Africans in Chicago Call for Peace in the Congo

CHICAGO - The recent escalation of violence in the North Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has worsened the suffering of the civilian population and the international community must take prompt action to stop the violence and protect civilians, the Congolese Community of Chicago (CCC-DRC) and United African Organization (UAO) said in a joint statement.

"The world cannot stand by while more civilians in eastern Congo are killed, maimed, raped and forcibly removed form their homes," said Kividii Kikama, Jr., Chairman of the Board of CCC-DRC. "During the last Congolese war that ended in 2003, more than 4 million people perished as a result of the violence, making it the deadliest war since World War II. It is imperative that the world intervenes forcefully to avert another humanitarian catastrophe."

Fierce fighting erupted in North Kivu province in the month of October when the National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP), led by renegade general Laurent Nkunda, launched a fresh offensive against government forces. CNDP forces seized the town of Rutshuru on October 28, while forcing more than 100,000 people out of their homes. Aid agencies estimate that, since the resumption of fighting two months ago, more than 300,000 civilians have been forced from their homes, bringing the total number of displaced people in the two provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu to over 1.6 million. More than 100 people have been killed, some caught in the cross-fire and others summarily executed. According to various reports, more than 50 civilians were killed in the town of Kiwanda on November 4-5, the majority of them by CNDP forces who are believed to have assassinated civilians they deemed collaborators of the Mai Mai militia allied to the Congolese government.

"The Security Council must reinforce the capacity of the UN peacekeepers in the DRC so that they can fulfill their mandate to protect civilians," said Alie Kabba, Executive Director of UAO. "It is impossible to envision lasting prosperity and development in Africa without peace and stability in the DRC. A conflict-free DRC will ignite the engine of development in all surrounding countries and beyond. Stabilizing eastern Congo should therefore be a priority for all who are concerned about Africa."

The more than 17,000-strong United Nations Mission in the DRC (MONUC) is stretched thin in a country the size of the United States east of the Mississippi. Its mandate is to protect civilians against all forms of violence, but it has been unable to do so in the face of attacks against civilians by the CNDP, continued on page 12

New American Voters Flex Muscles

Chicago - In 2006 immigrants marched in Chicago in historic numbers, chanting "Today We March: Tomorrow We Vote!" In 2007 close to 1.5 million immigrants in Illinois and across the U.S. became American citizens. This year new American voters turned out in record numbers. Many pundits credit the Latino vote with Democratic victories not only in Florida, Colorado, New Mexico, and Nevada, but also for the margins of victory in North Carolina, Virginia, and Indiana.

In Illinois immigrant civic engagement efforts reached new levels of scale and sophistication, and an exit poll shows that La-

Un Obama africain, est-ce possible?

par Samy Ghorbal
Jeune Afrique

L'élection de Barack Hussein Obama à la présidence américaine est une révolution et un symbole. Mais elle ne se résume pas à l'élection d'un Noir à la Maison Blanche. Car l'homme que les électeurs de la première puisance du monde ont choisi de porter à la magistrature suprême est bien plus que cela. C'est un sang-mêlé. Le fils d'un étudiant kenyan et d'une Américaine du Kansas, Obama n'est ni un descendant d'esclave ni un fils d'immigrant - fort-il de souche africaine-, venu goûter aux désirs du rêve américain. C'est un citoyen du monde, un enfant de couple mixte, né à Hawaii et ayant passé une partie de son enfance en Indonésie. Et ces signes particuliers, loin d'atténuer la signification de sa victoire, lui confèrent au contraire une portée véritablement universelle.

En France, 15 % des mariages célébrés en 2006 - un mariage sur six - étaient des mariages mixtes, entre conjoints de nationalité française et étrangère. Des dynamiques similaires quoique moins marquées sont observées en Grande-Bretagne et aux Pays-Bas, anciennes puissances impériales européennes aujourd'hui à l'avant-garde d'un vaste mouvement global de mixissage. En Afrique, 17 millions de migrants de l'intérieur sont officiellement recensés, dont 7,5 millions dans la seule Afrique de l'Ouest. Et la fréquence des mariages mixtes est plus élevée qu'ailleurs. Mais les Africains, qui ont célébré dans l'allégresse l'élection du sénateur Obama, seraient-ils, pour autant, prêts à faire preuve d'autant d'audace que les Américains, et à confier les rênes du pouvoir à un enfant de couple mixte? Pas nécessairement. Ne serait-ce que parce que leurs Constitutions ne le permettent pas toujours... Le Continent a connu au moins
“I want my children, who I leave behind and perhaps will never see again, to be told that the future of the Congo is beautiful and that their country expects them, as it expects every Congolese, to fulfill the sacred task of rebuilding on our independence, our sovereignty, for without justice there is no dignity and without independence there are no free men...Do not weep for me, my companion, I know that my country, now suffering so much, will be able to defend its independence and freedom.”

