemet Institute and a priest in the Temple of the African Community of Chicago. Mr. Thindwa is the Executive Director of Chicago Jobs with Justice since November of 2002. He is originally from Zimbabwe and was an anti-apartheid leader from 1974 until apartheid ended in 1990.

During his portion of the panel, Dr. Worrill emphasized the importance of being aware of the history of both struggles. He pointed out the fact that colonialism and Jim Crow are "first cousins". They both took away one's right to self-determination. He discussed a range of historical events that played a part in both struggles, ranging from the 5th Pan African Congress to the Montgomery Bus Boycott to 60,000 people gathering and marching in Washington D.C. and singing "We are an African people". He then asked everyone in the audience who was alive at the time, to take a moment and remember what they were doing on April 4, 1968 when they received "the news". Some audience members were in elementary school; some heard it over the radio. Everyone, however, knew that something major had just taken place. Cities all across the United States went up in smoke. People were angry, saddened, hurt and upset.

Professor Jones discussed a program called "Teaching about Africa". It is a major problem that many people in the general public don't know much about the his-

tory of Africa or much about contemporary Africa. It is worsened by the fact that the majority of people charged with teaching school kids are also lacking knowledge about this vital continent. Within this short program, teachers leave with the ability to identify at least 80% of the countries of Africa when given a blank map as well as an appreciation for its history and culture. During her presentation, a very interesting and heart-warming thing occurred. There were many young

people in the audience, and she began to go through each letter of the alphabet asking them to name a country in Africa whose name begins with that letter. The children rose to the challenge. They named the countries without once faltering or stumbling! The entire crowd was overjoyed and the pride that all attendees felt filled the room. To see African American youths able to recite the names of African countries was a source of overwhelming happiness.

Mr. Thindwa began by discussing his experiences as a student at Beria College. During his time there he noticed the lack of interaction between students of color, especially Africans and African Americans. This clearly needed to change. They held a forum in which African and African American students were able to come and discuss their feelings and stereotypes they had about each other. The students began to question what the origins of the stereotypes were, as well as how and why they were still being perpetuated. This proved to be a very beneficial event. Once problems and issues are on the table, he noted, it is only then that progress can take place.

The open dialogue that followed the panel, moderated by Alie Kabba, executive director of the United African Organization, allowed members of the audience to ask the panelists questions, make statements, and raise issues of their own.

The conversations that ensued were very productive. Based on evaluations that were distributed at the end of the forum, the response was very positive. One hundred percent of attendees said they would attend more events hosted by the United African Organization. The forum was just the first of many that aim to nurture shared vision between African immigrants and refugees and the larger African American community.

point out that the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN) has found that it takes only \$30 billion to feed the poor of the world. It takes \$10 billion to ensure that they have potable water.

Judging by Brown's figures, in comparison to those of the FAO, it is evident that the G20 countries have found that saving the face of capitalism and the floundering theories that prop it up is a more viable future investment than the livelihood of the citizens of the rest of the world who provide only labour and natural resources for the furtherance of the capitalist interest.

Khadijah Sharife, reporting for

It is further reported that "ECOWAS recently revealed that food production in West Africa has doubled during the past two decades. A leaked report issued by the World Bank attributes high grain prices to the crop-for-fuel initiatives instituted by biotech companies to accelerate growth and dependence on corn, soya, and other genetically modified monocultures, forcing 100 million below the poverty line".

The combined effect of these imperialist shenanigans is to force Africa and the underdeveloped counties into a permanent state of dependence on food aid.

Sharife points out: "Food aid dis-

The fact of the consistent and persistent failure of Western countries to honor their promises with respect to servicing their financial promises to African development programs is neither novel nor in need of proof. That reality has now become a given.

the New African, observes: "Paradoxically, Africa was self-sufficient in food in the early 1960s, complete with a billion dollar food surplus, and a net exporter of cereals, among other produce. Yet by 1990, Africa was a net importer of food, and in 2004, continental debt stood at \$165bn and a food deficit of \$11bn.

The environmental watchdog, GRAIN, reports that: "Farmers across the world produced a record 2.3 billion tons of grain in 2007, up four percent on the previous year.

"Since 1961, the world's cereal output has tripled, while the population has doubled.

Today, roughly 70 percent of all so-called developing countries are net importers of food. And of the estimated 845 million hungry people in the world, 80 percent are small farmers."

Needless to say, by far the largest constituency among the poor farmers are Africans, many of them women.

Sharife reports further that as the former vice president of the World Bank, the economist Hollis Chenery, has stated, the main objective of foreign assistance, as many other tools of foreign policy, is to produce the kind of political and economic environment in the world in which the US can best pursue its own goals.

"The business of biotechnology is intimately entwined with agrochemicals; over 60 percent of GM (genetically modified) seeds are built to be pesticide and herbicide dependent. In 2005, global pesticide sales stood at \$5.4bn, mainly accrued by three companies," according to Chenery.

tributed by USAID is derived from subsidised corporations. Cumulatively, US and EU subsidies total over \$1bn per day, producing goods that are subsequently dumped on nascent industries in developing countries via World Trade Organization (WTO), IMF and World Bank trade mechanisms."

South Africa reappears once more under curious circumstances. "Unfortunately for the GM multinationals, African farmers have never taken to GM seeds or agrochemicals.

After 30 years of the Green Revolution and prodding by GM enthusiasts, Africa's answer to GM crops remains a firm "NO", save for South Africa, one of the six pivotal GM growers in the world.

"In 2002, even in the midst of a sweeping famine in southern Africa, the Africans still rejected GM food aid, compelling the FAO director general, Jacques Diouf of Senegal to almost commit sacrilege by asking the African countries attending the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in August 2002 to accept the GM food aid because it was safe for human consumption".

Diouf is quoted saying that "the food being offered to southern African countries is not likely to present a human health risk and may be eaten".

Apparently, despite the famine, the governments and peoples of southern Africa who had been wisened up to the shenanigans of purchased African advocates of Western economic interests were not convinced.

Then president of South Africa,

and faith-based organizations, scholars, advocates and organizers, public policy analysts, students and youth, and allies in the African American and immigrant communities.

The keynote speaker for the event is Cheryle Jackson, President/CEO of the Chicago Urban League. The first woman to lead the venerable civil rights organization in its 90-year history, Cheryle R. Jackson, as president and chief executive, made national news when she shifted the Chicago Urban League from a social services agenda to focus exclusively on economic empowerment as the driver for social change.

In her first year, Ms. Jackson launched **projectNEXT**, a series of initiatives created to support career, business and community development for African Americans. The League founded an Entrepreneurship Center in partnership with the Kellogg Graduate School of Management to provide 'high-octane aid' to existing minority-owned businesses to help them grow to scale and build capacity. Ms. Jackson also brokered a groundbreaking partnership with energy giant BP Inc. to support a League-sponsored venture capital fund and won stewardship over a major job training and hiring initiative at BP's Whiting, Ind., plant.

Under Ms. Jackson's forward-looking leadership, the Chicago Urban League published a special report examining the potential economic impact of a Chicago 2016 Olympic Games on African-American businesses and communities. In February 2008, the League published a report examining the economic future of black Chicagoans over the next decade, and unveiled a new initiative that takes a holistic approach to addressing the challenges and barriers to successful living encountered by African-American males.

Ms. Jackson also spearheaded the founding of a League task force to address the lingering problems African Americans face in the construction sector, and embraced a workforce development agenda that includes education, skills and career development in the high-skilled manufacturing sector.

Before coming to the League in October 2006, Ms. Jackson served as deputy chief of staff of communications and chief press secretary for former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich. Before that, she was the spokesperson for Amtrak in 41 states as vice president for communications and government affairs. In addition, she served in various capacities at National Public Radio (NPR), including as vice president of communications and brand management, director

of corporate communications and director of corporate identity and information.

Ms. Jackson serves on the boards of the Metropolitan Planning Council, the Chicagoland Chamber of Commerce, the Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council and The Field Museum, where she also co-chairs the museum's Center for Cultural Understanding and Change. Ms. Jackson sits on the board of trustees of Northwestern University and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and serves on the 2016 Chicago Olympics Committee, the Daniel Burnham Anniversary Planning Committee, and the Executive Committee of Chicago Metropolis 2020.

