OBAMA: L’Espoir de la Nation

By Haïdara Cherif

Vous vous souvenez ? Il n’était pas suffisamment noir, il était inscritrement noir et pas d’autre encore... Il a fini par se faire une place dans la chair les affres de la ségrégation puisqu’il était plus blanc et africain qu’African American ; il est vrai vous avez bien la foi et compris. Barack Obama, c’est de lui qu’il a dû faire la chronique ici aux Etats-Unis depuis qu’il est senti capable de postuler pour la plus haute fonction du pays.

Mais bien avant, dans sa conquête pour le poste sénatorial de l'Illinois, et où il réside avec sa famille, son concurrent Républicain Allain Keyes (plusieurs fois candidat à la présidentielle et docteur en théologie) lui-même African American, comme un mercenaire de son parti, il avait été dépêché en Kamikaze pour barrer la voie au jeune Obama, déclarant impromptu qu’il (Obama), était noir, il n’était pas pour autant ce genre de noir comme lui.

Ces origines mixtes (son père étant Kenyan et sa mère blanche de Kansas) ne lui permettait pas de représenter la vaste majorité des African Americans qui eux ont vécu la discrimination, les préjugés néfastes des autres communautés et l’esclavage dont ils sont les descendants.

Aux âmes bien nées, la valeur n’attend pas pour autant de noir comme lui. Barack, son père se dirigeait vers une carrière diplomatique, amour qui, pour Barack, signifie en langue arabe la bénédiction, et quel africain dans son for intérieur ...

Obama était prémonitoire de sa fulgurante ascension depuis 1996.

L’actuel locataire de la Maison Blanche (les multiples mensonges et reniements sur la guerre en Irak), est une grande différence entre les deux, il est d’un charisme éparpillé et d’une amabilité évidente. Barack représente un espoir pas seulement pour les noirs et autres minorités mais aussi et surtout pour les blancs.

Il n’est plus un secret pour personne que Barack Obama n’a jamais rejeté ses origines blanches de sa famille pour affronter les vicissitudes de la vie ?

Premier Noir à être responsable du journal de la célèbre Université de Harvard, activiste communautaire dans le sud de Chicago, auprès des services de ses frères noirs du ghetto, Obama n’a jamais rejetti ses origines blanches et africaines. Sénateur détaché (State Senator) avant d’être Sénateur fédéral (U.S. Senator), il y a une grande différence entre les deux, il est d’un charisme éparpillé et d’une amabilité évidente. Barack représente un espoir pas seulement pour les noirs et autres minorités mais aussi et surtout pour les blancs.

Il n’est plus un secret pour personne que les huit années du cow-boy du Texas Georges Bush ont été un désastre pour l'image, le crédit et le pouls des Etats-Unis dans le monde. Il faudra un échange, dans la conscience populaire américaine et mondiale pour pouvoir restaurer un début de crédibilité à ce pays.

Il devient impératif que l'Amerique questionne au plus profond d'elle-même les fondements de sa démocratie, faire létat des seuls états généraux de sa société.

A revisiter les débâcles successifs de l’actuel locataire de la Maison Blanche, les multiples menonges et reniements sur la guerre... (continued on page 12)

UAO Summit on African Immigrants & Refugees

By Gwen Austin

Chicago: The 2nd Chicago Summit on African Immigrants and Refugees will take place on Saturday, May 31, 2008. It is a unique collaboration between the United African Organization (UAO) and the DeSable Museum of African American History, marking a historic chapter in forging a link between the recent African immigrant and refugee experience and the larger narrative of the African American experience.

The summit is a public education and organizing program of the United African Organization aimed at raising awareness about the state of the African immigrant and refugee community, which is often relegated to mere passing footnotes in academic discourse and token remarks in media commentaries on immigrant communities in the United States.

The theme of this year’s summit is “Harvesting Hope...Weaving Change: Contemporary Africa and the African Experience in the US”. It will be held at the DeSable Museum of African American History located at 740 East 56th Place, Chicago.

The first summit, whose theme was “Planting Seeds for a New Season”, took place last May at the Illinois Institute of Technology. It was an unprecedented success in terms of the quality of presentations by eminent scholars, clergies, public servants, community advocates and service providers. By all accounts, the summit provided a constructive forum to discuss the often overlooked experience of African immigrants and refugees. It was funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services – Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services and the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. Support was provided by the City of Chicago Commission on Human Rights – Advisory Council on Immigration and Refugee Affairs and the Advisory Council on African Affairs, the South African Consulate in Chicago and member organizations of the United African Organization.

This year’s summit will have three significant plenary sessions to share perspectives on contemporary Africa, the African immigrant and refugee experience, and building bridges of understanding and shared vision between immigrant communities and the African American community around a common agenda for civil rights and immigrant rights in the US. In addition, there will be a cultural performance, tour of the DeSable Museum and a luncheon. It will be an all-day event beginning with a continental breakfast and registration from 8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. The program will end at 4:00 p.m.

Inside: Advocate Spotlight

Celebrating Ghana’s Independence Anniversary

African Advocate

Voice of African Immigrants & Refugees in Illinois

April 2008

Volume 1 Number 2

By Carol Adams, Secretary Illinois Department of Human Services

American community can contribute to the work of the UN.

In February 2004, she was selected to join a highly-acclaimed group of African-American educators, lawyers, doctors, entrepreneurs and internationally renowned experts from South America and the Caribbean who traveled to the African nation of Uganda to promote community redevelopment and revitalization at Kampala, its capital city. There she delivered
Le nouveau “Vent de l’Est” venu du ... 

Kenya!

By Calvin Tchatchoua

Qu’ils ne se souviennent pas de la chute du fameux Mur de Berlin ? Naively not encore en mémoire? De tout le flot des républiques socialistes soviétiques à l’aube des années 90 après plusieurs décennies d’implosion et de guerre froide. Aujourd’hui, quand ce ne sont pas les jeunes qui sont dans la rue pour contester les résultats d’élections présidentielles, brûlant des pneus, avec moins d’ampleur certes mais plein de signes d’illégitimité, l’Ouragan se propage et se déploie : C’est le nouveau Vent de l’Est. Le bilan de dernières manifestations de rue au Cameroun est très grave. Le président du Tchad Idriss Déby n’a pu sauver son régime qu’en quittant la présidence et en plonger le pays dans un cycle de violence sans précédent. Le président sortant d’alors Mwai Kibaki avait été plongé dans un mauvais cycle de violence après deux décennies de politique dite “d’acalmie” avec le “multipartisme”, des soi-disant élections pluralistes avec des fraudes massives parfois organisées ou commanditées par les dirigeants africains et les puissances occidentales. Ce vent a décapité au passage quelques dictatures de par le monde. On avait alors parlé à l’époque du “vent de l’Est” . Ce vent qui a soufflé de la côte est de l’Afrique, a ravi espoir que tant d’Africains attendaient. Ce vent a décapité au passage quelques dictatures de par le monde. Ce vent qui a soufflé de la côte est de l’Afrique, a ravi espoir que tant d’Africains attendaient. En effet, les forces françaises ont pu “sauver” une ville éclectique, le palais présidentiel Tshadien de l’effondre des rebelles qui l’avait déjà envahi. Reste à savoir si quel que ce sauvetage a été nécessaire, et bien entendu au détriment des populations plus qu’appauvris, et vivant dans un état de déliquescence matérielle avancée.

Au Tchad, voici un autre cas d’autre même cloche. Les populations sont descendues dans la rue pour manifester contre la hausse des prix des denrées alimentaires, de l’essence à la pompe, les produits de première nécessité, pour récupérer des salaires, brûlant avec un vent d’ampleur certes, mais plein de signes d’illégitimité, l’Ouragan se propage et se déploie : C’est le nouveau Vent de l’Est. La population, déçue par le silence de leurs dirigeants, n’a pu, dans plusieurs cas, se manifester. Reste à savoir si quel que cette sauvetage a été nécessaire, et bien entendu au détriment des populations plus qu’appauvris, et vivant dans un état de déliquescence matérielle avancée.