Patrice Lumumba, first Prime Minister of the Congo and visionary African leader, was assassinated on January 17, 1961.

New American Voters Flex Muscle (continued from page 1)

Progreso Latino. The “Our Vote is Power” campaign was supported with over $1 million in contributions from charitable foundations and the immigrant community itself. A total of 25,804 new citizens registered to vote and more than 144,277 immigrant voters in Latino, Asian, South Asian, Arab and Muslims communities were targeted. 24 full-time campaign fellows and ICIRR project’s staff worked with 1,654 Election Day volunteers in 694 precincts and turn out record numbers of immigrant voters through:

- Total door knocks: 212,091
- Total live phone calls: 57,385
- Total robo-calls: 36,652
- Total pieces of mail: 150,887

Immigrant and Latino voters played a decisive role in the Presidential contest as well as in local races. In sample immigrant heavy precincts targeted for GOTV in Suburban Cook and Lake County turn out increased by 56% and 76% respectively, Lake County turn out increased by 56% and 76% respectively, GOTV in Suburban Cook and Lake County turn out increased by 56% and 76% respectively, an increase of 16% and 21.5% above neighboring non-immigrant precincts.

“Immigrants flexed their political muscle as never before,” said Salgado. Economy and just immigration reform were top issues for immigrant voters. “The deportation-only strategy has the effect of destroying families, including the families of many U.S. citizens. Immigrant voters will be holding their newly elected leaders accountable to keep immigrant families together. At a time of economic crisis, our elected officials should stabilize our economy with legalization, preventing unscrupulous employers from pulling down wages by hiring undocumented workers.”

One of the areas with record numbers of immigrants registering and voting on Election Day was Chinatown.

“Chicago's Chinatown has made history with the registration of more than 1,600 new Chinese American voters and an unprecedented turnout on the Election day,” said CW Chan, President of the Coalition for a Better Chinese American Community. “We marched in solidarity with other immigrant communities and we voted to make sure that our collective voice is heard and our American dream is realized.”

Through the “Illinois Immigrant Election Central”, 899 Latino and 311 Asian American voters were surveyed as they were leaving their polling places on Election Day. This first time effort was done by ICIRR in partnership with Univision Radio News and the Asian American Institute and with the collaboration of Miwa Challenge, Institute of Latino Studies at University of Notre Dame, Chicago Public Schools, and the McCormick Foundation.

Among key results:

- Latino and Asian American voters overwhelming voted for President-elect Barack Obama. Latino voters supported Obama over Republican nominee John McCain 91%-8% and Asian American voters supported the Democratic candidate, 81-16%.
- Obama’s support was particularly intense among Latinos ages 18 to 30, who voted for Obama 96%-4% and Asians in that age range favored him at 92-3%. US-born Latinos favored Obama at a slightly higher rate (92%) than for-

continued on page 3

African Advocate

Voice of African Immigrants & Refugees in Illinois

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New American Voters Flex Muscle

...continued from page 2...

eigen-born Latinos (89%). Latino first-time voters supported Obama 95%-5%.

- Latinos and Asian American voters broke heavily for Democratic candidates for Congress. In the 10th Congressional District race between Republican incumbent Mark Kirk and Democratic challenger Dan Seals, Latinos favored Seals 77%-23%. Asians also backed Seals 59%-41%. In the 11th Congressional District, Latinos voted for Democrat Debbie Halvorson over Republican Martin Ozinga 91%-9%, while Asians supported Halvorson 83%-17%. In the 14th District, where Rep. Bill Foster (D) faced a rematch with Republican Jim Oberweis, Latinos supported Foster 81%-19%, while Asians voted for Foster 63%-37%.