Ms. Jackson's elegance and eloquence has made her a role model for young girls and women aspiring to leadership in male-dominated organizations. She is a gifted story-teller who weaves her life's lessons and experiences into poetic, heart-warming prose. Her business prowess and her ability to forge unlikely partnerships have won her the respect of major players in business and philanthropic arenas; and her unpretentious, down-to-earth disposition has the ability to woo and captivate her audiences.

Ms. Jackson, a native of Chicago, graduated from Northwestern University in 1988. She and her husband, Charles, reside on Chicago's South Side.

The United African Organization is a coalition of African national associations dedicated to social justice, civic participation and empowerment of African immigrants and refugees in Illinois. Through its democratic organizing framework of equal representation of all African national communities in its decision-making structures, the UAO is the legitimate voice of the more estimated 100,000 African immigrants and refugees that now call Illinois home. For more information about the UAO, visit the website at www.uniteafricans.org

Malcolm X College, located on 1900 W Van Buren, is part of the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC). The CCC, Community College District 508, today reaches more than 200,000 people annually through the 13 facilities of the City College system, programs conducted in local community centers, public and parochial high schools, social service centers, and branches of the Chicago Public Library. Students can also take internet-based courses via television through CCC's Public Broadcast Station, WYCC-TV Channel 20, and the Center for Distance Learning. The district offers a variety of Associate Degree Programs that prepare students for

transfer with junior level standing to universities. A comprehensive offering of certificate programs also prepares students for immediate entry in their chosen careers. City Colleges provides specialized training for many workforce development programs, and tuition-free Adult Education courses including English as a Second Language (ESL), Adult Basic Education (ABE), and General Education Equivalency (GED), as well as Continuing Education (CE) programs that add value to the quality of life. The CCC continues to serve its community, offering highly qualified faculty, a sustained commitment to affordable tuition and excellence in higher education for all citizens of Chicago. Malcolm X

College is committed to leadership in post-secondary education; it is a learning and assessment-centered community college that empowers students of diverse backgrounds and abilities to achieve academic, career, and personal success. For more information about the college and its public, family, and educational programs and services, please visit the website at <http://malcolmx.ccc.edu/>

Registration for the 3rd Chicago Summit on African Immigrants and Refugees is on-going. Although there is no charge for the conference, please RSVP at 1-312-949-9980 or e-mail gloria.havyarimana@uniteafricans.org.



Reflection



U.S.-Africa Relations Hampered by Colonial Legacy

The following is excerpts of a lecture delivered at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) by Haskell Ward, examining 50 years of relations between the United States and Africa.

UCLA is celebrating 50 years since the establishment of a formal Center of Scholarship devoted to Africa. At the State Department in Washington, the Africa Bureau just last year celebrated 50 years as an independent bureau within the Department. And in 2007 Ghana celebrated its fiftieth anniversary of independence. 1960, 50 years ago next year, saw a great wave of independence sweep over the continent.

My first trip to Africa was in 1962 to pre-independent Kenya. As mentioned earlier, my association with UCLA began in 1963. So the past 50 year policy period is one that I know quite well. I have adult and mature memories of Soapy Williams, proclaiming, "Africa was for the Africans!" So you see I have spent most of my adult life either working in matters surrounding Africa or on the Continent...

I believe now, at this very moment in time, that Africa is at the dawn of a great new Era. Economically, it is the only area of the world that is continuing to grow, African music, fine art, fashion and food is being exported like never before...even white girls come up to my wife and, when she's wearing braids, ask her who did her hair.

More Africans are also voluntarily immigrating to the United States and other areas than ever

before, and more non Africans are going to Africa. My 25-year-old son, for instance, just left his lucrative job on Wall Street to take a job in finance that is based in Southern Africa. And my 22 year old daughter is joining the Peace Corp when she graduates from Spelman College next month. And, last but certainly not least, we cannot underestimate the "Obama Factor". A son of African is currently the President of the largest stable democracy on earth now.

So despite the daunting task of undertaking a fifty-year U.S. and Africa policy review and analysis in such a short period here today, my starting point must of necessity begin seventy-five years earlier. For even though Africa's first class scholars and policy makers no longer lay blame for today's problems on the continent's colonial past, no serious assessment of current conditions on the continent can ignore the reality of the impact of this history. Therefore, for our purposes, I will begin not with the post colonial period and its policy dynamics. Rather I will start with the traumatic impact on the continent of the Berlin Conference of 1884-85 and its consequent scramble for Africa, which resulted in European economic, political and military dominance on the continent.

When reviewing Africa's fifty year post independence period record, one possible reason for the enormous disappointment of so many people is that we have tended in recent decades to minimize the continuing impact of the nineteenth century scramble. Having little or no concern for the conti-

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Kwame Nkrumah at 100 - Lessons for African Leadership

Yao Graham

While many African leaders have aspired to inherit Nkrumah's mantle as the visionary and driver of Pan-Africanism and continental unity, writes Yao Graham, a gaping political leadership vacuum remains at the heart of the continent's collective expression. From an age when there were a number of outstanding African leaders, among whom Nkrumah was preeminent, Graham argues that the African Union's election of Gaddafi as its leader is a statement of a collective failure of leadership and underlines the crisis in which the Pan-African project is currently mired at the inter-state level. Where, asks Graham, are the African leaders who see opportunities for change in the current crisis, and who are 'ready to dare and look beyond guaranteeing the sanctity of aid flows?'

In February Ghana's new President John Atta-Mills announced that Nkrumah's birthday in September will be observed as Founder's Day and a national holiday. The long and tortuous national rehabilitation of the man who led the country to independence and remains an inspiration to Africans all over the world had taken yet another important step in the centenary year of his birth.

In the years after Ghana gained independence, Nkrumah's life and work was dominated by two primary concerns, one international, the other domestic. Internationally Pan-Africanism as a project of political and economic freedom, unity and structural transformation linked to the issue of Africa's place and voice on the world stage was dominant. Inside Ghana the main issue was the structural transformation of the mono-crop dependent colonial economy bequeathed by the British into a balanced and internally linked one that offered improved and secure livelihoods to Ghanaians. The domestic and international concerns were of course closely linked in Nkrumah's pronouncements and practice. He hoped that any achievements in Ghana would serve as a model as well as a unit in the economy of a united Africa. Nkrumah was ready to incur the wrath of the major imperialist powers of the day in pursuit of what he believed was in the interest of the African people.

David Rooney concluded his critical biography of Nkrumah with the acknowledgement that 'His hopes were encapsulated in his ultimate goal of a United Africa in which its rich natural resources would be used for the benefit of all its people and would not be



filched from them by foreign financiers and other exploiters. It may take centuries for Nkrumah's goal to be achieved, but when it is, he will be revered as the leader with the dynamism and intelligent imagination to take the first brave steps'.

From an age when there were a number of outstanding African leaders, among whom Nkrumah was preeminent, the continent currently confronts the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression and a host of other challenges such as the situation in and international political play around Darfur without a rallying figure.

Nkrumah's leadership and rallying role in African affairs went well beyond his vision and theorizing. Importantly it included support for national liberation movements. This support embodied a unity of his Pan-Africanism and commitment to anti-colonial independence as a necessary precondition for the continent's unity and progress. The activities of the Bureau of African Affairs which oversaw support for national liberation movements and the training of their cadre in Ghana with support from the Soviet bloc and China led to Cold War accusation that Ghana was a base for communist subversion in Africa. Two events however stand out in Nkrumah's readiness to support the national liberation struggle as well as defend its unity with the Pan-African cause, even when face to face with much more powerful countries. These are the financial aid Ghana gave to newly independent Guinea in 1958 and Ghana's stance and action in support of Patrice Lumumba's government during the Congo (DRC) crisis of the early sixties. Developments in the two countries soon after independence offer credence to Cabral's argument that 'so long as imperialism is in

existence an independent African state must be a liberation movement in power, or it will not be independent'.