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Au Cameroun, voici un autre cas d’autre même cloche. Les populations sont descendues dans la rue pour manifester contre la hausse des prix des denrées alimentaires, de l’essence à la pompe, les produits de premier...
Barack Obama’s Historic Speech on Race in America

By Rev. Walter Coleman

Part 1: Barack Spoke… And Harold Smiled

Like thousands of other pastors and students of theology, I was seething with anger and frustration at the crucifixion of Rev. Jeremiah Wright last week. I wondered and worried at what Obama would say. As I listened to his historic speech, I remembered a particular moment during Mayor Harold Washington’s time with us.

The Mayor called me into his office about three years into his first term, and asked me to sit down. “Slim,” he said, “It’s time to stop this racial stuff.”

I had been charged with organizing the precinct structure in 30 white majority wards during the 1993 primary. We built a coalition with Latinos, through the courageous leadership of young men like Rudy Leon and Luis Gutierrez, and a few whites. I was on the ground during the Epton reaction where they threw everything, every racial stereotype, every personal attack imaginable, at Harold. We came to blows more than once on the street corners. I had been to the Latino community enthusiastically embraced Harold in the general election but as most whites on the northwest and southwest side became overnight republicans to vote against Chicago’s first African American Mayor. Then I had been charged to target Videlock, the leader of the Council 29 that sought to mobilize the white community against the Mayor. “If Harold is elected again then let the last white man out turn out the lights,” he said.

Harold had fought a tough fight. He never backed down. After he won control of the city council through bitterly fought special elections, he was ready to move on to make sure his term in office would go down, not as a racial civil war, but as a time of accomplishment and problem solving – and did he!

Shortly after our conversation, Harold made a bold political move; negotiating the “Dream Ticket,” supporting Aurelia Puchinski for county office and creating the spot for “Dream Ticket”, supporting Aurelia Puchinski made a bold political move, negotiating the civil war, but a time of accomplishment and back down. After he won control of the city%

The stone the builders threw away will be the cornerstone.

As we have reflected positively in part 1 on the admirable position taken by Barack Obama, let us now, among ourselves, reflect on the naked truth.

The attack on Senator Obama came as an attack on his patriotism — on his faith. Those who attacked Rev. Wright declared that his comments should not have been made in a Christian church. The controversy was about both race and Christianity. This should show us that the issue of race cannot be resolved without a catalytic reaction in Christianity.

From the beginning of the European occupation in this hemisphere the Christian justification of conquest, colonization, white supremacy and slavery has been at the center of religious debate. The contradictions that surfaced last week between an African-centered, liberation theology church and the dominant Christian culture was only the latest chapter in this debate.

As race—and racism—comes to the forefront of the Presidential elections in this nation, it is important that we reflect on the history and present day reality of racism and its expression in what has come to be known as the “immigration issue.”

For the immigration issue is not about immigrants but about the complex history of the colonization and continuing legacy of that colonization on the continents of North and South America. The continuing legacy of that history is found in the continuing contradictions in the Christian faith and the struggle amongst Christians over the issue of immigration.

To say that “the immigration issue” is about immigrants is to forget the history of the colonization of this hemisphere.

The colonization of the north by largely protestant Anglos was one in which the colonizers were concerned with their own salvation. They were involved in a project they considered blessed and ordained by Almighty God. The indigenous were considered savages to be swept from the land so that the new project of a United States Democracy could be completed and perfected.

That this land on the wings of genocide would turn immediately to build its wealth on the institution of African Slavery was a testament to the deformed Christianity of the Settlers. The notion that slavery and later Jim Crow were minor aberrations in an otherwise sound Christian faith is comprehensible and unintelligent. The poisoned fruits were fruit of poisoned roots.

Yet slavery was also the foundation of the Spanish conquest of Mexico, the Caribbean and Latin America. The enslavement of the indigenous of the south was some of the most brutal in the history of the world, ending in the genocide of over half the population, the dehumanization of the separation of families and the attempted spiritual genocide of the imposition by force of a false Christianity.

There were differences in the conquest of the north and the south, even as they were founded on the common institution of slavery. The Spanish Catholics sought to evangelize, even as they exploited and enslaved. They lacked the commitment to racial purity of the Anglos to the north. What evolved was a racial mixing that did not and still has not occurred in the United States. What also evolved was a spiritual rebellion and the appropriation of the Gospel by a peasant population that incorporated and did not ratify their own spirituality. These differences lead the Anglos of the north to despise and seek to dominate the south, claiming racial purity and divine right.

Tension and fierce discrimination still remain.

Surely deep tensions and fierce discrimination remained and still remains towards the indigenous population and color or shade of skin remained and remains as a gateway to privilege. Into this mix, came the importation of African Slaves, brought at first to fill the void left by the destruction of so many Indigenous slaves.

While tensions and divisions remained, the collective and racially mixed population of the south was offensive to the white culture and self-righteous presumption of manifest destiny of the north. They viewed the mixed race of the southern white Europeans who came to join their Anglo neighbors in the scheme of manifest destiny is a tragic and ignorant interpretation of present day realities.

The “immigration issue” is not about immigrants.

To suggest that those who have emerged from the system of colonialism, slavery and imperialist domination are the same is a white European who came to join their Anglos neighbors in the scheme of manifest destiny is a tragic and ignorant interpretation of present day realities.

The United States is a nation of itself. It is the headquaters of a dominion of a continent. Through that dominion it has exercised its control and domination over most of the world – to the world’s detriment. The arrogant and self-righteous claim to a superior democracy in the United States is not only a deception which disguises the source of its wealth in the exploitation of the south, it is the basis for the imposition of a “Pax Romana” on countries all over the world.

(continued on page 5)
Remember Amilcar Cabral

A Symbol of a New, Fearless Leadership on the Continent

By Kwame Opoku

A people who free themselves from foreign domination will be free culturally only if, without complexes and without underestimating the importance of positive accretions from the oppressor and other cultures, they return to the upward paths of their own culture, which is nourished by the living reality of its environment, and which negates both harmful influences and any kind of subjection to foreign culture. Thus, it may be seen that if imperialist domination has the vital need to practice cultural oppression, national liberation is necessarily an act of culture.

On January 20, 1973 Amilcar Cabral was kidnapped in Guinea-Conacry and shot by an assassin in the service of the Portuguese secret police, PIDE. The African world was aghast with shock and many of the African intellectuals were devastated. Cabral was a symbol of a new leadership emerging on the continent, a fearless leadership which was viciously anti-imperialist but non-racist. A leadership which was willing to talk to the colonialists but was determined to be independent in thought and action. The Portuguese knew why Cabral had to go. With Agostinho Neto in Angola and Eduardo Mondlane in Mozambique, Cabral had coordinated and spearheaded a series of military actions against the Portuguese in their colonies in Africa that would weaken the fascist colonial power in Lisbon and finally oblige them to accept and grant independence to their African colonies.

The collapse of the Portuguese empire was a prelude to the 25 April 1974 Revolution in Lisbon. Not only did the oppressive colonial wars exhaust the resources of the Portuguese Fascist State and thereby hasten its demise but many of the soldiers from the colonial wars returned home with new ideas about liberty. In contact with the colonial peoples, especially with the PAIGC (Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde), MPLA (Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola) and FRELIMO (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique), the Portuguese soldiers had learnt to understand the meaning of freedom: they asked themselves why they were fighting thousands of miles away from home to defend a regime that was oppressing their families and friends. They came into contact with Marxist ideologies that were forbidden at home by the fascist regime of Salazar and Caetano. Thus Cabral, Neto and Mondlane contributed directly or indirectly to the demise of the fascist regime in Portugal and thus paved the way for a new free and modern Portugal. The Portuguese should remember this when they enjoy their freedom and other Europeans come with proposals directed against the African peoples.

Portuguese commanders attracted by the ideas of Cabral

Manuel Alegre, the Portuguese writer and politician, has acknowledged that the various commanders of the Portuguese army were attracted by the ideas of Cabral and that it was in fighting against the PAIGCV that many of the soldiers understood the need for effecting what was to become the 25 April 1974 revolution. In an interview which Cabral gave to Manuel Alegre, Cabral addressing himself directly to the Portuguese people, asked them why a people who had always defended their own liberty would support the Fascist Salazar government in its oppressive wars in the colonies. As an African fighting colonial oppression, he was ready to fight side by side with the Portuguese in Portugal to regain their liberty. According to Manuel Alegre, many young soldiers, hearing Cabral’s appeal deserted that very evening the colonial army.

