

# African Advocate

Voice of African Immigrants & Refugees In Illinois

NEWSLETTER OF THE UNITED AFRICAN ORGANIZATION (UAO)

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## OUR MISSION

The United African Organization is a dynamic coalition of African community-based organizations that promotes social and economic justice, civic participation, and empowerment of African immigrants and refugees in Illinois.

## OUR GOALS

- ◆ Build the leadership and organizational capacity of the community
- ◆ Advance public policies to increase opportunities and support for immigrant and refugee integration
- ◆ Ensure that African immigrant and refugees have an active role in multiple civic arenas
- ◆ Promote community development and access to social services
- ◆ Serve as a viable model of African Unity and Empowerment

## AFRICAN JOIN THE TRAIN: FREE HEALTHCARE COVERAGE ENROLLMENT

Our work to increase healthcare coverage enrollment within the African immigrant and refugee community continues unabated. Over the past few months, we have raised awareness in the African community about the new health care law, and expanded our outreach efforts to ensure that everyone within our community gets health insurance by hosting enrollment events around Chicago.



Our January 23rd enrollment event took place at Gold Coast Taxi Association's office in Uptown. The workshop was such a success that we are planning a second enrollment event on Monday, February 10th from 10:00am to 3:00pm.



Participants are guided through the health care coverage application process by our certified navigators. All navigators undergo rigorous state and federal training, and are able to answer questions about the new health care law and guide you to choose the right health insurance plan that meets your budget and healthcare needs.

There are still many in the community who need to enroll to avoid paying tax penalties. The March 31st deadline is just 53 days away.



UAO is hosting enrollment events every week in the month of February. Please bring the following documents to apply - photo identification, social security number, income information, and immigration information for your household. We will help you for **free!**

**Monday, February 17th - 10 West 35th Street - 10am to 1pm**

**Monday, February 24th - Uptown Library - 10:30am to 1:30pm**

Please call **(312) 949-9980** for more information.

**Upcoming UAO Events:****TAX BASICS - LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP**

United African Organization's Leadership Development Program will be hosting a February workshop aimed at enhancing community leaders' skills and capacities to become effective advocates in their communities. Saturday, February 15th - 10:00 am to 12:00 pm - IIT Tower, 10 W 35th Street, Chicago 60616

**HEALTH CARE COVERAGE ENROLLMENT EVENT**

The new healthcare law, called the Affordable Care Act or ObamaCare, impacts you and your family! You must have health insurance before March 31, 2014 or face paying tax penalties! Apply now at one of our enrollment events!

Monday, February 17th - 10:00 am to 1:00 pm - IIT Tower, 10 W 35th Street, Chicago 60616

Monday, February 24th - 10:30 am to 1:30 pm - Uptown Library, 929 W Buena Ave, Chgo 60613

**FREE CITIZENSHIP WORKSHOP**

All residents who are Green Card holders for at least 5 years, or 3 years and married to a U.S. citizen are invited to attend a free citizenship workshop where they can get free assistance with their application to become a U.S. Citizen.

Saturday, February 22nd - 9:00 am to 11:00 am - Ahlul Bait Center, 2425 Main St, Evanston 60202

**AFRICAN YOUTH FORUM**

This annual event brings together high-school and college-age African immigrant and native-born young people of color to dialogue around key issues and challenges in their communities. This year's themes are immigration, incarceration, and education.

IIT Tower, 10 W 35th Street, Chicago 60616

Saturday, March 29th - 11:00 am to 4:00 pm

## PETITION FOR PARENTS OF U.S. CITIZENS

Over the past year, UAO's staff attorney, Sondra Furcajg, has expanded our Immigration Legal Services and Citizenship Program for the African community. For Furcajg, the security and permanency of citizenship are among the most compelling reasons for African immigrants and refugees to apply for naturalization.

"Citizenship is permanent. There is a sense of security for you and your children" she says, adding "That is why we encourage every Green Card holder to become a U.S. citizen."

As a U.S. citizen over the age of 21 years old you may petition for your parents (mother and father) to live in the United States as lawful permanent residents (Green Card holders).



To start a petition for your parents, you must submit pertinent documents: (1) Proof that you are a U.S. citizen, (2) Evidence of the qualifying relationship, and (3) the Form I-130, Petition for Alien Relative with a filing fee of \$420. Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens do not need to wait in line for a visa, because visa numbers are always available to them. Immediate relatives who are in the U.S. may be able to file Form I-485, Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status and Form I-130 at the same time. [Learn more here.](#)

## IT'S TAX TIME!

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## Community Events

**ETHIOPIAN COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF CHICAGO'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

ECAC will be celebrating its 30th year on Saturday - May 3rd at Saint Andrew Greek Orthodox Church.

**IIT CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

IIT will be celebrating Black History Month by hosting various events throughout the month of February. To see the full list of events, click [here](#).

**CELEBRATION OF THE BATTLE OF ADWA VICTORY**

The Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago invites you to the celebration of the Battle of Adwa victory with screening of a documentary film, followed by a discussion by Professor Solomon Addis Getahun and Professor Haile Gerima, the director of the film. Saturday, March 1 - 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm - Northeastern Illinois U., 5500 N St. Louis Ave, Chicago 60625

**FILM PREMIERE OF GRACE**

Grace is a film produced and cast by Liberians. Entry fee is \$25 and includes food, free DVD copy, and entrance to the LIB Valentine's Bash. Additionally, 20% of the film's proceeds will be donated to Liberia's Children Playground Fund. For more information, please call (312) 576-3038.