As France stared defeat in the face in Algeria at the hands of the National Liberation Front (FLN) - a prospect made all the more difficult to countenance because of the humiliation inflicted by the Vietnamese in 1954 - it sought to re-package its colonial control by offering its African colonies membership of a French community. All French African colonies, except Guinea under Sekou Toure, agreed to the new colonial package. In an unforgettable act of vindictiveness, the departing French stripped Guinea of anything they could carry, leaving the country on the brink of collapse. Nkrumah stepped in with a £10m loan to help the newly independent country avoid collapse. This was a considerable sum in those days and big sacrifice by a small country like Ghana.

Nkrumah's brave and sustained but ultimately doomed support for Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, the unity of Congo and his faith in the UN in the face of Western plotting and intrigue marked a high point of his willingness to assume international leadership on African causes. The outcome was also a stark statement of what could not be achieved without a concerted African engagement in the face of powerful external forces. Nkrumah maintained a consistent line during the Congo crisis. He insisted that the country should solve its problems with the support of other African countries within the framework of the UN without the meddling of global powers, especially the NATO bloc. He assumed that the UN framework would give international legitimacy to the African-led process. Nkrumah sent troops to support Lumumba using Soviet planes much to the anger of the USA. On 23 September 1960 Nkrumah used the platform of the UN General Assembly to make the case for Congo's unity, Lumumba's leadership and for an African solution under UN auspices to the crisis in the Congo. The appeal failed to gain traction, mainly because the UN auspices also provided perfect cover for the US and its NATO allies to

carry out their plans in the Congo.

It is now a public fact that even before Congo's independence on 1 July 1960, the American CIA was getting ready to put its puppets in power. President Dwight Eisenhower issued a national security order for the killing of Prime Minister Lumumba within six weeks of Congo becoming independent. Congo's fate as a Western plaything in the Cold War was sealed and its long and tragic descent into what it has become today had begun. The gulf between Nkrumah's intentions and his weakness in the situation was tragically highlighted by how Ghana's contingent in the UN military force became detached from Nkrumah's political objectives and acted as accessories to actions against Lumumba.

Nkrumah's lonely and heroic, but ultimately futile, stance on the Congo crisis contrasts sharply with the flabby collective African approach on Somalia and Darfur. The former process has lurched from crisis to crisis with ever diminishing credibility and capacity of the transitional government. The situation was further compounded by the readiness of Ethiopia, the host country of the African Union, to act in concert with the Bush administration in pursuit of their particular national interests that converged in Somalia. Old Ethiopian imperial pretensions meshed with Bush's war on terror. All these fuelled the discrediting, resistance to and delegitimation of the AU's role in that country.

The Darfur crisis and its escalation around the indictment of Sudan's President Bashir by the International Criminal Court has provided a grave test for Africa's collective ability to deal with African issues which are heavily intermeshed with international dimensions and interests. The UN/AU hybrid peacekeeping operation in Darfur (UNAMID) continues to face various difficulties. Joint UN-AU as well as Arab League mediation and peace initiatives do not appear to be making much progress. The indictment of Bashir and the issuing of a warrant for his arrest has further complicated the situation. Having failed to exert a decisive influence on the course of events in Darfur, including on the behavior of the Sudanese government and the evolution of the ICC's pursuit of Bashir, the African Union has taken a critical stance towards the implementation of the arrest warrant. As the internationalization of the Darfur conflict widens, the purchase of the Afri-

can Union on how it is likely to be resolved shrinks.

In recent years Pan-African structures, institutions and processes have proliferated. The mechanisms of the AU have been undergoing refinement since it took over from the OAU as the premier continental institution. Alongside these phenomena, many African leaders have aspired to inherit Nkrumah's mantle as the visionary and driver of Pan-Africanism and continental unity. A gaping political leadership vacuum however remains at the heart of the continent's collective expression. Earlier this year the AU elected Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi as chair of the Union. In recent years, he has emerged as the most forthright spokesman for the urgency of creating a United States of Africa. How best and how quickly to move forward to a union of African states was the main item on the agenda of the 2007 AU summit, fittingly held in Accra during Ghana's 50th year of independence. The debate was inconclusive but the exercise underlined Gaddafi's stature as a leader of the Unity Now! camp.

The African Union's election of the unpredictable Gaddafi at this grave moment in history is more a negative than a positive. It is a statement of a collective failure of leadership and underlines the crisis in which the Pan-African project is mired at the inter-state level. His seemingly radical stance on African Unity notwithstanding, the sad truth is that Gaddafi is not the successor to Nkrumah that the continent currently and urgently needs. He does not offer a coherent vision or leadership practice of pan-Africanism in keeping with the needs of the age. These shortcomings are compounded by his unpredictability and histrionics. Some of his views and pronouncements show him up as a man deeply marked by his years as an authoritarian leader. Among his many bizarre acts is his current self-designation as king of Africa's kings, a reactionary assertion out of tune with the democratic logic on the continent's national liberation struggles.

The African people want democracy not monarchs. If there is one element of Africa's post-colonial history that the masses want behind them it is the years of despotism. In Black Star, his deeply sympathetic study of Nkrumah's life and times, Basil Davidson, who devoted his life to supporting Africa's national liberation struggles, pointed to the decay of internal party democracy and the gradual ascent of authoritarian use of power in Nkrumah's Ghana as a key contributor to the erosion of mass support for Nkrumah's efforts to transform the economy for the benefit of ordinary people. 'The view for tomorrow is that Nkrumah's aims were the right ones and their re-

alization will become increasingly possible as conditions ripen and as other strategists take up further struggles for liberation. These strategists will succeed... in the measure that they undertake and carry through the work of building democratic organizations which become the vehicles of mass participation as well as mass support: movements in which the mass of ordinary people really make, enshrine and uphold the fundamental law of the land'.

The African delegation to the London G20 summit was led not by Gaddafi the chair of the AU but by Ethiopia's Meles Zenawi, who is chair of NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development) and a good friend of the West. NEPAD is at best a substructure of the AU and Zenawi's presence is illustrative of the ease with which many outside Africa are able to pick and choose how to deal with the continent. During the Beijing China Africa Forum the Chinese were able to deal with African countries as individuals while the AU was treated as observer.

Processes of restructuring of global leadership are underway in the international level responses to the unfolding economic crisis. One strand of these is the emergence of the G20 as a key site of global economic leadership, the effective downgrading of the G8. This process mirrors the way in which the old wholly Western quartet of leading powers in the World Trade Organization (WTO) has been replaced by a new quad of the US, EU, Brazil and India. The seating around the G20 table reflects the power of individual Asian and Latin American economies with South Africa the only African country there as an individual member country. Realistically the most effective way African countries could have optimized their voice would have been through effective prior preparation and definition of positions and South-South diplomacy ahead of the meeting, as well as having a collective representative of their own choosing.

The continent's response to the global crisis has so far lacked urgency and the sense that this is an opportunity to make a break with some of the discredited policies which have failed to deliver transformative growth over the past couple of decades. The main line in the global fora has been to plead for Africa to be remembered and for the security of aid budgets. As African leaders traipse around international fora, the glaring absence of leaders who see opportunities for change in the current crisis stands in sharp relief.

The current global crisis has validated what critics of neoliberalism have been saying for years. In the last few years the annual

Economic Report on Africa (ERA) published by the UN Economic Commission for Africa has been gently putting out its critique of the experience of the neoliberal agenda in Africa. Years of growth had failed to effect either transformation or the much touted poverty reduction. The current crisis had again brought to the fore the fundamental structural problems of Africa's economies which the recent years of growth had masked, especially in countries exporting oil or benefiting from the commodities boom.

Nkrumah reportedly broke down in tears when confronted with the news that the collapse of cocoa prices had cut the ground from under his plans for the economic transformation of Ghana. In the years since Nkrumah's overthrow, the cyclical movement of cocoa and gold prices has been the determinant factors in the health of the Ghanaian economy, tempered in recent years by the substantial aid that the country receives. For some years now Ghana has been a model of the type of economy and economic policy that has been proclaimed as the way forward for Africa but which has failed to deliver over a generation and has been exposed as bankrupt by the global crisis.