- Latinos ranked immigration as their second most important issue, only after the economy. Latino views on immigration issues, two-thirds of Latinos ranked an earned path to legal status for the undocumented as the most important (92%), followed by family visa delays. Asian Americans ranked family visa delays as their most important immigration issue, followed by an earned path to legal status.

- Latino and Asian American voters see the Republican Party unfavorably to immigrants. Latinos viewed the Democratic Party as favorable to immigrants (59.8% very favorable, 34.3% somewhat favorable), but had strongly negative views of the Republican Party.

- 68% of Latino voters in the Chicago region consider the Republican Party "not favorable" to immigrants.

- Asian Americans held similar views of the parties, though by a closer margin. More than half of Asian American voters thought the Democrats were favorable to immigrants, while only 53% thought the Republicans unfavorable. Nearly half (46%) thought the GOP was unfavorable, with only 11.6% thinking them very favorable.

Minutenmen: Anti-Migrant Bigotry Crushed at the Polls:

The most virulent attempt to mobilize voters using anti-immigrant feelings came in efforts by the Illinois Republican Party, with the support of Illinois Minutemen spokesperson Rosanna Pulido, to reclaim the 56th state district seat of incumbent Republican-turned-Democrat Paul Froelich (D). Representative Froelich has been an outspoken defender of immigrant rights. Republican challenger Anita Forte-Scott sent numerous attack mailers accusing Rep. Froelich of being soft on illegal immigration, and a robocall was recorded on her behalf by Minutemen spokesperson Rosanna Pulido. Ms. Forte-Scott was crushed by Rep. Froelich in a lopsided vote of 58%-43%. Latino and Asian voters made up 11.8% of the voting population in this race. "This race showed conclusively that Illinois voters reject the politics of divisive racial rhetoric," Salgado added.

Immigrants Support Immigrant Friendly Republicans:

Despite the preference of the immigrant community towards the Democratic Party during this election cycle, Republicans who supported immigrant issues were rewarded by this growing sector of the immigrant voting bloc. In House district 17, Republican Elizabeth Coulson (R) defeated Dan Bliss (D) by 51%-48%. The Latino and Asian American vote in this district made up 10% of the voting population. Coulson has been a supporter of the immigrant community.

"These results show the importance for both Democrats and Republicans to pay attention to the immigrant community and their rapid growing political power," said Cristina Garcia, citizenship program coordinator who worked mobilizing Latino immigrant voters in Chicago West side. "Immigrant and Latino voters showed that they are a powerful segment of the electorate that can decide elections."

On November 20, ICIRR obtained a victory at the state level with the passage of the Access to Religious Ministry Act (HB 4613) that would allow religious ministry access to immigrant detainees in state jails and detention centers. HB 4613 was passed unanimously in the Illinois House and Senate.

ICIRR will also push for just and humane immigration reform and an end to raids and deportations that lead to the separation of families. On January 21, ICIRR will be joining other state coalitions and national organizations in D.C. for a massive rally in support for common sense solutions for our broken immigration system.

Public opinion polls found that 80% of Latino voters supported Obama primarily because of his stance on immigration and the broken immigration system.

L'Afrique à l'heure américaine

Par Philippe Perdrix et Christophe Boisbouvier

Jeune Afrique

Pour une fois les chefs d’Etat africains ont été en phase. La plupart ont passé la nuit du 4 novembre devant leur télévision pour assister au sacre du « cousin d’Amérique ». Et beaucoup y sont allés de leur petite phrase le lendemain matin, le parti de tournant. Les chefs d’Etat africains ont donc tous célébré la victoire de Mr. Obama. Cette victoire signifie pour les Africains, des perspectives nouvelles, des projets d’aide et de développement à l’horizon. L’Amérique, aux côtés des Africains, se réjouit de cette victoire. En Guinée, Côte d’Ivoire et Sénégal, les chefs d’Etat ont exprimé leur joie et leur espoir pour les Africains. En Tunisie, le Président Béji Caïd Essebsi a salué cette victoire, en disant : « Je crois que nous avons une nouvelle chance. »