In any case, the Portuguese and their secret police PIDE understood the importance of Cabral for the freedom fighters in the Portuguese colonies. Cabral enjoyed the absolute confidence of Agostinho Neto and Eduardo Mondlane whom he had known in Lisbon where they created an African Studies Centre (Centro de Estudos Africanos) in 1948, ostensibly to study African culture.

Cabral attached great importance to culture in all its manifestations

His revolutionary theories and praxis had been solidly based on the culture of Cape Verde and Guinea. As a trained agronomist, Cabral knew his country very well, having traveled through the length and breadth of the country doing research both as a student in Lisbon and later as an official in the colonial period for the Portuguese administration.

Cabral like Agostinho Neto was also a poet. His poetry often reflected his experience as an agronomist and often, the real conditions of Cape Verde and Guinea. Bisani. He did not believe in art for art’s sake. “Poetry, like any artistic manifestation, and apart from any individual characteristics, emanating from the personality of the poet, is necessary a product of the milieu in which it is expressed. That is to say, however great the influence of the individual may be on the work he produces, it is always, in the final analysis, a product of the social complex in which it was produced.”

The assassination of Amilcar Cabral

Amilcar Cabral is considered by most Africans as an outstanding leader. He has a great prestige and is usually put in the same category as Africa’s great personalities: Abdel Gamal Nasser, Ben Bella, Kwame Nkrumah, Sekou Toure, Patrice Lumumba, Nelson Mandela, Agostinho Neto, Eduardo Mondlane, and Samora Machel.

In a long line of prominent African politicians eliminated by Western imperialism

The assassination of Amilcar Cabral stands in a long line of prominent African politicians eliminated by Western imperialism in its attempts to stabilize its political hegemony in Africa. Ever since Western Europeans arrived on the coasts of Africa in the 15th and 16th centuries they have sought to exploit the resources of the continent and its peoples by all means possible. They have tried to ensure that leaders in African countries are amenable to European designs and those who could not be persuaded that being under European rule was the best thing for Africans were either eliminated in battle or sent to exile (see Premphét of Asante, Behanzin of Dahomey and Oluf Okubadejo of Benin). In modern times, they have tried to corrupt these leaders and if that did not work, they simply eliminated them (see in addition to Cabral (Cape Verde), Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), Felix Moumié (Cameroon), Sylvanus Olympio (Togo) and Patrice Lumumba (Zaire): Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana) escaped several assassinations attempts: Western imperialism has always reserved for itself the possibility of resort to violence if persuasive methods fail to achieve the desired objectives; violence has been used by Western States to achieve the objectives, or to demonstrate their determination of will and purpose.

The Eurocentric epistemological order that supports the hegemonic system of the West has tried to offer explanations about the failing leadership qualities on the African continent: corruption, inefficiency, vainglory, tribalism etc. But whenever we have had leaders dedicated to the cause of their peoples, they have been mostly eliminated. The Eurocentric theory gives the impression that the continent is somehow cursed and could never bring out good leadership or make any useful contribution to civilizations hence the tendency to dismiss accounts about ancient African empires - Ghana, Mali, Songhai and where this is not possible, for instance in the case of Egypt, to assert that such a civilization was not African at all. But was it European? The Eurocentric approach is apparently able even to move countries out of continents.

Cabral distinguished himself from other revolutionary leaders and theorists by the emphasis he put on culture and its role in the liberation struggle and in the transformation of society.

He would have been in the forefront to rehabilitate African culture and to reclaim our culture, including the significant cultural objects stolen by the colonial masters and now located in many European and American museums. The colonial masters knew the need for every society to have its cultural icons and understood the power and significance that symbolic objects possess. They themselves will never part with cultural objects which symbolize their societies and their cultural achievements. But what should we think of some of our African leaders who show no interest in reclaiming our stolen cultural objects? How do we move forward in our cultural development when most of our cultural icons are else where? Where shall we tell the Europeans and Americans to stop the foolish talk and insist that our cultural icons are better preserved in Europe and America? Do they understand our culture better than ourselves when hardly any of them understand our languages? Have they all now become Africans and adopted African customs and religions as some of their museum directors would have us believe when they proclaim in their infamous Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums that our cultural objects have become part of their culture? Can they present and represent African culture better than the Africans? Cabral would have been amazed by such assertion and the lack of vigorous reaction on the part of many African leaders.

Amilcar Cabral showed by his own life and works the exemplary leadership which seems to be missing in some of the countries on the continent. He will forever be remembered by those who are not prejudiced as a selfless leader who contributed to the liberation of Africa and demonstrated that with the confidence of the people one could defeat an oppressor who had powerful armies behind him. African youth can only gain by learning about Amilcar Cabral and pondering over his writings, the problems and conflicts of his times. That is the least we can do for the memory of a man whose life was sacrificed in the pursuit of liberty.
In truth, the way in which this nation confronts the "immigration issue" which is not about immigrants, will determine the humanity, faith and survival of both black and white and Latino in the United States.

The presence of 12 million undocumented and the resulting growth and power of the black and brown people of the south now in the United States has brought out the historic, self-righteous belief in its manifest destiny. Perhaps from that fertile soil, the seeds of a confrontation will come, a confrontation with the perversion of the Gospel and the perversion of human rights that has taken hold of the souls of men.

The great danger in the notion that we can move beyond the prophetic faith of a Jeremiah Wright is that we don’t yet grasp that Wright’s vision is the only foundation from which the legacy of colonialism and slavery can be over come and from which colonial Christianity can be redeemed.

West Africa: Bad Economic Policies Driving Migration

If West African governments are serious about reducing migration from their countries they must invest in improving living conditions and reducing inequality, according to sociologists, economists and other experts meeting in the Senegalese capital, Dakar.

“As long as governments do not attack the longstanding and structural problems that make people leave, I think they are completely off track,” said Cheikh Oumar Ba, a Senegalese sociologist with the Initiative for Rural and Agricultural Futures.

Ba was among technical experts and government officials at the Dakar conference on migration and development in Africa.

A principal aim of the conference—organized by the International Organization for Migration, the Dakar-based foundation TrustAfrica and the UN’s African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEП)—was to urge African governments to incorporate migration into their national development strategies.

Inequality

Conference participants noted that migration was inevitable and had both negative and positive effects for countries of origin. But many at the conference said too many people in West and Central Africa were unnecessarily being forced out of their home regions or countries because of bad policies.

“The distribution of economic gains is still largely unequal, leaving the vast majority of the people below the poverty line,” IDEП’s Aloysius Akin told participants, blaming economic policies that are failing people in much of sub-Saharan Africa.

Akin said youths across the continent have been granted TPS must re-register for the 18-month extension during the 60-day re-registration period beginning March 12, 2008 and remaining in effect until May 12, 2009. Somalis TPS beneficiaries are encouraged to apply as soon as possible following the start of the 60-day re-registration period. Please note that re-registration applications from Somali nationals will not be accepted by USCIS until the re-registration period opens on March 12, 2008. Details on when, and how to file under each designation will soon be published in the Federal Register and additional information will be provided online at: http://www.uscis.gov/.

To re-register for TPS under this extension, a TPS beneficiary must submit Form I-821 (Application for Temporary Protected Status) without the application fee and Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization). If the applicant is only seeking to re-register for TPS and not seeking an extension of employment authorization, he or she must submit Form I-765 for data gathering purposes only, and is not required to submit the I-765 filing fee. All applicants seeking an extension of employment authorization through September 17, 2009 must submit the required application filing fee with Form I-765. The biometric service fee must be submitted by all re-applicants age 14 and older, as well as re-applicants under age 14 who are requesting an EAD.

Applicants may request a fee waiver for any of the application or biometric service fees in accordance with the regulations. Failure to submit the required filing fees or a properly documented fee waiver request will result in the rejection of the re-registration application.