During the last six or so years of his rule Nkrumah attempted to transform the colonial economy he inherited. Many leaders of his generation - Nyerere in Tanzania, Kaunda in Zambia, and many others - recognized this to be a primary task of post-colonial economic policy. Despite the claims that Nkrumah's difficulties were because of his socialist policies, the truth is that for a long time he was a good pupil of the dominant economic theories and ideas of his day as purveyed by leading thinkers in the West. His later attempt to learn from the development strategies of the Soviet Union as well as China and Yugoslavia showed a readiness to take risks and try uncharted paths. In retrospect it clear that many mistakes were made and offer rich lessons for today, but he dared.

In the 15 years Nkrumah was in power a leading role for the state in the economy was the norm in both communist countries and the West where Keynesian economics prevailed. The experience of the Soviet Union offered lessons in rapid industrialization, which India had started learning before Ghana came along. The relative success of import substituting industrialization in Latin America had made that strategy a respectable one by the time of Ghana's independence. The Labor party was undertaking extensive nationalizations in Britain when Nkrumah first came to power. Nkrumah's Pan-Africanism was powered by a grander vision and ambition than the modest European Coal and Steel community,

which has flowered into the European Union, but they were united by recognition of the benefits of regional integration.

Using existing resources, Nkrumah rapidly expanded education, health and infrastructure and aided other newly independent countries such as Guinea. With additional borrowing, industrial and agricultural investments were made. Many of the agro-industrial projects, not all well conceived, were in their infancy when he was overthrown. He inaugurated the Akosombo hydroelectricity dam, the centre piece of the Volta River project, which he saw as powering Ghana's industrialization a month before his overthrow. The creation of a local raw material base was not properly scheduled with the new factories that were built in the period before the 1966 coup. By that time the crisis in the international price of cocoa had wrought considerable damage to revenue and growth projections, putting pressure on imports and consumption.

The turn towards the Soviet Union and China was an economic as well as political act. Nkrumah's anti-imperialism meant that he did not believe he could rely on the West for full support for his transformational project especially given the centrality of African unity with its implication for existing colonial spheres of influence as well as US intrusions into the continent.

One of the key lessons from Ghana's development experience under Nkrumah is linked directly to his commitment to a pan-African solution to the challenges of underdevelopment. Nkrumah's works are replete with warnings about the limits of what small 'balkanized' African countries can do on their own. Faced with the absence of a larger political economic unit he sought to transform the small economy and market of Ghana into an industrialized economy at a fast pace. The post-Cold War global economic framework has made the regional and continental even more key in any serious African project of economic transformation.

Sadly even in the face of the global crisis many African governments are looking only outwards towards their 'development partners' rather than exploring the opportunities for deepening regional and continental cooperation and integration. The IMF is offering its pernicious advice that not much needs to change and there seem to be many in African leadership ready to listen. Meantime in the global North, pages are being torn from the rulebooks by which African economies have been run from Washington. The norms which have driven the negotiating positions of the West in fora such as the WTO have been

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African Unity -

Feeling with Nkrumah, Thinking with Nyerere

Chambi Chachage

Exploring Nyerere's 'step by step' approach to building African unity in relation to Nkrumah's desire to 'fast track' the creation of a United States of Africa, Chachage concludes that while Nkrumah's Pan-African vision remains powerful, his approach is unrealistic even today. 'To that end, I will feel with Nkrumah, yet I shall think with Nyerere', he writes, 'Africa must unite, albeit pragmatically'.

The times have indeed changed. What was known as the Organization of African Unity (OAU) is now called the African Union (AU). It is just a matter of time before we see a United States of Africa ('USA') in our lifetime. At least that is what Pan-Africanists envision.

Any change tends to be characterized by both discontinuity and continuity. Discontinuity of what was/is meant to be changed. Continuity of the vision associated with a mission of bringing that change.

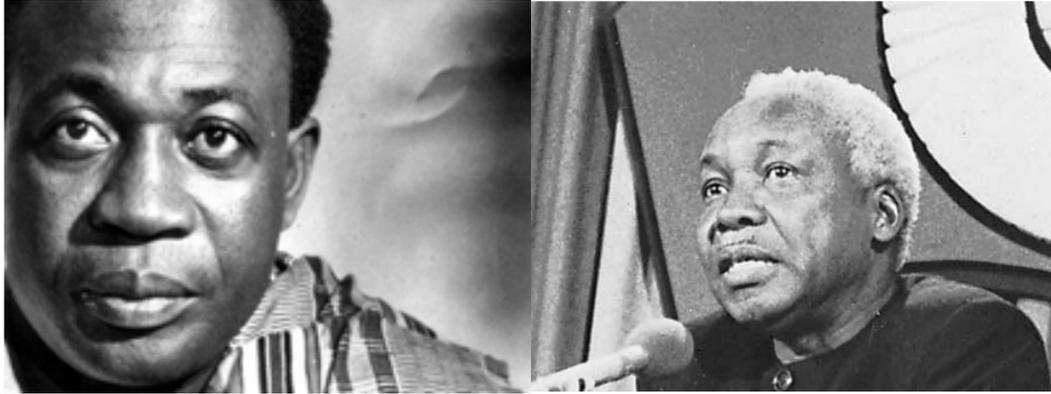
It is such continuity that this article seeks to address. Why? Simply because the terms of the debate on how to unite African states has not changed significantly since Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah and Mwalimu Julius Nyerere locked horns on the matter in the early 1960s.

The thoughts and sentiments of these two great Pan-Africanists on how to achieve African Unity still divide us today. There are those who side with Nkrumah. Others side with Nyerere. Yet some of us are caught somewhere in between.

Note, for instance, the position advanced by Ebou Faye in *Dr Kwame Nkrumah: Remembering Africa's Most Influential and Greatest in the 21st Century*. Therein he claims that it was Nyerere who frustrated Nkrumah when he 'cunningly pushed through a resolution which urged the OAU to accept the colonial borders as permanent, recognized frontiers of the OAU member states.' Nyerere indeed admitted in 1992 and 1997 that he was responsible for moving that resolution which was carried by a simple majority at the 1964 OAU Summit in Cairo with two reservations: Morocco and Somalia.

This move, Faye further asserts, 'was in collaboration with Emperor Haile Selassie, who one year earlier had annexed Eritrea' and that 'though Nyerere claimed

that the intention was to minimize border conflicts in Africa,' the 'underlying motive of the resolution was to frustrate Nkrumah and his Pan-Africanist ideals.' These ideals called for a speedy continental unity as early



Kwame Nkrumah (left), and Julius Nyerere (right)

as 1965.

For the likes of Faye the choice was and is as clear as crystal: Nkrumah's speedy way toward a United States of Africa, rather than Nyerere's gradual way toward African Unity. And to the Fayes, Nyerere was 'the architect of the OAU status quo' because he 'cunningly pushed through' that resolution which allegedly made OAU cease 'to be an instrument of the Pan-African revolutionary change.'

As such, they contend, even 'the liberation of the remaining colonies was conceived in the context of maintaining this status quo' and that the OAU became its 'apologist'. The situation became worse, they further contend, to the extent that in 1972 Nyerere himself publicly admitted that 'the OAU had become no more than a 'trade union of Africa's heads of state.'

Then there is another relatively less polarized position advanced by the Mwalimu Nyerere Professor in Pan-African Studies at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, Issa Shivji, in his Bill Dudley memorial lecture on 'Pan-Africanism or Imperialism? Unity and Struggle towards a New Democratic Africa' on 17 July 2005. Shivji sides with Nkrumah's position yet bails out Nyerere's supposedly recanted position. After quoting in full Nyerere's speech at the 40th independence anniversary of Ghana in 1997, Shivji concludes that in that quote 'Nyerere is no doubt vindicating Nkrumah's position' and asks rhetorically if thus Nyerere 'is also critiquing his own position of step by step, any unity?'

Ironically, that same quote - coupled with what Nyerere went on say prior to his untimely death in 1999 - proves that he never abandoned his own pragmatic

position of step by step continental unity. In fact it shows how impractical Nkrumah's position was vis-à-vis Nyerere's practical approach. To get the context, let's revisit this quotable quote of Nyerere's that Shivji was referring to.