Dans la plupart des capitales africaines, le Centre culturel américain y est allé de sa soirée spéciale. Quant aux VIP, il s’agissait de la résidence de l’ambassadeur des États-Unis. Dans le quartier populaire de la capitale, le Commissariat à l’Obama - parrainé par le maire de Dakar et président du Sénat, Pape Diop - a battu campagne comme s’il s’agissait d’une cause nationale. A 5 heures du matin, un cortège s’est arrêté à la porte. Les impatients sont allés en direct au discours d’Obama, et peu dormi, il a épluché les résultats pour ensuite délivrer ses commentaires à la presse. Dans la capitale, le centre culturel américain y est allé de sa soirée spéciale. Quant aux VIP, il s’agissait de la résidence de l’ambassadeur des États-Unis. Dans le quartier populaire de la capitale, le Commissariat à l’Obama - parrainé par le maire de Dakar et président du Sénat, Pape Diop - a battu campagne comme s’il s’agissait d’une cause nationale. A 5 heures du matin, un cortège s’est arrêté à la porte. Les impatients sont allés en direct au discours d’Obama, et peu dormi, il a épluché les résultats pour ensuite délivrer ses commentaires à la presse.
In spite of the advances in technology and the shrinking of the world, it is curious that there is such silence around the suffering of the Congolese people due to the exploitation of powerful corporate and foreign forces beyond its people's immediate control.

Mark Twain who wrote King Leopold's Soliloquy, Joseph Conrad, The Heart of Darkness (PDF) (Often misread as Congo or Africa being dark but he was referring to the dark hearts of the exploiters of the Congo), and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle of Sherlock Holmes fame who wrote Crime in the Congo.

The Congo Reform movement that drew from the work of African Americans such as William Sheppard and George Washington Williams and led by European figures such as Robert Casement and E.D. Morel gave birth to the modern international human rights movement.

We need to prosecute the corporations buying blood-soaked natural resources for abetting crimes against humanity, and introduce a global coltan-tax to pay for a substantial peacekeeping force. To get there, we need to build an international system that values the lives of black people more than it values profit.

One hundred years later we are again calling on the global community to be at the side of the Congolese. This time, there is one fundamental difference, the Congolese are agents in this narrative and the call this time is not a hand-over to a colonial power or neo-colonial institutions but rather to the people of the Congo.

The clarion call is for the combating of the forces (local elites and rebels, foreign governments, foreign corporations, and multi-national institutions) that have the Congolese people in a death trap. The charity prism of the humanitarian industry is not the answer. It only perpetuates dependency and dis-empowerment. Should Congo be truly liberated, the Darfurization (emptiness of agency from the afflicted people) of the global movement in support of Congo must be avoided at all cost.

Congolese must be agents rather than objects in the pursuit of the Congolese. This time, there is one crossroad. In spite of the shrinking of the world, it is curious that there is such silence around the suffering of the Congolese people due to the exploitation of powerful corporate and foreign forces beyond its people's immediate control.

In the words of Friends of the Congo, "The Congolese must be agents rather than objects in the pursuit of the Congolese. If they are agents, the Congolese will be truly liberated, the Darfurization (emptying of agency from the afflicted people) of the global movement in support of Congo must be avoided at all cost."

Congolese Refugees on the main road to Goma in eastern Congo after fleeing in Kibumba.
Barack Obama, 47 years old, son of an African from Kenya and a white American was on 5 November 2008 declared the 44th president-elect of the most powerful country in the world, the United States of America. When he was born in 1961 black people were still unable to vote effectively and if his Kenyan Dad had been an American he would have had little in the way of representation. In the year when we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the assassination another African-American icon, Martin Luther King Jr, how more just can it be that the first ever black president of the US was elected? Just imagine a black couple and their two girls in the White House, not mowing the lawns or as ‘selected’ advisers holding office through patronage but as and family occupying the Oval Office, the West Wing and with the buck stopping at his table!

But the election of Obama has too many symbols not just for America, for Africa, but for the whole world. Across the world, many people felt connected to him and able to claim him for their own dreams of a better world.