More information can be obtained from the USCIS National Customer Service Center toll free number: 1-800-375-5283. TPS forms are available from the toll-free USCIS Forms line, 1-800-870-3676, or from the USCIS Web site: http://www.uscis.gov/.

In truth, we will never get past the racism that prevents real progress, and peace as long as we view racism as an issue between black and white in the United States, for the truth is that racism at its core, is the concept and reality of manifest destiny.

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Akin said youths across the continent have been granted TPS must re-register for the 18-month extension during the 60-day re-registration period beginning March 12, 2008 and remaining in effect until May 12, 2009. Somalis TPS beneficiaries are encouraged to apply as soon as possible following the start of the 60-day re-registration period. Please note that re-registration applications from Somali nationals will not be accepted by USCIS until the re-registration period opens on March 12, 2008. Details on when, and how to file under each designation will soon be published in the Federal Register and additional information will be provided online at: http://www.uscis.gov/.

To re-register for TPS under this extension, a TPS beneficiary must submit Form I-821 (Application for Temporary Protected Status) without the application fee and Form I-765 (Application for Employment Authorization). If the applicant is only seeking to re-register for TPS and not seeking an extension of employment authorization, he or she must submit Form I-765 for data gathering purposes only, and is not required to submit the I-765 filing fee. All applicants seeking an extension of employment authorization through September 17, 2009 must submit the required application filing fee with Form I-765. The biometric service fee must be submitted by all re-applicants age 14 and older, as well as re-applicants under age 14 who are requesting an EAD.

Applicants may request a fee waiver for any of the application or biometric service fees in accordance with the regulations. Failure to submit the required filing fees or a properly documented fee waiver request will result in the rejection of the re-registration application.

More information can be obtained from the USCIS National Customer Service Center toll free number: 1-800-375-5283. TPS forms are available from the toll-free USCIS Forms line, 1-800-870-3676, or from the USCIS Web site: http://www.uscis.gov/.

In truth, we will never get past the racism that prevents real progress, and peace as long as we view racism as an issue between black and white in the United States, for the truth is that racism at its core, is the concept and reality of manifest destiny.

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President Bush and Africa’s Debt—Who Owes Whom?

By Neil Watkins

Editor’s note: Neil Watkins tackles the unfinished agenda on debt, calls for an audit of past lending in Africa by the United States and international financial institutions including the IMF and World Bank in order to look at which debts are odious, onerous, or illegal.

President Bush in Africa was looking to secure his legacy in part through the lens of his administrations debt relief initiatives on the continent. One of those initiatives is the administration’s support for expanded debt relief for the continent.

To take a closer look at this Administration’s record on debt, let us start with a question that Africa-based civil society groups often start with when describing the debt issue: Who Owes Whom?

Take the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The United States, the World Bank and IMF; and other creditors lent former President Mobutu Sese Seko billions of dollars in the 1970s and 1980s, knowing full well that the funds would not benefit the people. This was a price they were willing to pay in the context of the Cold War to win then Zaïre’s allegiance to the West. But this clearly odious and illegitimate debt remains on the books today—over $9 billion worth in fact, and the people of the DRC are still paying for the sins of a leader they didn’t want.

Does Africa owe President Bush a debt of gratitude?

But the Bush administration has supported debt cancellation in Africa. Does Africa owe President Bush a debt of gratitude? Let’s look at the Bush administration’s record on Africa’s debt. In 2005, the Bush administration, together with the UK, took strong leadership at the G-8 summit in Gleneagles, Scotland that year, and agreed to provide the possibility of 100% debt stock cancellation of eligible debts to eligible countries. This was important because up until this point, only debt relief - reduction of payments - rather than outright cancellation, was possible.

The initiative championed by the Bush Administration has since become known as the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI). Under this program, 23 countries have received 100% cancellation of eligible debts, 19 of them in Africa. Another 20 countries are potentially eligible for the program but have not yet seen their debts cancelled. Added together with previous rounds of debt cancellation, this has meant that eligible nations are saving about $2 billion in debt payments each year.

The money saved from debt relief has been put to good use. Of the five countries President Bush will visit on his trip, four—Benin, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Ghana—have received debt cancellation under the MDRI. In Tanzania, debt relief led to a 50% increase in primary school enrollment. In Ghana, freed up funds supported the rehabilitation of essential major highways and feeder roads in the main agricultural areas; and to support education and health initiatives. In Benin, relief bolstered investment in health and education and funded small-holder projects in agriculture.

The other country President Bush will visit on his trip—Liberia—just recently moved towards eligibility for the official IMF/World Bank debt relief program with the strong support of the administration. But Liberia has not yet seen its more than $3.5 billion debt - much of it run up by the odious regimes of Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor - cancelled outright yet.

More could be done

It is clear that the Bush Administration has provided leadership on debt relief that has benefited a number of African countries. But President Bush could do even more. He could return from Africa—inspired by seeing first hand the impacts of relief to date—and address the unfinished agenda on debt, in turn cementing his legacy in this area.

He should support the expansion of debt cancellation to all countries that need it to reach global poverty-reducing goals, including countries devastated by HIV/AIDS—such as Lesotho—that have not been included in agreements for debt cancellation to date.

Second, Bush should put an end to unconscionable practices of so-called “vulture funds.” Vulture funds are private creditors that buy up distressed developing country debt on the secondary markets, then refuse to join other creditors in the debt relief process and instead use poor country governments for a big mark-up. Last year, Zambia had to pay $35 million to Donegal International, a vulture fund that paid $3 million for the debt originally. The President should support changes to US law that would make profiteering by vulture funds illegal. While that work is underway, he could immediately reach out to new Paris Club creditors in the US sphere of influence and urge them to sign onto a new Paris Club agreement that commits creditors not to on-sale claims on the secondary market.

Another problem facing Africa now is a rapid re-accumulation of debt, including massive new lending from China. The administration’s plan to address this problem has focused on an IMF/World Bank framework which punishes debtors by hardening the terms of soft loans they get from the World Bank if they borrow too much. But this approach is likely to only worsen the problem and punishes poor countries without addressing creditor co-responsibility for the problem. Only a strong, binding international system for responsible lending and sovereign debt restructuring which holds creditors and debtors responsible can ensure debt sustainability in the future.

Finally, to finally answer the question of who owes whom, there should be an audit of past lending in Africa by the United States and international financial institutions including the IMF and World Bank. Such an audit should look at which debts are odious, onerous, or illegal. Having this information will help us learn lessons from the past and avoid the same mistakes in the future.

To enhance his legacy in this area, President Bush could announce his support for the bipartisan Jubilee Act for Responsible Lending (S. 2166 / H. 2634) which addresses many of the aforementioned elements of the unfinished agenda on debt, and is currently pending in Congress.

Neil Watkins is National Coordinator of Jubilee USA Network, an alliance of religious organizations, development agencies, and human rights groups working for debt cancellation and responsible lending for impoverished nations.

African Proverbs

African languages are seasoned with proverbs to transmit profound knowledge. Proverbs are the majestic branches of the tree of ancestral wisdom; the vital arteries and vessels of self-expression in everyday conversation throughout Africa. Here are some proverbs to wet your appetite. Hey, marinade and chew them well for everyday use!

Until the lion has his or her own storyteller, the hunter will always have the best part of the story.

No matter how long a log stays in the water, it doesn’t become a crocodile.

Patience can cook a stone.

If God breaks your leg, He will teach you how to limp.

When there is no enemy within, the enemies outside cannot hurt you.

Two birds disputed about a kernel, when a third swooped down and carried it off.

A bird is in the air but its mind is on the ground.

An okra tree does not grow taller than its master.

One who enters a forest does not listen to the breaking of the twigs in the brush.

The hunter in pursuit of an elephant does not stop to throw stones at birds.
Africa: Reason for Hope

By Julius Coles

The news Americans hear about Africa these days is mostly bad—the periodic outbreak of violence, the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, runaway inflation in Zimbabwe, and the devastating impact of malaria and the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In addition to the crises of the moment, Africa faces structural challenges unlike those faced by any other continent in the world every day—chronic food insecurity, unsafe and inadequate water, preventable childhood diseases, infant and maternal mortality, an alarming increase in the number of orphaned and vulnerable children, inadequate schools, cycles of drought and flooding, civil war, the devastation of HIV/AIDS, lack of basic infrastructure and social services, and grinding poverty.