As 'the greatest crusader for African Unity', generously notes Nyerere, Nkrumah 'wanted the Accra summit of 1965 to establish a Union Government for the whole independent Africa'. But, he admits, they failed. 'The one main reason', Nyerere further notes, 'is that Kwame, like all great believers, underestimated the degree of suspicion and animosity which his crusading passion had created among a substantial number of his fellow heads of states.'

The major reason, however, confesses Nyerere, is that already too many of them 'had a vested interest in keeping Africa divided.' He then echoes his 1960s prophetic warning on the necessity of establishing an 'East African Federation' prior to independence by reiterating why Nkrumah encountered such resistance.

Such opposition, affirms Nyerere, naturally happens because once 'you multiply national anthems, national flags and national passports, seats at the United Nations, and individuals entitled to 21 guns salute, not to speak of a host of ministers, prime ministers, and envoys, you would have a whole army of powerful people with vested interests in keeping Africa balkanized.'

Tellingly, Nyerere reminisced how in that summit he heard 'one head of state express with relief that he was happy to be returning home to his country still head of state.' Even though he was not sure if this leader was serious or joking - although Nkrumah 'was very serious and the fear of a number of' leaders 'to lose' their 'status was palpable' - Nyerere thus reiterates his then pragmatic scepticism:

'But I never believed that the 1965 Accra summit would have

established a union government for Africa. When I say that we failed, that is not what I mean, for that clearly was an unrealistic objective for a single summit. What I mean is that we did not even discuss a mechanism for pursuing the objective of a politically united Africa. We had a liberation committee already. We should have at least had a unity committee or undertaken to establish one. We did not. And after Kwame Nkrumah was removed from the African political scene nobody took up the challenge again.'

Contrary to what some Pan-Africanist revisionists would want us to believe, Nyerere was solidly consistent in his pragmatic position. While it is correct to argue, as Shivji does in his Bill Dudley lecture, that Nkrumah had much earlier held the gradualist position but was quick to learn from experience and switch to a fast-track position, it is equally correct to argue that Nyerere had also earlier held a fast-track position in the context of regionalization but was quick to learn from experience and switch to gradualism.

In his 1960s call for an East African Federation prior to the independence of Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar, Nyerere ridiculed what he referred to as the camps of the 'bados', that is, those who were saying 'bado kidogo' as in 'we are almost ready but not yet so let's wait a bit' to federate. He even asserted that this was the same argument that imperialists used to delay our uhuru - freedom.

Therein Nyerere used case studies of Somaliland/Somalia, India/Pakistan, Nigeria, Canada and USA among others to prove it was relatively easier to federate prior to independence, paying homage to what he hailed as 'the most brilliant and far-sighted sons of Africa', that is, Nkrumah and Ahmed Sekou Toure, for managing a then exception to that rule by uniting Ghana and Guinea after they became independent.

This is the Nyerere who was ready to delay the independence of Tanganyika so as to fast-track the East African Federation. 'The balkanization of Africa,' he insisted, 'is a source of weakness to our continent' and that the 'forces of imperialism and neo-imperialism will find their own strength in this basic weakness of our continent.' Thus he saw that golden chance of removing the balkanization of East Africa as a chance to undo part of the harm of continental balkanization and as a step toward continental unity.

Barring conspiracy theories about

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Congo-Kinshasa: Sarkozy As King Leopold

Okello Oculi

President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy, a descendant of Hungarian immigrants who was born into wealth, on March 26th, 2009, stood inside the Parliament of the Democratic Republic of Congo and would neither apologize nor offer reparations for France's role in the deaths of over five million Congolese who have perished from wars inside Congo's borders; the massive looting of the country's resources; the destruction of her economy, and the culture of international impunity against the Congo all of which occurred between 1998 and 2009.

With typical contempt, he sought to divert attention by becoming a new philosopher of unity, cooperation and courage in relations between a deeply injured Congo and a gun-totting economically rapacious Rwanda. He saluted as a "courageous decision" a recent blood-stained collaboration between the armies of Rwanda and Congo that turned Hutu refugees into mere pests to be hunted down, outside the cover of morality and humanism, even though they remained citizens of Rwanda. In President Sarkozy's view, armed Hutus are apparently the only ones who can commit genocide.

The year 1997 marked the historic, even if silent, fall from power and flight into a short exile, quickly followed by death from cancer, by President Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Waza Banga. His venalities were longer, and more destructive, than his names. Mobutu had, since his role in the murder of Patrice Lumumba - Congo's first and vigorously anti-colonial Prime Minister-ruled and ruined the country continuously for 29 years as a loyal friend of France and the NATO countries. Nelson Mandela must today dread the day he sought

peace and reconciliation on a South African navy ship off the coast of Congo by calling a sick and frightened Mobutu sitting to his right, and a bulky Kabila cheered by alcohol to his left, as "two of the greatest sons of Africa". Under his rule French global propaganda could proudly claim that sad and tortured country as the largest "French-speaking country in the world".

His fall came when the Cold War had ended, Soviet communists had become new Russian millionaires hawking raw gold inside suitcases inside hotels in New York, London and Amsterdam. The Soviet empire had broken up under Mikhail Gorbachev as western leaders, led by Henry Kissinger, mocked his naiveté in global statesmanship by believing that President Reagan and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher loved him and were trusted friends. With the fall of Soviet power also fell the usefulness of Mubutu as a herds-boy and loyal foreman to protect the vast natural resources of the Congo by keeping away communist rivals.

The road to Mobutu's fall started when France decided to fight a defensive diplomatic and military battle over Rwanda against a British-American plan encircle and contain Islamic fundamentalism being brewed by Omar Bashir in Sudan by putting in power friendly rulers in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda. In Rwanda they would replace the Hutu rulers, who were linked to the French language, by supporting an invasion launched from Tanzania against Idi Amin; and later re-launched from Uganda against Habyalimana's government in Kigali. The second offensive saw Museveni's troops, tanks and guns being used by the Tutsi-based Rwanda Patriotic Front, RPF, whose leaders had grown up and been educated up to univer-

sity level, in Uganda. Their Tutsi parents had escaped brutal death and slaughter by Hutu gangs on the eve of the country's independence in 1959. Having seen Idi Amin seize and use power in Uganda around a tribal dream, even though clothed with Islam, the leaders of the RPF also began to dream of going back home to grab back the power that had been launched with the blood of the Tutsi as libation to long fermented anger of oppressed Hutu ancestors. Realizing that the triumph of RPF would mean the expansion of the English language into the Great Lakes region, and would eventually eat up the vast Congo, French leaders decided to welcome Tutsi fighters into a Rwanda without any Tutsi's left to join their invading forces. France had once played a similar vicious game of destroying furniture, ripping off telephones from government offices, tearing up and burning government files in anger that Sekour Toure's people in Guinea had voted to become independent instead of remaining tied to France. It is either France gets all the control in Africa or nothing remains standing.

The government of Paul Kagame has publicly accused French diplomats, military officers, business adventurers and administrators of deliberately and systematically planning and training Hutu militias to exterminate Tutsis out of Rwanda. France has countered back by accusing Kagame himself of carrying out the shooting down, in 1994, of the aircraft that was carrying the two democratically elected Hutu presidents of Rwanda and Burundi. They were returning from peace talks, held in Arusha, Tanzania, and a power-sharing formula between the invading RPF and the incumbent Hutu-led government. Hutus constitute the majority in both countries, and since democracy is a game of arithmetic, they would

win a free and fair election any day. Sarkozy inherited the bitter recriminations with Kagame. He also inherited France's role in the 1994 genocide that exploded all across Rwanda. As the RPF became unstoppable, Hutu civilians in their hundreds of thousands fled into Mobutu's Congo. So did the remnants of the Rwanda army and the militias that had been trained to conduct the genocide planned with the collaboration of French officials.

French officials and diplomats supported efforts by the international non-governmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross to feed the Hutu refugees, the Interahamwe "genocedaires", and remnants of former Rwanda troops inside the Congo. They were camped within easy range if they wished to continue fighting the RPF inside Rwanda. Herein lay the main body of France's 'Rwanda hook-bomb' that would explode inside Congo and blast Mobutu out of power. The RPF, and their supports in Uganda, would be lured into not only chasing after the Hutu attackers now lodged across the border in Congo, but also the temptation to drive out their willing host, Mobutu, and rule over a vast Congo empire.. The genocide in Rwanda had disgusted even former President Nyerere to the point where he would not be in a position to restrain those in Tanzania who agreed with a plan to rid East and Central Africa of Mobutu as a long deadly political poison. Tanzanian officials are reported to have recovered Laurent Kabila from bars of Dar es Salaam and dusted him up into returning to his days as a revolutionary who once had the historic honor of being assisted by the legendary Che Guevara in his short-lived armed war against Mobutu in the mid-1960s.