There are many angles to look at this victory and hopefully, barring the assassin’s bullet, we will have four or even eight years to judge this captivating personality against performance. Today is for celebration of the possibilities and the ways in which the campaign and the candidate has touched so many people. One, it is a victory for all mothers, especially those forced to raise their children alone. It is a victory for family, in the broader sense of the word, not the very narrow and increasingly narrower nuclearism of the West and the middle classes globally. Here was a man raised by his maternal grandparents and President-Elect Barack Obama

from all accounts with love, emotional security and extreme confidence to believe he could beat the best in a world that set limitations on race and class on his ambitions. Can you imagine how challenging it must have been to raise a mixed-race kid in the 1960s? It is a shame that his grandmother was not able to hold out to see the promise come through. It must touch Obama most deeply too that neither his father nor mother whose ‘hidden love’ that gave life to him were alive to see this great moment. It is prove that love across all kinds of divide is not wrong.

Two, in a world distinctly lacking in visionary and inspiring leaders Obama’s message of hope and ‘yes we can’ resonates with the frustration of the frustrated, the marginalized peoples, giving rise to the notion that they can do better for themselves and re not hopeless or powerless.

Three, American democracy has been described as ‘the best democracy money can buy.’ While this is true – and this election is by far the costliest ever in the balance has shifted in favor of ordinary people. Money was traditionally seen as in the big corporations and financial houses, and in special interests more generally, but Obama’s faith in the ordinary people who donated $5, $10, $100 forged a formidable movement and force buoyed by his vision, a vision eloquently carried across the length and breadth of the world and echoed thanks to the new information technology carrying ‘unyielding hope’ to many. Four, in a cynical world, dominated by the ‘me me’ ideology of greed from which decades of neoliberalism decreed TINA (There Is No Alternative), Obama made ‘change’ relevant and inspired millions to

across the border into Congo. The Rwandan government chased after them. But it’s a lie. How do we know? The Rwandan government didn’t go to where the Hutu genocidaires were, at least not at first. They went to where Congo’s natural resources were – and began to pilage them. They even told their troops to go with any Hutus they came across. Congo is the richest country in the world for gold, diamonds, coltan, cassiterite, and more. Everybody wanted a slice – so six other countries invaded. These resources were not being stolen for use in Africa. They were seized so they could be sold on to us. The more we bought, the more the invaders stole – and slaughtered. The rise of mobile phones caused a surge in deaths, because the coltan they contain is found primarily in Congo. The UN named the international corporations it believed were involved: Anglo-America, Standard Chartered Bank, De Beers and more than 100 others. (They all deny the charges.) But instead of stopping these corporations, our governments demanded that the UN stop criticizing them. There were times when the fighting flagged. In 2003, a peace deal was finally brokered by the UN and the international armies withdrew. Many continued to work via proxy militias – but the carnage waned somewhat. Until now. As with the first war, there is a cover-story, and the truth. A Congolese military leader, Laurent Nkunda – backed by Rwanda – claims he needs to protect the local Tutsi population from the same Hutu genocidaires who have been hiding out in the jungles of eastern Congo since 1994. That’s why he is seizing Congolese military bases and is poised to march on Goma. It is a lie. François Grignon, Africa Director of the International Crisis Group, tells me the truth: ‘Nkunda is being funded by Rwandan businessmen so they can retain control of the mines in North Kivu. This is the absolute core of the conflict. What we are seeing now is beneficial to the illegal war economy, fighting to maintain their right to exploit.’ At the moment, Rwandan business interests make a fortune from the mines illegally seized during the war. The global coltan price has collapsed, so now they focus hungrily on cassiterite, which is used to make tin cans and other consumer disposables. As the war began to wane, A Congolese mining leader told the ‘selected’ Rwandan government – so they have given it another bloody kick-start. Yet the debate about Congo in the West – when it exists at all – focuses on our inability to provide a decent banditage, without mentioning that we are causing the wound. It’s true the 17,000 UN forces in the country are abysmally failing to protect the civilian population, and urgently need to be super-charged. But it is even more important to stop fuelling the war in the first place by buying blood-soaked natural resources. Nkunda only has enough guns and grenades to take on the Congolese army and the UN because we buy his loot. We need to prosecute the mining and broadcasting blood-soaked natural resources for abetting crimes against humanity, and introduce a global coltan-tax to pay for a substantial peacekeeping force. To get there, we need to build an international system that values the lives of black people more than it values profit.

How we fuel Africa’s bloodiest war, continued from page 4

Obama Makes Hope Possible Again!