It is no wonder that some people ask, “Is there any hope for Africa?”

An emerging Africa, that belies the dire news of the day

Yes, there is reason for hope. There is another Africa, an emerging Africa, that belies the dire news of the day. The trends are truly encouraging.

According to the United Nations Economic Report on Africa, overall Africa has enjoyed sustained economic growth over the past recent past. In 2006, Africa’s economies grew by more than five percent—their greatest expansion in eight years—and are projected to grow by seven percent this year, with Ethiopia, Mozambique and Tanzania among the fastest-growing countries in the world. Across a broader comparison, African economic growth has surpassed the average economic growth of Latin America (4 percent).

Africa’s oil industry has emerged to become the most viable alternative supplier to that of the Middle East. Over the past few years, Africa has benefited from a significant oil boom, resulting both from large increases in oil prices and the substantial influx of investments in petroleum exploration and production. The U.S. alone derives 15 percent of its oil imports from Africa. China buys 28 percent of its oil from African countries, in particular Angola, Nigeria and Sudan.

The Bush administration has understood the importance of supporting a prosperous and stable African continent. Under President Bush’s leadership, American development assistance to Africa has more than doubled—part of the largest expansion of development assistance since the Marshall Plan. Plans are under way again to double these assistance levels over the next five years to fulfill the United States’ GI Bill commitments. Having created the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), the Bush administration has seen to it that more than two-thirds of that account’s $5.5 billion is being invested in Africa.

In short, America has become an investor, not just a donor. Private capital flows in general to sub-Saharan Africa now exceed development assistance.

In addition, investments in Africa have been made by the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), which expects to mobilize a total of $1.6 billion in new capital. The Bush administration has suggested numerous other initiatives, such as the Africa Education Initiative, to distribute textbooks, train teachers, provide scholarships; and $15 billion for PEPFAR, the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDs Reduction, the largest international health initiative in history to fight a single disease.

And these programs are getting results. As the President said before leaving for his recent trip to Africa, “Africa is increasingly vital to our strategic interest... Nations that replace disease and despair with healing and hope will help Africa do more than just survive—they will help Africa succeed.”

There’s an African proverb that says “No matter how long the night, the day is sure to come.” I have lived and worked in Africa for more than 46 years and have never felt more hopeful about its future. I believe a new day is dawning across the continent.

Democracy in Africa is growing, with more than 30 democratic elections between 2001 and 2009. The impact of HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases is being lessened. The social and economic indicators listed above tell a promising story of energetic, resourceful, and forward-thinking nations.

Another recent sign of Africa’s positive developments has been the successful outcome of the negotiations led by former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in building the basis of a coalition government in Kenya in which President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga will share political power.

This outcome is a real triumph for democratic governance in Africa. It also speaks well of the continent’s ability to find acceptable solutions to difficult political problems and may enable Kenya to finally come to grips with long-term ethnic problems that have threatened the country’s stability over the past 30 years.

America is instinctively linked to this critical continent through individual human beings, through our deep and enduring commitment to justice and human needs and through our practical approach to business and security.

Our friends in Africa are working hard for change. Now is the time for our most steadfast support.

Julius Coles

One day last summer, driving down a street in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Minneapolis, I passed a children’s playground on the sidewalks alongside young boys and girls idling near the intersection, their joyful voices filtering through my rolled-up windows. I heard an exhilarating whisper in the wind. We are a people of the outdoors.

For African people in general, the good time is the communal time. And the communal is expressed in a social space—the sidewalk, front porch, street corner, night parties, etc. Unfortunately, the communal is often oppressed in the guise of “No Loitering” signs in the neighborhood. Also, the communal spirit endures no matter the effort to suppress it by rules and regulations.

Well, the Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center police departments seem to be getting the point. Gradually it seems when it comes to house parties organized mainly by members of the Liberian community, they’re realized that arresting patrons is not going to do it. You can write citations until your fingers bleed, and almost every Saturday (not Thursday and Friday) night, the music will be turned up, the Hecklers will pop, the cars will come, the people will congregate, and the night parties will go on.

In an attempt to control these “loud parties,” the two police departments are now doing what perhaps a social service organization should have done a long time ago once it became apparent that Brooklyn Park was the new Monrovia. In an effort to better understand the Liberians and their culture, the police departments turned to Victoria Amari at the Greater Twin Cities United Way.

Victoria is the curator of a time-tested tool called Cultural Complementary Model. This model does something extraordinary: it helps people talk. Yes, that simple. It is built on the idea that when you get two people together in a safe non-confrontational environment and encourage them to talk, wonderful things happen. And over the years, Victoria and her team have been bringing people of diverse background together to dialogue about their unique experiences. And wonderful things have been happening to businesses and organizations all over the state.

Recently I attended the second in a series of such dialogues organized to foster a better relationship between the two police departments and the Liberian community in their respective cities. That Saturday morning, at the Brooklyn Park community centre, I found my way to a room where the dialogue was scheduled to be held, and came to an empty gymnasium with about 50 chairs sitting in a large circle. They were soon occupied.

A Liberian caterer provided lunch before the dialogue began. The food was very delicious, and my mouth journeyed back to my favorite childhood delicacy: rice bread! I must confess, my taste was not unique. Others in the room also abandoned their meals in anticipation of more substantial fare.

Victoria had given us a chance to share our thoughts on the Liberian community and the police force. Some people talked about their first encounter with Liberians. They were not always pleasant experiences. And wonderful things have been happening to businesses and organizations all over the state.

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A Liberian caterer provided lunch before the dialogue began. The food was very delicious, and my mouth journeyed back to my favorite childhood delicacy: rice bread! I must have had five large pieces of rice bread before too long.

The Liberian community came out in full force: the old, the young, as well as first and second generation Liberians. Other community members were also present. And, of course, members of the two police departments, including the newly appointed Brooklyn Park police chief, Michael Davis (the city’s first African American police chief).

I marked it a success before the dialogue ever started. To have these people in one room, voluntarily, not as a result of some tragedy, that alone was success to me.

Victoria set forth the objective of the dialogue: to understand and foster cross-cultural awareness. Then as the model is designed, with few questions to frame our conversations around, we split into free groups of about eight people each. It is in such small groups that dialogues bloom. And here was no exception.

In my group, introductions (name and the town of birth) moved seamlessly into conversations about cultural norms and differences. As the dialogue moved to perhaps the one thing most had in common—the citys—some members of the Liberian community expressed feeling unwelcome when they first arrived to the city, perplexed at the flight of their African neighbors, frustration at the lack of representation in city offices, in the police department, and many more.

But unlike similar gatherings, I've previously attended, this meeting was different. Even when the subject was clearly frustrating, the tone never became confrontational. Participants reasoned well, listened to opposing views, and took their share of the blame when warranted.

When we returned to the large group and heard reports from other groups, I realized my experience was not unique. Others in smaller groups had discussed similar issues, and gotten similar outcomes.

Through a series of subsequent activities, the group decided on strategies to address some of the issues and concerns raised. And, again, unlike other similar gatherings, everyone seemed pre-occupied about finding solutions.

At the end of the afternoon, I felt the “local parties” were not specifically addressed. However, I felt a lot had been learned and shared. Nothing else, but the binary tension associated with “Us vs. Them” was resolved. And with that going, perhaps the police departments might host the next party.

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Dispatch from Minnesota: When Cuffs don’t do it, Talks Might
Ghana National Council of Metropolitan Chicago
Celebrating Ghana’s Independence Anniversary

By Alie Kabba

The Ghanaian community, joined by other African and friends of the Ghanaian community, recently came out in numbers to mark Ghana’s 51st independence anniversary at the Westin Hotel in Rosemont.