Somalia: Pirates or Patriots of the Sea? (continued from page 1)

Third, the Hard Truth: We live in a world with tons of nuclear waste, too. The waste was not created in Somalia. Remember, Somalia is not Iran or Pakistan or India or China or France or Britain or the US. But some of the nuclear waste has found its way to the open seas of Somalia...polluting the coastlines and destroying the livelihood of thousands of Somali fishermen. Someone is making lots of money for dumping nuclear wastes in Somali waters, but we are certain that the Somalis are not among the Dumping Mafia.

In a situation like the one prevailing in Somalia, one would expect that some Somalis would wonder why they are so helpless in the face of this brazen and illegal ex-

ploitation of their sea wealth. A few, in a sudden outburst of patriotic fever, would want to protect their coast with the little that they have left after all these years of fratricidal war.

Herein we find the clash of narratives: patriots as defenders of national sovereignty vs. pirates as criminal gangs in a lawless jungle of the high seas.

Whose story do you believe? Whose side are you on? Whose camera angle do you follow on the evening news?

The desperation that drives a sixteen year-old Somali to take to the high seas is neither examined nor validated in the news. "We should bomb the hell out of them," some talking heads scream

incessantly on television.

The old, lame binary analysis of the Somali Problem - good guys (on our payroll) vs. bad guys (everyone else that's not on our payroll) - becomes Kool-Aid for policymakers in search of "new" ways to deal with old problems.

Experts on Africa in the Obama administration should know by now that the Somali Problem is not new. Alas, there are no quick fixes. Gun boat diplomacy won't work!

After eight years of jargons à la Axis of Evil or Chasing the Devil in Empty Caves between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Obama administration should tread carefully in the waters of Somalia. Here's a simple advice: Take your Easter Victory in stride and avoid the

temptation of *triumphantism*. It's imperative to start with a good map, a policy framework that's sound enough to change the game for the good of Somalia, Africa and the US.

The future of Somalia is anyone's guess, but we must seek to understand the complex underbelly of "piracy" as an opening to illuminate policy discourse in the search for a new path to durable peace, stability and restoration of democratic statehood in Somalia.

Alie Kabba is Executive Director of the United African Organization, a Chicago-based advocacy organization dedicated to social justice, civic participation and empowerment of African immigrants and refugees in Illinois.



ment's natural ethnic boundaries or its historical cultural affinities, Europe carved up Africa with reckless abandon. The inhumane manner and consequences of this balkanization rivals the greatest tragedies ever to beset the continent. The ongoing Congo/Zaire/Congo civil and military cauldron is an excellent illustration of the grotesque results of this Conference. Imagine a country the size of Spain, France, Germany, Sweden and Norway being handed to King Leopold of Belgium as his personal property!

The Conference is also directly related to our discussion today because African attempts to remedy the effects of Berlin have met with consistent U.S. political opposition. Nowhere is this opposition more apparent than in our efforts to frustrate concerted efforts by African political leaders to unite in addressing, in a pan African manner, the continent's problems.

One might ask why the Berlin Conference is pertinent to an examination of modern U.S./African policy issues. The answer, to some may appear elliptical. And that is because we were not a party to that Conference or to the spoils of its outcome. Put another way, the United States was never a colonial power in Africa. And because of that the U.S. had a great opportunity to shape post independent relations between Africa and the West. Indeed, Africans looked to the United States to play a neutral and constructive role in bridging relations with the West.

When one examines Africa's various independence struggles, references to our own War of Independence with Britain were often cited by Africans as having had profound moral and political impacts on their movements. I will never forget the reference to our own independence struggle by Angolan liberation leaders in their first meeting with President Carter in 1977. Angolan leaders expressed disappointment in this meeting with our political and military support for our Portuguese NATO allies. They mentioned specifically that they, too, were aware of and affected by the shot heard round the world.

In my judgment and experience, one of the greatest lost opportunities in our relations with Africa in the post independence period was our refusal to establish a policy framework with Africa that was free of the European colonial past. In fact, however, our policies in Africa over most of the past fifty years have been identical to those of Africa's former so-called colonial masters and therein lies the rub...the elephant in the room in other words. That is the essential ingredient in our modern-day relationship with Africa and its leaders.

I like to characterize this period, the immediate years following the independence of Ghana in 1957 and Guinea in 1958 as turning points and prime examples of our lost opportunity with the continent. Long before, Nkrumah's policies became overtly hostile to U.S. policies; as such, we did not want to see him succeed in his Pan African aspirations. Moreover, to this day, many see U.S. complicity in his overthrow. Much the same is said of the death and overthrow of Lumumba. The prevailing sentiment, which I have heard for most of the past fifty years, is that a strong charismatic African leader is antithetical to U.S. and African interests and must, therefore be eliminated.

What, in fact, was this great, lost opportunity? In a phrase, it was our failure to differentiate. Differentiate what? The answer, concisely, was the failure to differentiate our policies and values from those of a still resistant and unfriendly Europe. For instance, the United States naively viewed the nature and force of Guinea's break with France as hostile us. And sadly and telling, in 50 years of post independent U.S. engagement with Africa, our government never undertook the basic, independent study and review of what are our national interests really were in Africa. We never really explored how, in the immediate post-independent period in the freshness of warm relations and great expectations, our interests intersected and/or converged with those of Europe. Moreover, on the flip side, we never seriously considered how these interests might diverge.

It was understandable, in the pre independence period, that our relations with Nigeria should rightfully have been conducted through our bilateral relations and diplomatic channels with Great Britain and those with Senegal through our relations with France, etc. However, in the post-independence period, when we began to conduct our relationships with African countries like Nigeria, for example, through their own embassies, it is not at all understandable why our strategic policies toward those countries would continue to be coordinated, until very recently, lock stock and barrel with our kith and kin, the British.

In the strategic arena our political relations with the continent were even more disappointing to Africans. Until the dissolution of the Soviet Empire following Glasnost, our policies in Africa were dictated by something called Soviet Containment. Soviet containment was an effort to reduce Soviet influence in Africa. It is truly fair to say that in the absence of this dynamic, we had no policy interest in Africa that was separate from those of our European allies.

To be sure, Africans quickly learned to play this card well and to their own narrow political interests. Many Africans knew that they could get more if they threatened to create an alliance with the Soviet Union and vice versa. The change of partners in Egypt, Ethiopia and Guinea are good examples of this.

More recently, in the post-9/11 period, U.S. policies were formulated with an almost singular pre-occupation on antiterrorist strategies and the containment and destruction of Al Qaida cells of influence on the continent. It is in the areas of development policy, however, that we and others in the West have experienced our greatest failures in Africa. This is so largely because while well intentioned in many instances, we have sought to export our values and ways of doing things to Africa. In both the public and private sectors, NGOs notwithstanding, for fifty years it has been our way or the highway. Our money or no money. For 50 years our aid to Africa has been tied to our own formulations, priorities and institutions. The approaches made by the Bretton Woods financial institutions have not been different. In like manner, the major international financial institutions have dictated the terms of development under the rubrics of partnership and sustainability while excluding Africans from the councils of governance and staff leadership. These institutions, the World Bank, IMF, IFC, and others, have conditioned their aid on structural adjustment and other private sector strategies while shielding themselves from the consequences and liabilities associated with outcomes and policy failures. Western advisers and planners, with a heavy dose of U.S. and U.S. foundation input, introduced centralized macro policies through devices such as five and ten year centralized macro economic development plans not a feature of private free market systems.