Saturday, February 15 - 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm - Skyway Banquet Hall, 10101 S Ewing, 60617

## SPRINGFIELD ADVOCACY DAY

Join us in Springfield on **February 19th** for legislative advocacy in partnership with the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights. The 2014 priorities include the following:

**Preserve the Immigrant Services Line Item (ISLI)** in the Illinois Department of Human Services budget, which funds New Americans Initiative (citizenship) Immigrant Family Resource Program (immigrant self-sufficiency)  
**Uphold trust between immigrant communities and law enforcement** by passing an **Illinois TRUST Act** that limits law enforcement interactions with federal immigration enforcement.

**Ensure health care access and coverage for immigrant families**

Protect the All Kids program to cover all children  
 Fully implement the Affordable Care Act

**Other legislation we support:**

**A responsible state budget** that addresses our revenue needs and supports all of our families ([www.abetterillinois.org](http://www.abetterillinois.org)).

**Domestic Worker Bill of Rights** to protect housekeepers, caregivers, child care providers and other workers from unfair and unsafe working conditions.

**Same-day voter registration** to allow more citizens to participate in the democratic process

**State coverage for organ transplants for undocumented patients** who otherwise cannot overcome cost barriers to lifesaving procedures.

**Fixing unjust convictions** that could lead to deportation and other consequences by enabling more individuals (including immigrants) to reopen their cases (HB 2961-Drury).

Call your State Representatives and Senators today to support these priorities. Thank you!

Contact Fred Tsao at [ftsao@icirr.org](mailto:ftsao@icirr.org) for more information

## EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR YOU

**The Dream US Scholarship Fund**

The Dream US Scholarship Fund is a new \$25M scholarship fund set up to help DACA beneficiaries attend certain colleges and universities. "The Dream.US provides college scholarships to highly motivated DREAMers who want to get a college education but cannot afford it. Our scholarships of up to \$25,000 will help cover your tuition, fees, and books for an associate's or bachelor's degree at our partner colleges.

To be eligible to apply, you must:

- Be a first time college student applying to an associate's or bachelor's degree program at one of our partner colleges,
- Have a GPA of 2.5 or greater (or equivalent GED score), and
- Be DACA eligible and have applied for or received DACA approval. [Learn more](#)

Do you have events going on in your community? Let us know by emailing: [events@uniteafricans.org](mailto:events@uniteafricans.org)

#### Share Your Story

We all have stories about how we, each in our own way, enrich our communities. Tell us how you GIVE BACK to YOUR COMMUNITY...

You could be featured in the next issue of African Advocate!  
Email: [editor@uniteafricans.org](mailto:editor@uniteafricans.org)

## EDUCATION RESOURCES CONTINUED

### 2014-2015 Illinois Dream Fund Application

The Illinois Dream Fund is currently accepting online applications for the 2014-15 scholarship. This opportunity is open to undocumented/ DACAmented high school seniors & current undergraduates attending or planning to attend an accredited non-profit public/private institution in Illinois or outside of Illinois. Students must possess a 2.5GPA+ and meet the requirements of the Illinois Dream Act.

Deadline is March 1, 2014. Learn more or apply online at [www.illinoisdreamfund.org](http://www.illinoisdreamfund.org).

### IL State Government Internships & Fellowships

The Illinois Governor's Office offers great opportunities to experience first hand the inner workings of state government. The Office offers fellowships and internships for college and graduate students as well as college graduates. [Learn more here](#)

## DON'T LET HEPATITIS B WIN!

Hepatitis B is more widespread in the African and Asian American communities than in many other communities. An estimated 6-13% of Africans living in the United States have Hepatitis B, compared to less than 1% of people born in the United States (Kowdley, *et al*, 2012)\*.

Hepatitis B is an inflammation of the liver that results from an infection of the Hepatitis B virus. If left untreated, Hepatitis B can cause liver damage or even lead to liver cancer. Hepatitis B is spread mostly through contact with the blood or other bodily fluids of an infected person. It can also be spread from mother to child during birth or through shared use of razors or needles with someone who is infected. Acute Hepatitis B sometimes has symptoms, such as jaundice (yellow eyes), nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, and lack of appetite. However, chronic Hepatitis B often has no symptoms. Consequently, it may be difficult to determine whether or not someone has Hepatitis B without being tested.

If you have never been tested for or vaccinated against Hepatitis B, it is important to take these steps to protect yourself and your family. If you test positive for Hepatitis B, there are many promising treatments that can reduce the health risks for you and those around you. The best way to protect yourself against Hepatitis B is to get vaccinated. The Hepatitis B vaccine consists of a series of three shots and provides lifetime protection against the virus.

UAO is a partner in the Asian Health Coalition's "**Don't Let Hepatitis B Win**" campaign to increase Hepatitis B education and awareness within the African immigrant and refugee communities in Illinois and connect individuals and families to screening, vaccination and treatment opportunities.

\*[Statistics: Chronic Hepatitis B Among Africans in the U.S.](#)



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## United African Organization

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**Advocacy, Unity, Empowerment**

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