Invited guests to the dinner included Mr. Dana V. Starks, the new Commissioner on Human Relations at the office of the Mayor of Chicago; Ms. Norma Reyes, Commissioner of Consumer Services; Mr. Arnold Romeo, Director of African Affairs; Mr. and Mrs. Annang of Annakka Enterprises; Mr. Alie Kabba, Executive Director of the United African Organization; and Mr. Z. Bayou, President of Choice Taxi in Chicago. A family of ten African Americans who recently traced their roots to the family of Dr. Kofi Ahfeld Busia, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Ghana from 1969 to 1972, was recognized at the function. Chiefs, Queen Mothers and elders of the community were also in attendance to grace the occasion. Rev. Dr. Qagum and Rev. Caton Mensah praised for success and the Lord’s protection of the new leaders of the Ghanaian Community. Alhajie Baba Cisse offered the Muslim prayer. Reverend Dr. Kofi Nduom swore the New Officers of the GNC into office.

In a short remark, Commissioner Dana V. Starks, the keynote speaker of the event, reminded the gathering that the independence of Ghana had a deep impact on the Civil Rights Movement in the USA.

"The independence of Ghana threw a new wave of enthusiasm in the Civil Rights Movement in the USA," Mr. Starks noted.

As the first colonized African nation to gain independence, Ghana’s emergence in 1957 marked the beginning of the end of Western imperial conquest and occupation of Africa. The new nation inspired the global African community and gave hope to millions of colonial subjects all over the world—from Vietnam to Jamaica—that freedom was knocking on the door.

The wind of change that began with Ghana’s independence blew across seas, mountains, deserts and valleys to trumpet a new day in Africa. It gave hope to a young Nelson Mandela and Patrice Lumumba, it opened a path in the night for Algerian and Kenyan freedom fighters, it ignited anti-colonial agitators in Nigeria and Zambia; it galvanized Sekou Touré’s Guinea to say “No” to French colonial rule; and it ruffled the mind of Ian Smith in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), who thought that African majority rule would not happen in a thousand years.

Ghana was indeed the hope that colonized Africans needed when the night was long and cold; the nation that W. E. B. Du Bois would later call home and where he is laid to rest.

Ghana’s first President, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, articulated the special role of Ghana as an immaculate symbol of African dignity and respect. He saw in Ghana’s independence the seed of a New Africa. His visionary construction of African unity remains the foundation of our long march toward a continental Union Government.

In looking far ahead in 1957, President Nkrumah proclaimed that “the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent.” Governor Rod Blagojevich and Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago expressed best wishes to Ghana and Ghanaians in their proclamations read on their behalf by Mr. Arnold Romeo. The president of the Ghana National Council, Mr. John Henry Assabill, appealed to members of the community to financially support programs of the council since the era of begging for sponsors is over with his administration.

"The Ghana National Council was founded by the affiliates and it must be funded by the affiliates," GNC President noted. "Although the affiliates have their individual programs, activities organized by the Council bring ALL Ghanaians together and that is healthy for our community. Currently, the Council is $20,000.00 in deficit. It is not by frivolity, precipitous or impulsive spending but by reality. Our annual budget stands at over $50,000.00. However, the combined revenue from all affiliates annually is only $12,000.00. For example, it costs a minimum of $22,000.00 to host Ghana Fest alone. Fellow Ghanaians, we must put our pockets where our hearts are." The GNC President implored his fellow Ghanaians who do not belong to any of the Affiliate Associations of the GNC to join one. The GNC President added that "It is worthy of note that this administration of the Ghana National Council has moved strongly to take our rightful position in the United African Organization (UAO)."

He concluded by expressing his gratitude to MoneyGram, the main sponsor of the event.

Prior to the President’s speech, Mr. George Asiedu, representing MoneyGram International, asked members of the community to patronize MoneyGram in order to enable the Money Transfer giant continue supporting activities in the community. He explained that MoneyGram has comparatively lower transfer fees than their closest competitors in the money transfer business. "MoneyGram now have branches in almost all districts in Ghana because of our alliance with Ghana Commercial Bank, and other major Banks in Ghana," George informed the audience.

Other sponsors of the independence anniversary dinner were African Spectrum and Annaluka Enterprise.

Members of the previous executive under the leadership of Ruben Hadzide were awarded with plaques and ribbons for their distinguished service to the Ghanaian Community. A surprised Richard Daley, almost emotional with tears, dedicated his award to the founding fathers and all past executives of the GNC and asked the community to support their new leaders. He also asked the "old guards" in the audience to join him in receiving the special award. Some of the founding members and former executives present were: Alhajie Baba Cisse, Ms. Patience Adigbli, Dr. Mark Kutame and Mr. Amponsah Yeboah, who is also the current moderator of the council.

The Ghana National Council of Metropolitan Chicago is a Not-for-Profit Corporation, incorporated with the Illinois Secretary of State’s Office on January 4, 1984. Our main objective is to promote the general welfare and unity in the Ghanaian, African, African-American and Caribbean communities in the Metropolitan Chicago area.

The Council hopes to achieve these objectives through charitable, humanitarian and educational activities.

The council is the umbrella organization of 9 Ghanaian Traditional Councils and 2 other organizations, all registered with the Illinois Secretary of State’s office. The affiliates are independently constituted, with varying and independent constitutional provisions. Representatives of the member affiliates constitute the board of the "Council." The board is composed of a thirty-three representatives. The composition is three permanent representatives from each organization.

The council has four standing committees that handle various issues. The primary objective of the standing committees is to assist the Central Committee and the Secretariat in administering the programs and activities of the council.

The council has a provision for a Council of Advisors. The membership of the Council of Advisors shall be composed of twelve members, representing each of the twelve Ghana National Council Affiliates.

The GNC is a member of the United African Organization.

For more information about the Ghana National Council please visit the website at www.ghananationalcouncil.org.
Rwanda: Paul Kagame’s Vision
Setting Himself Apart from Other African Leaders

By Simon Kasyate

In just one month, Rwandan President Paul Kagame of Rwanda has appointed one of the world’s greatest minds in business and strategic investment to his council of economic advisers besides hosting UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and US President George W. Bush.

This is clearly a sign of an attempt by Mr Kagame to set himself apart from other African leaders.

President Bush, while addressing a press conference in Kigali during his recent visit, said: “I want my fellow citizens to know that I am dealing with a respected leader, not only here in Rwanda, but regionally.”

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair offered his services to help raise donor funds and boost Rwanda’s economic growth by giving advice on policy and government efficiency, but without any pay.

According to Mr Blair, his motivation for taking up this Rwanda job is to help make the country the continent’s most economically attractive outsourcing and information technology hub, which is in line with President Kagame’s vision of uplifting a country that would otherwise be economically doomed, given its history.

But, some critics say that Mr Kagame’s latest efforts are all a façade by a leader who is growing increasingly unpopular due to his clampdown on the Opposition and free Press.

Education for all

But, improvements in health care, increased education opportunities for all, an investor friendly environment and the transformation that Kigali has seen into a modern city pays waters on this argument.

To the West, and perhaps the rest of the world, President Kagame epitomizes the new breed of progressive African leaders. But then, many other leaders began the same way. On ascending to power they condemned the ineptitude and corruption of their predecessors and entrenched themselves in power for too long.

On ascending to power they condemned the ineptitude and corruption of their predecessors and taking their citizens for granted are well documented.

However, at the last Africa governance Forum in Ouagadougou, Burkana Faso, President Kagame toned down his earlier hard line position on life presidency, saying different countries had different leadership styles.

The most important thing is to look at the achievements Rwanda has made under his leadership and try to make projections for the future.

It appears that President Kagame is determined to woo as much foreign investment into the country as possible. And his travels across the globe have resulted in the signing of several deals and there is plenty to show for it, especially in Kigali.

The amount of construction going on in the capital is evidence of this.

A Rwandan government official who requested anonymity said the new construction ventures currently in the capital include a $300 million (Sh20 billion) modern convention centre, complete with a five-star hotel and an IT park aimed at making Kigali a regional IT hub.

There is also construction of a ring road around the capital to ease motor traffic flow, even though there is no traffic jam worth talking about in Kigali or anywhere in Rwanda. All this is against a backdrop of advisory services from the government of Singapore on building a new city.