The challenge remains, though, of setting up structures that bring Africans themselves to the table so that they can play the lead role in devising strategies for designing the continent's future. It is no longer acceptable for entertainers like Bono, "BranJolie" and Madonna (as nice as they all are) to carry the policy and conscience torch on behalf of the continent. That is to say, we should never, ever, ever, presume to know more about Africa than the African's do. If we do we will not be able to work effectively in partnership with Africans to fulfill the continent's needs. Despite the half century of engagement with the continent, our ignorance in almost every realm remains our greatest challenge.

Not since dawn of the Kennedy presidency have Africans expressed as much hope in the United States as now exists with the emergence of a son of Africa and the United States to guide our policies and relations. Obama's first step in appointing Johnnie Carson as his Assistant Secretary for Africa is a good start. Carson is an experienced diplomatic student of Africa. He knows the continent as well or better than anyone in U.S. government today. And I believe he understands that we no longer live in a bipolar, ideologically driven world. And I also think he knows that U.S. control, in a new international economic order, will not be the last word on how things should necessarily work.

Within this new context, however our policies are not unimportant. To move from where we have come to where we must go under the conditions of the current global economic meltdown, are critical for us and for Africa.

In the worst economic environment of Africa's post-independence period, of the last 50 years, the continent confronts some of its greatest challenges. The test for the Obama Administration will be to find new ways to respond vigorously to crises in Africa, while celebrating and reinforcing many positive trends of progress on the continent.

What we are beginning to slowly recognize in this country is that Africa is not so different from everywhere else, except, perhaps, in embodying the extremes. Some of the world's most vexing problems are there combined with a vast, still largely untapped potential. If we can embrace these dual realities and respond creatively, in a spirit of collaboration and mutual respect, the next fifty years of U.S./Africa relations can build a new, prosperous future on the missed opportunities of the past.



Kwame Nkrumah at 100 - Lessons for African Leadership,
(continued from page 7)

called into question by domestic policies in those countries. All these offer important opportunities for a new agenda for economic transformation in Africa. Where are the African leaders ready to dare and look beyond guaranteeing the sanctity of aid flows? Wanted: an African 'leader with the dynamism and intelligent imagination to take the first brave steps'.

Yao Graham, an activist and writer, is the head of Third World Network Africa, a pan-African research and advocacy organization based in Accra, Ghana.



being a stooge of Anglo-American Imperialism, it is this experience that made Nyerere lock horns with Nkrumah on the feasibility of fast-tracking unity. Out of this experience there is no way, unless conspiracy theories hold water, that Nyerere displayed what Shivji's (2008) 'Pan-Africanism or Pragmatism: Lesson of Tanganyika-Zanzibar Union' refers to as 'his limited appreciation of Nkrumah's analysis of imperialism as a world system in which Africans could stand tall only as a politically united continent' when he thus responded to his criticism at the 1964 OAU Summit:

'To rule out a step by step progress towards African Unity is to hope that the Almighty will one day say, 'Let there be unity in Africa', and there shall be unity; or pray for a conqueror, but even a conqueror will have to proceed step by step. To say that the step was invented by the imperialists is to reach the limits of absurdity. I have heard the imperialists blamed for many things, but not for the limitations of mankind. They are not God!'

Indeed Nyerere lacked the economic sophistication of Nkrumah, but that by no means meant that he did not then have a deep sense of the neo-colonial dynamics of imperialism. To prove that, one only has to reread his writings prior to the 1960s, such as his 1958 pamphlet on 'National Property' to see how he apprehensively foresaw, and tried to avert, the ongoing neo-colonization of land tenure in Tanzania.

What then made Nyerere 'oppose' Nkrumah? The answer, I think, lies buried in Bill Sutherland and Matt Meyer's 1992 interview with Nyerere on 'Mwalimu, Tanzania, and the Meaning of Freedom' and in Ikaweba Bunting's (1998) 'The Heart of Africa. Interview with Julius Nyerere on Anti-Colonialism':

In the case of the former interview, Nyerere thus reminisced:

'My differences with Kwame were that Kwame thought there was somehow a shortcut, and I was saying that there was no shortcut. This is what we have inherited, and we'll have to proceed within the limitations that that inheritance has imposed upon us. Kwame thought that somehow you could say, "Let there be a United States of Africa" and it would happen. I kept saying "Kwame, it's a slow process." He had tremendous contempt for a large number of the leaders of Africa and I said, "Fine, but they are there. What are you going to do with them? They don't believe as you do - as you and I do - in the need for the unity of Africa. BUT WHAT DO YOU DO? THEY ARE THERE AND WE HAVE TO

PROCEED ALONG WITH EVERYBODY!" And I said to him in so many words that we're not going to have an African Napoleon, who is going to conquer the continent and put it under one flag. It is not possible. At the OAU Conference in 1963, I was actually trying to defend Kwame. I was the last to speak and Kwame had said this [OAU] charter has not gone far enough because he thought he would leave Addis with a United States of Africa. I told him that this was absurd; that it can't happen. This is what we have been able to achieve. No builder, after putting the foundation down, complains that the building is not yet finished. You have to go on building and building until you finish, but he was impatient because he saw the stupidity of others.

In the case of the latter interview, Nyerere thus recollected: 'Kwame Nkrumah and I were committed to the idea of unity. African leaders and heads of state did not take Kwame seriously. However, I did. I did not believe in these small little nations. Still today I do not believe in them. I tell our people to look at the European Union, at these people who ruled us who are now uniting. Kwame and I met in 1963 and discussed African Unity. We differed on how to achieve a United States of Africa. But we both agreed on a United States of Africa as necessary. Kwame went to Lincoln University, a black college in the US. He perceived things from the perspective of US history, where the 13 colonies that revolted against the British formed a union. That is what he thought the OAU should do. I tried to get East Africa to unite before independence. When we failed in this I was wary about Kwame's continental approach. We corresponded profusely on this. Kwame said my idea of 'regionalization' was only balkanization on a larger scale. Later African historians will have to study our correspondence on this issue of uniting Africa. Africans who studied in the US like Nkrumah and [Nigerian independence leader] Azikiwe were more aware of the Diaspora and the global African community than those of us who studied in Britain. They were therefore aware of a wider Pan-Africanism. Theirs was the aggressive Pan-Africanism of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey. The colonialists were against this and frightened of it.

Such was a context in which Nyerere clashed with Nkrumah. In his own words, 'it was when we were very close to a federation of East African states and Kwame was completely opposed to the idea.' His, then, was the most practical solution given the fact that organic movements of

the people, such as the Pan-African Movement for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA), had made strides toward regionalization whilst the preamble of the OAU Charter that stated 'we the heads of state' rather than 'we the people' was ironically creating a bureaucratic Pan-Africanist political project. Later on these groupings would have come together naturally to form bigger units and, ultimately, a greater African unity. This is a position that Nyerere consistently held, as his 'Reflections' during his 75th Birthday celebration in 1997 thus attest:

'The small countries in Africa must move towards either unity or cooperation, unity of Africa...if we can't move towards bigger nation states, at least let's move toward greater cooperation. This is beginning to happen. And the new leadership in Africa should encourage it... southern Africa has a tremendous opportunity... because of South Africa... but you need leadership, because if you get proper leadership there, within the next ten fifteen years that region is going to be the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) of Africa... West Africa. Another bloc is developing there, but that depends very much on Nigeria... The leadership will have to come from Nigeria... It is people's loyalties to these

regional blocs as well as nations that pose what Nyerere referred to in 1966 as 'The Dilemma of the Pan-Africanist'. 'On the one hand', he noted, 'is the fact that Pan-Africanism demands an African consciousness and African loyalty; on the other hand is the fact that each Pan-Africanist must also concern himself with the freedom and development of one of the nations of Africa.'

It is not surprising, then, that the latest Afrobarometer Survey conducted in 2008 showed that the majority of Tanzanians do not support the political and military unification of East Africa even though they are supportive of its economic integration. Interestingly, the majority of Tanzanians also told the presidential committee that collected public views in 2007 on fast-tracking the proposed East African political federation that they were in favor of a gradual approach. Once again most citizens are on the side of Nyerere's pragmatism. One can easily guess what they would say to a proposed United States of Africa.