President Barack Obama

Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem, Pambazuka News

Johann Hari has reported from Iraq, Israel/Palestine, the Congo, the Central African Republic, Venezuela, Peru and the US, and his journalism has appeared in publications all over the world. 

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Un Obama africain, est-ce possible? (suite de la page 1)
deux présidents métis : le père écossais, et le Togolais de mère africaine, de se présenter en 2012, comme beaucoup lui en prêtaient l’ambition.

Howard W French
Huffington Post

In the momentary lull that follows a presidential election, between full-out campaigning and real decision-making, the media has a few humoring rituals that center on parlor games and policy speculation.

This election has been no different. While we wait for an Obama administration to start taking shape, one of the favorite exercises has been gazing into crystal balls about the foreign policy crises the new president will face. Others, a bit more boldly, make forthright statements about what the incoming government’s foreign policy priorities should be.

Fred Kaplan’s take in Slate was a fairly typical offering of this kind. Under the heading, “A Foreign-Policy Repair Manual: Six priorities for President Obama,” he went on to describe a typical laundry list of crises and opportunities, from getting out of Iraq to “laying the initial groundwork for renewed Israel-Palestinian talks.”

As priorities, the lists were fine as far as they went. The problem is that for a new leader promising change, they have tended to reflect the most traditional sorts of Washington priorities, neglecting other parts of the world that are starving for American moral and political leadership; places where Obama, by virtue of his unique background, offers particularly compelling potential for impact.

The most obvious and important omission, on lists like Kaplan’s is Africa, a continent of nearly one billion people today that according to United Nations projections will count an astounding two billion people by mid-century.

Today, for example, a new war looms in the Congo, a place where unknown to most Americans the United States has played a critical and mostly disastrous role since independence from Belgium in 1960. According to respectable international estimates some four million people have died in the Congo as a result of wars there since 1996, the greatest toll anywhere since World War II.

There is a powerful argument to be made that this disaster, along with the Rwandan genocide that preceded it, is Bill Clinton’s most important foreign policy legacy, and an Obama policy toward Africa run by many of the same people and carrying forward Clinton era thinking would be a sign of disdain for the continent and its problems.

The Congo’s apocalyptic dissolution began in earnest when Washington gave Rwanda the green light to invade the country, setting off a free for all that sucked in many of the Congo’s neighbors.

Washington has spent money on the crisis through the United Nations, but in terms of showing political leadership it has run from the flicts, build functioning institutions and continue to lay the foundations of democracy stands to become an important player in the next phase of globalization, as labor costs rise in much of Asia, and capital begins to prospect for productive opportunities elsewhere.

An Africa pocked by neglected failings will increasingly become a nexus of catastrophe, and contrary to the wishes of our foreign policy establishment, which always seeks to confine Africa to the realm of our lowest priorities, the blowback from its ever-larger disasters will inflict high costs and pain everywhere.

While much of the world has gone sour on the United States’ claim of being a beacon of hope, the 53 countries of Africa have by and large remained profoundly attached to a vision of America as land of justice, opportunity and freedom.

To waste this moment would be more than a lost opportunity. For the United States, for Africa and for the world, it would be a tragedy.

Howard W. French is an associate professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, where he began teaching in September 2008. In 1997, his coverage of the fall of Mobutu Sese Seko won the Overseas Press Club of America’s award for best newspaper interpretation of foreign affairs.

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Howard French

Obama and Africa: The Change We Have Been Waiting For?

countries of Africa have by and large remained profoundly attached to a vision of America as land of justice, opportunity and freedom. Obama’s election will only make such feelings much more intense, a fact I can attest to from correspondence from friends across the continent of prayer vigils in every faith for his candidacy and for his success in office.

un des deux parents ne possède pas la nationalité d’origine de ses parents et continue à poser des problèmes. Les dispositions de l’article 35 de la loi fondamentale ivoirienne ont d’ailleurs été invoquées en 2000 pour écarter l’ancien Premier ministre Alassane Ouattara, au motif qu’il se serait prévalu dans sa jeunesse de la nationalité burkinabé.