Notably, while in other African countries millions of dollars are used to patch up potholed roads ahead of a visit by a dignitary like President Bush, Rwanda had no such problem.

The city has good roads and is kept clean by an efficient council that collects garbage promptly and enforces bylaws.

In a region where commuter taxis and motorcycles are a menace on the streets, Rwanda’s are well behaved and adhere to traffic rules.

“I cannot work without an extra helmet for the passenger; the police cannot allow me,” said Mr Nicholas Niyimana, a motorcyclist.

And, education is already free at the primary level and free education at secondary and university level is projected to be effective by 2015.

Meanwhile, corruption, an evil that has taken a toll on many African states, remains remarkably low in both the public and private sectors in Rwanda.

Recently, the ombudsman, Mr Tito Rutaremara spearheaded a move by all government officials in declaring their wealth; failure to do so meant facing prosecution. The compliance rate was 98 per cent.

But, Kagame’s critics say that he presides over a police state, a claim the establishment has dismissed. The government has also dismissed claims by the independent media that it has come up with draconian laws to curb their activities.

“They have denied us adverts, some colleagues have been assaulted, threatened or their media outlets shut down when they write or say critical things about the government,” said Mr Didas Gasa, managing editor of Newline, an independent publication.

But Mr Oscar Kimamuka, the director general of the Rwanda Bureau of Information and Broadcasting, says the biggest bottleneck to press freedom in Rwanda is not so much the state as lack of adequate training by the practitioners, which limits their ability to perform their duties properly. If anything, Mr Kimamuka argues, the laws regulating media practice in Rwanda are weak and allow room for mistakes to ply the trade in a manner that compromises the very tenets that journalism stands for, truth and fairness.

The opposition

Another journalist, Mr John Bosco Gasasira, alleges that the government views the independent media in the country as the opposition.

But these seem like the few anti Kagame voices you are likely to hear. It is not clear whether others are too afraid to speak out, or whether it is only a handful that are not comfortable with President Kagame’s rule.

But, President Kagame’s appointing of high-profile personalities as his advisers, admirers say, clearly imposes limits on how he exercises power in Rwanda.

Some critics assert that all his advisers have selfish interests they meet by being his advisers and for as long as he meets their ends, they are likely to turn a blind eye to whatever excesses might creep into Mr Kagame’s hold on power.

President Paul Kagame

President Paul Kagame

APRIL 2008
As I came of age, the things that are dramatic in my memory are the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the events in Little Rock, and the events in Montgomery, Alabama, and tangled in there are the independence of Ghana and the Mau Mau struggle in Kenya.

I remember the Pittsburgh Courier used to run a little box on the front page that talked about the conflict in Kenya, the conflict in Congo, the Sharpeville demonstrations, Lumumba, Thionne, Kasavubu, all of which were happening when I was in high school. These things were part of my consciousness, growing up.

A lot of us in 1960 and '61 who were in college were caught up in the student sit-in movement, which was more or less a spontaneous movement, though not quite as spontaneous as some historians would suggest. I was living in Massachusetts and had been picketing the Winchestein support of Southern students in 1960. The students who were protesting in Greensboro and Nashville were black and living in those areas, you were really living almost in a state of paranoia... As an organizer the idea, the real idea behind organizing, was to begin to get people in motion around something, just to break that paralysis.

It was in '63 that we really started to become aware of Africa, as Freeman. Oginga Odinga, who was at that time the vice president of Kenya, was touring the United States, and one of the places he visited was Atlanta, Georgia.

A whole bunch of us went to see him, just because he was an African leader. There was no political assessment of Kenya, or any of that. He was a black guy who was a vice president of a country, and we had just never seen that. He was staying at some posh hotel in downtown Atlanta, and we saw him. We had this talk, and shook his hand; it was a big thing.

Afterwards we decided to go have coffee at a restaurant next door to the hotel, and we were all refused service. We were kind of high on meeting this black leader, and so naturally we refused to leave the restaurant, and we all got arrested. Oginga Odinga became a known name in the organization. There were songs written about him. Because of this incident, discussion started.

Then in '64 Harry Belafonte, who was a supporter of SNCC and other organizations, arranged trips to Africa for some SNCC people. It was a big thing, and built the discussion more and more in the organization. In the media by this time you're starting to get the whole business with Rhodesia and the Unilateral Declaration of Independence, and all this was filtering into the organization.

Our expanding consciousness of Africa and the discussions within the organization revolved around two key words: power and alternatives.

All along we were asking ourselves whether what we were doing was really going to provide the answers for blacks. You work in a country, or you work in some rural town, and because you're working some blacks get killed or shot, something like that. And you inevitably ask yourself, “Is it really worth it? If they actually get this vote, what will it really mean for them?” Is it worth it, or worth it for blacks? What do they write. Inevitably one says, “I can do a hell of a lot better than that.” I traveled widely, I was in south Asia and Africa. It seemed to be important to begin to figure out ways to communicate what I’d seen.

What looks simple turns out to be complex.

In 1969 I was teaching school in the United States and decided to go to an African country long enough to really learn something about it. I chose Tanzania simply because it seemed to be the place where the liberation movements were concentrated and because I just happened to know more Tanzanians than anybody else. And one of the things I started to do there was to write.

The thing that I learned in the South, which I didn't know before going into it, was that what looks simple turns out to be complex. The same thing is true about rural Africa. And if you want to write about it, as I did when I went to Africa, or if you want to organize it, which is what I did in Mississippi, then you have to learn to deal with these complexities.


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Editor's note: In an excerpt from the book, No Easy Victories: African Liberation and American Activists over a Half Century 1950-2000, journalist Charles Cobb Jr. tells of a meeting with the Kenyan leader Oginga Odinga and of looking to Africa to find alternative ways of organizing. Cobb was a field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Mississippi from 1962 to 1967. He moved to Tanzania in 1970. In this interview, he traces the beginnings of his involvement in the civil rights movement and his introduction to Africa.
Prostate Cancer: The Single Most Diagnosed Non-skin Cancer Among African-American Men

By Rosemarie Mamie Tambu, RN, BSN, MSN

What is the prostate?

The prostate is a walnut-size gland that only men have. It is part of the reproductive system that makes the fluid that carries sperm. The prostate is located in front of the rectum (the lower part of the intestine) just below the bladder (an organ that collects and empties urine). The urethra (the tube that carries urine from the bladder to outside the body) runs through the center of the prostate. It also produces fluid that makes up part of the semen. The prostate tends to increase in size as men age and can cause the urethra to narrow and decrease urine flow.

Prostate cancer, on the other hand is made up of cells that do not grow normally. The cells divide and create new cells that the body does not need, forming a mass of tissue called a tumor which sometimes spread rapidly to other parts of the body, multiplying and causing death.

According to the National Prostate Cancer Coalition, prostate cancer is the single most diagnosed non-skin cancer among African-American men. Among the ten leading causes of cancer death, prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among African-American men.

It is projected that 30,870 men will be diagnosed in 2008 in the African-American community. An African American man in his lifetime has ninety percent chance (one in five times) of being diagnosed and five percent chance (one in twenty times) of dying from prostate cancer.

Risk Increases with Age

The American Cancer Society states that the risk for prostate cancer can be increased with family history (men with father, brother or son who has had prostate cancer) and age (the older a man is, the greater his risk) as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Risk of Prostate Cancer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>1 in 1,111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1 in 204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>1 in 66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>1 in 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>1 in 13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>1 in 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75</td>
<td>1 in 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75+</td>
<td>1 in 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Early detection of prostate cancer through screening (men who have no symptoms) depends upon a combination of examination by a healthcare provider and laboratory testing. The gold standard has always been DRE (digital-finger rectal examination) and PSA (prostate specific antigen test).

DRE is a quick exam for checking the health of the prostate. For this test, the examiner inserts a lubricated gloved finger into the rectum of the man. This allows him/her to feel the back portion of the prostate for size and any irregular or abnormally firm areas.

The PSA (prostate specific antigen) is a substance produced only by cells from the prostate gland and released into the blood. The PSA test is a simple blood test to measure how much PSA a man has in his bloodstream at a given time.

How is the PSA test done?