My heart is with Nkrumah. I still get moved when I read his electrifying 'Address to the conference of African heads of state and government' on 24 May 1963 in Addis Ababa. But it is as unrealistic now, especially with Colonel Muammar Gaddafi at the helm of the AU, as it was then when

continued on page 12

Africans At G20 *continued from page 8*

Thabo Mbeki, whose country was identified to promote proliferation of GM products into the southern African diet, appears to have fallen for the bait, as was his Botswana peer, Festus Mogae, who demanded a good explanation that discounted the wisdom of giving the people of southern Africa to genetically modified seeds, food, fertilizers and ideas.

Mbeki would benefit from elevation to sponsor of the program of the GM multinationals and fertilizer producing companies, whilst Mogae was compelled to follow suit out of lack of choice since his country is committed against home grown food self-sufficiency. And so, the citizens of the underdeveloped countries, have not only been betrayed by the World Bank and the IMF, who are in cahoots with both the American and European governmental aid organizations and the international trade gatekeepers such as the WTO, but also by some of their own leaders.

The G20 leaders, contrary to the public noises, are certainly more committed to refurbishment of the discredited system of international capitalism and its inherently self-destructive financial systems, whilst attempting to rebuild what remains of what Bob Geldorf referred to as 'forced cooperation' under globalization, than to a fundamental rethinking

of the problems of poverty, famine, lack of access to water, education, health and work in the underdeveloped countries.

African civil society then, is charged with the difficult task of deciphering the rhetoric of the G20 captains of moribund capitalism, also staying vigilantly on the lookout against the vulnerability of the continent's leaders - most of them culturally biased towards America and Europe through their education and personal economic interests - to cooption by the westerners.

The fact of the consistent and persistent failure of Western countries to honor their promises with respect to servicing their financial promises to African development programs is neither novel nor in need of proof. That reality has now become a given.

The South Africans at the G20 meetings should also be held accountable to the Africans at home, in southern Africa and at the African Union.

The character, Geraldine, created by the American comedienne, Flip Wilson, always promised: "What you see, is what you get," as she fed the curious eye everything that she had by way of her well endowed posterior.

The Africans should surely have learnt that: What you get, is what you see!

Emperor Haile Selassie was the head of OAU. As such, my mind is with Nyerere. His pragmatic way is still valid today.

Thus to me the question is not Pan-Africanism or pragmatism? Rather, it is wither pragmatic Pan-African patriotism? To that end, I

will feel with Nkrumah, yet I shall think with Nyerere.

Yes, Africa must unite, albeit, pragmatically!

Chambi Chachage is an independent researcher, newspaper columnist and policy analyst.



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Book Review



Health Matters



The Somali Diaspora

Sadiq A. Abdirahman

You may never meet a photographer with the "eye of an eagle" quite like Abdi Roble, nor will you likely meet a writer with the talent of Doug Rutledge. These two gifted individuals have captured earnest human experiences in a new book on the Somali Diaspora -- the worldwide emigration of Somalis from their homeland.

Their book is the product of many years of traveling, interviewing and documenting the journey of Somalis residing in North America, especially in Minneapolis; Columbus, Ohio; Anaheim, California; and Lewistown, Maine. Though Rochester isn't featured prominently, it has a strong community of Somali immigrants, and this book will resonate with them.

Through words and compelling images, they bring to vivid life the universal experiences of people leaving their homes to build new lives elsewhere.

The cover photo is of a young girl dribbling a basketball while wearing her native Somali attire. This interweaving of two cultures is one of the revelations of the book -- so many of the new immigrants are seamlessly at ease with their identity, living comfortably within both cultures.

The book is presented in a simple format -- seven chapters, richly illustrated with intimate photographs that, by themselves, reveal volumes of information about the people featured.

Roble was born in Mogadishu, Somalia, and migrated to Columbus via Washington, D.C., in 1989. At that time, only a few Somali families were living in Columbus, unlike today's very active population. Roble was a professional soccer player in Somalia; he left two years before the outbreak of the civil war that has caused so much destruction in his homeland.

Roble wanted to help new arrivals to this country in any way he could. That impulse connected him with Rutledge, the son of a

factory worker who was born in Michigan. Rutledge's father never made it past the eighth grade, but he watched his son get his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago; Doug went on to become a poet, playwright and English professor.

Although immigration has been an integral part of American history, and a major contributor of population growth and prosperity, the influx of newcomers causes unease and challenges of assimilation. Roble and Rutledge address these challenges head-on and provide some answers to questions people naturally have in those communities.

Somalis have a strong commitment to family and faith, and they believe it's a religious obligation to extend kindness to their neighbors. A major element of their faith is that "one's first act of charity should be to one's neighbor."

Based on the reporting and photography in this book, it's encouraging to see how Somalis are becoming active participants in their new communities. Many have gained success in business, and they are politically involved as well.

Among the most affecting parts of the book is the chapter on the Dadaab refugee camp, located in a remote area of northeastern Kenya. The camp is home to more than 150,000 Somalis who have fled the violence in their homeland. The camp has no running water, no functioning hospital, inadequate food supplies and no schools for the children.

"The Somali Diaspora" is the most complete, well-written book to come out of the crisis in that country and the new life being discovered in places such as Rochester and Minneapolis.

Sadiq Abdirahman is a Somali American and lives in Apple Valley. He is a production systems management support engineer at Fair Isaac Corporation.



Autism Rates Are Higher for U.S.-Born Somali Children in Minneapolis

Donald G. McNeil, Jr.,
New York Times

Confirming the fears of Somali immigrants in Minneapolis, the Minnesota Health Department agreed Tuesday that young Somali children there appeared to have higher-than-usual rates of autism.

Though health officials emphasized that their report was based on very limited data, they concluded that young Somali children appeared to be two to seven times as likely as other children to be in classes for autistic pupils.

Dr. Sanne Magnan, the state health commissioner, said the finding was "consistent with the observations by parents," who have been saying for more than a year that alarming numbers of Somali children born in this country have severe autism. Somalis began immigrating into the area in the 1990s, fleeing civil war in their homeland. The report made no effort to explain why the children had autism. Its authors did not examine children or their medical records. They accepted the diagnoses -- some by doctors, some by school evaluators -- that admitted children to special-education classes, and they calculated rates for different ethnic groups. They counted only 3- to 4-year-olds, only children in Minneapolis public schools, and only children born in Minnesota. They drew no comparisons with Somalis in other cities.

There have been anecdotal reports of higher autism rates among Somalis in some American cities, and no formal studies. A small study in Sweden reported high rates among Somali schoolchildren in Stockholm.

Idil Abdull, the mother of an autistic child who has long tried to draw attention to the Minneapolis situation, said she was "happy that they said, 'Yes, there is a problem.'"

"I knew they couldn't count everyone," added Ms. Abdull, a founder of the Somali American Autism Foundation. "I know there are Somalis whose kids are under the

bed and not taken anywhere and kids who go to private schools or charter schools that weren't counted.

"But at least they didn't say, 'No, it's all in your minds.' If they had done that, I'd picket in front of their building."

Istahil Ma'alin, who has an autistic son, said, "They told us that what our eyes feel, they feel it, too."

Dr. Magnan said possible next steps included extending the study to Minneapolis suburbs or other cities with Somali populations or doing a study based on medical diagnoses that would try to determine autism rates statewide. But she added that creating statewide registries was difficult and expensive, even for easier-to-diagnose illnesses like cancer.

Dr. Magnan noted that this study found "strikingly low" numbers of Asian and American Indian children in the same special-education classes. But she cautioned that the reason might not be lower autism rates; instead, parents might not be enrolling their children in those classes, or might be sending them to private schools.

The study was done in consultation with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Coleen Boyle, director of the agency's division of birth defects and developmental disabilities, called the study well done but preliminary, adding, "It highlights the importance of ongoing monitoring."

There are no plans yet to study autism in Somalis elsewhere or to do genetic studies, Dr. Boyle said.

The disease control agency monitors autism diagnoses among 8-year-old children in 14 sites around the country, and in 2007 it estimated that about 1 child in 150 had an autism-spectrum disorder. Rates are roughly the same for whites and blacks, Catherine Rice, another C.D.C. official, said recently. They are lower among Hispanics, possibly because of poor medical care or cultural reticence, she said. Too few Asians were monitored to make estimates.