C’est au Maghreb que les critères d’éligibilité sont les plus drastiques. En Algérie, l’article 38 de la Constitution de 1996 spécifie que tout candidat à la magistrature suprême doit être algérien d’origine, de confession musulmane, que de père, de mère, de grands-pères et de grands-mères paternels et maternels tunisiens, tous demeurés tunisiens sans discontinuité, sont autorisés à se présenter.
SOMALIA: Policy Overhaul Required

Patrick Duplat & Jake Kurtzer

SOMALIA is the world’s worst humanitarian disaster and aid agencies are unable to respond to the immense scale of needs. The insecurity preventing assistance is a consequence of failed international political and diplomatic efforts. To stabilize the situation in south central Somalia, U.S. policy requires a complete overhaul, prioritizing humanitarian concerns over narrow counterterrorism objectives. Neighboring countries are bearing the brunt of the refugee outflow and more needs to be done to help them. For example, in Djibouti, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) should increase its protection staff as well as identify and provide services to urban refugees in Djibouti city.

While the situation has deteriorated in the past two years, the last months have seen worsening indicators: more than 1.3 million Somalis - 40% of the population - are dependent on external assistance, and 400,000 people have sought refuge in neighboring countries. Neighboring Countries

The U.S. should provide non-earmarked funding that allows UNHCR to allocate funding in the Horn of Africa where it is most needed.

• UNHCR Djibouti should maintain daily protection staff presence in the Ali Addeh camp.

• UNHCR Djibouti should start an outreach program for urban refugees.

Policy recommendations

• The incoming U.S. Administration should overhaul U.S. policy towards Somalia by taking a comprehensive regional approach, prioritizing the provision of humanitarian assistance and calling for a truly inclusive political process.

• The U.S. should provide non-earmarked funding that allows UNHCR to allocate funding in the Horn of Africa where it is most needed.

• UNHCR Djibouti should maintain daily protection staff presence in the Ali Addeh camp.

• UNHCR Djibouti should start an outreach program for urban refugees.

For America but potentially for the world.

* Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem is general secretary of the Global Pan-African Movement, based in Kampala, Uganda, and is also director of Justice Africa, based in London, UK.

Obama Makes Hope Possible Again, (continued from page 3)

believe that business should not and cannot continue as usual. So successful was he that even his opponent became a candidate for both of them effectively repudiating Bush’s legacy of right-wing extremism. It is a triumph of Obama’s possible change, and McCain not being seen as a credible agent of change, that won it for Obama.

Five, the pride that Kenyans and other Africans and peoples of the world take in Obama’s candidacy and victory is not just the fact of his partial African ancestry, but the potential for it to inspire a new way of playing politics in our own countries where candidates may be judged ‘not by the color of their skin’ or their ethnic, religious or social affiliations but - as Martin Luther King put it - ‘by the content of their character.’

Six, Obama becoming president of America does not mean that racism has ended in America or the poor will suddenly become rich, but they will be able to count on the listening ear of someone they trust and who understands their plight as a result of his own experience.

Finally Obama’s presidency may not mean that the US will suddenly be at peace with the rest of the world, but there is hope that his administration will stop treating the rest of us as tenants and be able to listen to other peoples and take their interests and sensitivities seriously, ushering in a real multilateralism in sharp contrast to the unilateralism of the Bush years. It may be ‘good morning’ again not just for America but potentially for the whole world.
African Refugee’s Election

is an only-in America story

Monitor Staff– Concord Monitor

New Hampshire

Richard Komi (right) with Michelle Obama (left)

The Democrats swept all the major contests in New Hampshire elections Tuesday. The New Hampshire elections Tuesday. The state will send its first female senator to Washington. The New Hampshire Senate is now dominated by women—apparently first for any legislative body in the country. In Concord, there is no longer a single Republican member of the city’s delegation to the state House.

To all those notable outcomes, let’s add one more: the unlikely election to the New Hampshire House of Richard Komi. Komi, 40, was born in Southern Nigeria. He fled when his tribe came under attack, and he spent nearly four years in the Republic of Benin as a refugee. He came to the United States nine years ago, working his way through factory and retail jobs. He eventually made it to Southern New Hampshire University, where he finished the education he began in Africa with a bachelor’s degree in communications. Today, he lives in Manchester and works for Easter Seals.

“I have always wanted not just to vote, but to run for public office,” he told Monitor reporter Chelsea Conaboy last week.