Blood is drawn from the arm by a fine needle. This can be done by a nurse, phlebotomist (a technician trained in blood draws) or doctor. The blood is sent to a laboratory on or off the premises. The patient should receive a copy of the written record of the results. File the record for comparison with tests later on.

This test was originally allowed by the FDA in 1986 to aid in the care for patients who already had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. The FDA approved the PSA test as the first blood test to help detect prostate cancer in 1994.

The higher the PSA level in the blood, the more likely a prostate problem is present. PSA levels tend to increase with age, and are also higher in African American men than in others. PSA levels may also be high in men who have an infection or inflammation of the prostate or BHP (an enlarged, but not cancerous prostate). This test is the most effective test currently available for the early detection of prostate cancer. In 2005, a Harvard University study found that men who have a yearly PSA test are nearly three times less likely to die from prostate cancer than those who do not have annual screening.

The level that is considered normal ranges from 0 to 4 nanograms per milliliter (ng/ml). A PSA level of 4 to 10 ng/ml is slightly elevated; levels between 10 and 20 ng/ml are moderately elevated and anything greater is considered highly elevated. But various factors can cause the level to fluctuate; one abnormal test does not indicate that cancer is present.

Can prostate cancer be prevented?

There are ongoing research studies in the healthcare industry to uncover the actual cause of prostate cancer. At this time, it is not possible to prevent most cases of the disease because risk factors such as age, race and family history cannot be controlled. While the results of research studies are not yet clear reduction in the progress of the disease is achievable by lifestyle changes.

The American Cancer Society recommends choosing foods and beverages in amounts that help achieve and maintain a healthy weight, eating a variety of healthful foods with an emphasis on plant sources, and limiting intake of red meats, especially high-fat or processed meats.

Pay Attention to:

Diet

• Fat more fruits, vegetables (broccoli and cabbage), and whole grains, soybean (phytosterogen), tomatoes (contain an antioxidant called lycopene), which may have big impact on the disease in lowering the risk. Reduce intake of saturated fat and cholesterol. Limit sweets and salt.
• Drink alcoholic beverages (redwine) in moderation, if at all. Fat moderate-sized portion and control calories. Fast fish, especially those that are rich in the Omega 3 fatty acids that protect against prostate cancer and other diseases include salmon, herring, and mackerel.
• Drink green tea (rich in polyphenols, believed to slow the growth of cancer), and avoid steak and hamburgers (red meat).

Exercise

Research studies are inconclusive about the impact of exercise on the prostate cancer risk. Exercise increases metabolism, resulting in weight loss, temporarily reduces testosterone (the chief contributor to male hormone dependent cancer such as prostate cancer).

Sex Behavior

Excretion

Studies show that ejaculation 3x per week may reduce the risk of getting prostate cancer by 15%.

Cess Smoking

Smoking can contribute to the growth of prostate cancer.

Education and early detection modalities such as digital rectal exam and PSA screening programs hold the future to reduce the mortality rate of prostate cancer among African American men.

Public awareness to educate men in general about prostate cancer will promote healthier behavior in seeking health professional advice.
As a returning adult student, I have exceeded far more than I ever expected when I decided to pursue an undergraduate degree at Northeastern Illinois University (NLIU). Not only will I receive a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the College of Arts and Sciences in the Justice Studies program in May 2008, but I will also receive it with honors and hopefully go on to graduate school in the Fall of 2008. The Ronald D. McNair Scholars program has been very instrumental in laying the groundwork for me to pursue graduate studies. My minor in Human Resource Development (HRD) has also provided me with an additional set of academic tools that will lend itself to understanding the need for training and teaching adults in the changing global workforce.

I have been fortunate to do my internship at the United African Organization (UAO), which is a grassroots social justice advocacy organization that advocates for African immigrants and refugees. As a Justice Studies major, I am concerned about the inequality and injustices African Americans face; therefore, I will employ myself in the academic field to address some of the policy challenges and disparities this nation faces. This will be done largely in part to advocate for those who lack or have limited knowledge of their legal rights, those who face economic hardships, and those who fall victim to racial and gender profiling, especially women and people of color that oftentimes find themselves working against the currents of life.

My internship with the UAO is a great learning opportunity to translate classroom theories into practical community organizing models for systemic change.

As the Event Coordinator for the UAO’s 2nd Chicago Summit on African Immigrants and Refugees, I am right at the center of an exciting and challenging initiative to give voice to the social justice aspirations of African immigrants and refugees.

**Promoting unity with immigrant communities.**

Ali Kabbah, UAO Executive Director, provides me with the necessary supervision and the necessary sponsorship and leadership. W e can and we must work against the currents of life.

Dr. Adams is affiliated with ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Chicago Project for Violence Prevention, the A. Phillip Randolph Pullman Porters Museum, the Bronzeville Arts Trust and the Harold Washington Research and Policy Institute. His memberships in professional associations include the American Sociological Association, the Conference of Minority Public Administrators, the Illinois Ethnic Coalition and the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Councils. Educated at Fisk University, the matriculated at Boston University, the University of Chicago and The Union Graduate School where she earned the Doctorate of Philosophy. During the summer of 2004 she pursued further studies at the prestigious John F Kennedy School of Governmental Affairs at Harvard.

Among her awards and honors are the Illinois Arts Council Governor's Award; In the Arts, the Winnie Mandela Award; The Outstanding Leadership Award presented by the Senior Citizens of the Chicago Housing Authority; and a Certificate of Merit presented by the Board of Aldermen of Louisville, Kentucky, her hometown.

For the African immigrant and refugee community of Illinois, Dr. Adams is the Grande Dame, a dedicated and passionate fighter for fairness, inclusion, and equal opportunity.

The United African Organization is a coalition of African national associations dedicated to social justice, civil 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 than 100,000 African immigrants and refugees that now call Illinois home. For more information about the UAO, visit the website at www.uniteafricans.org.

The DeSable Museum of African American History, located at 57th Street and Cottage Grove in Washington Park, is a Chicago independent institution and the first museum dedicated to the collection, documentation, preservation and dissemination of the history and culture of African Americans of African descent. Permanent galleries include African Speaks, a collection of artifacts from the Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western parts of Africa, Freedom Now mural depicting the struggles of African Americans from Africa to the Civil Rights Movement, and Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures. Masterpieces from the DeSable Museum Collection which displays the works of Black artists from the DeSable Museum’s own collection. The Harold Washington exhibit is now being expanded into a larger installation entitled A Slow Walk to Greatness. The Harold Washington Story. In mid-April, a new permanent exhibition titled Red, White, Blue and Black. An History of African Americans in the Armed Forces will open.

The museum’s current traveling exhibitions are And Freedom for All Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement and Soul Soldiers: African Americans and the Vietnam War. The latter will explore the Vietnam War and the role of the Civil Rights Movement through historical items such as soldier’s letters and Black music.

The DeSable Museum has grown since its inception in 1964 in the home of the late Charles Burroughs and Dr. Margaret Burroughs. In 1971, the Chicago Park District granted the DeSable Museum’s request to use a former park district administration building in Washington Park as its new location. In 1991, the completion of the Harold Washington Wing provided the museum with additional gallery space and a 450 seat auditorium. If you would like more information about the museum’s public, family and educational programs, please visit the website at www.desablemuseum.org. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturdays from 10am to 5pm and Sunday from 12 noon to 5:00pm.

Registration for the 2nd Chicago Summit on African Immigrants and Refugees is on-going. Although there is no charge for the conference, please RSVP at Green_Arista@UniteAfricans.org or call 1 866 363 0333.

The 2nd Chicago Summit on African Immigration is an ongoing effort to educate the American public about the needs of the African immigrant and refugee community. It’s a two-week sojourn. In 1999, the Chicago Park District granted the DuSable Museum’s request to use a former park district administration building in Washington Park as its new location. In 1991, the completion of the Harold Washington Wing provided the museum with additional gallery space and a 450 seat auditorium. If you would like more information about the museum’s public, family and educational programs, please visit the website at www.desablemuseum.org. Hours of operation are Monday through Saturdays from 10am to 5pm and Sunday from 12 noon to 5:00pm.

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