Komi’s remarkable journey was noted by President-elect Barack Obama in 2007, when he spoke at the SNHU commencement.

“Richard Komi may be graduation today, but it’s clear that he grew up a long time ago,” Obama said. “We celebrate with him because his journey is a testament to the powerful idea that in the face of impossible odds, ordinary people can do extraordinary things. At a time when America finds itself at a crossroads, facing challenges we haven’t seen in decades, we need to hold on to the idea more than ever.

That is, of course, the same way people talk about Obama himself. And this was before Komi was elected to the New Hampshire House. Komi’s new priorities: church groups have reached out to our newest neighbours to smooth their path. But there has been resentment, too.

Komi’s election… is a good lesson in the power of hard work, education and perseverance.

The needy will not always be needy. Indeed, refugees and immigrants will enrich our communities, our state, our politics.

Komi’s election last week is a good lesson in the power of hard work, education and perseverance. The needy will not always be needy. Indeed, refugees and immigrants will enrich our communities, our state, our politics.

In an election year with many fine results, here is one more reason to celebrate.

Refugee stories like Komi’s are as old as this country. Many of us have grandparents or great-grandparents who came to this country seeking a better life, sometimes fleeing war or hunger or persecution. But when refugees arrive from places so unfamiliar to the rest of us, their needs so great and their familiarity with American life so small, the welcome they receive can be grudging.

In Concord, the arrival of new comers from Africa, Iraq and beyond has created tension. Generous families and individuals, teachers and church groups have reached out to our newest neighbours to smooth their path. But there has been resentment, too.

African Refugees Succeed in Tucson After-school Program

Doug Ramsey
Public News Service - AZ
Tucson, AZ

A Tucson after-school tutoring program aimed at low-income nine-to-twelve-year-olds has unexpectedly found itself attracting African refugee children. Susie Elliott, program manager of the Lutheran Church-run ASPIRE program, says the African kids arrive in the U.S. with English skills far below their grade levels, and don’t get as much help as they need from cash-strapped public schools. She says some schools used to have three hours of daily English-leaner instruction, but no longer.

“They get maybe about an hour of instruction a day, of immersion in English, at their schools; then they get put back into the regular school day. They’ve been tested; some of them are not even at kindergarten level.”

Even aside from the reduced English instruction, Elliott says, public school teaching is geared mostly to Spanish speakers. With the help of two part-time teachers and several volunteers, Elliott has seen the African kids in her program make huge progress in learning English and doing their schoolwork.

One girl in Elliott’s program gained two years of reading level in just four months.

“She’s right now in sixth grade. She tested at second-grade level in English. She is now progressing to fourth-grade level.”

Elliott credits no-nonsense, intensive tutoring, along with lots of
card games.

continued on page 9

Africans Adapt to Nordic Chill

Ellen Otzen,
BBC News

In a small, white house standing in the shadow of Copenhagen’s oldest churches people from Cameroon, Botswana, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda meet each Wednesday night to sing in a gospel music choir. Ugandan Joel Moses came to Denmark for love, 13 years ago.

“I was once married to a Danish woman. She couldn’t stand living in Africa and so I moved to her home,” he explains.

“I love to sing and so I come every Wednesday even if I am tired, physically - it builds me up and gears me up for a new day.

“To be honest, I really come to do something as an African in a white community because there’s a lot of things I do that are gone, not recognized. But I think I am recognized by reaching out to my fellow Africans.”

Love broke down for Joel as it did for another Ugandan, Peace Kabushenga.

Dramatic

She is a project manager dealing with HIV/Aids among the ethnic minorities in Denmark. She arrived in Copenhagen almost 30 years ago in 1979, as a diplomat’s wife. Her life then was comfortable.

But it ended abruptly when their relationship broke down and her husband returned to Uganda.

“It was a dramatic change,” says Peace, who found herself as a single mother far from home.

“I had to declare myself a refugee to live in Denmark. I had to live in a refugee camp while my papers were being processed.

“Strangely, I knew no other Africans,” she recalls.

“It was my Danish friends who helped me. Of course I wouldn’t have survived - I am strong; but they made it so much easier for me and most importantly, for my son.”

Historic links

Denmark never had colonies in Africa but ties between the sea-faring Danes and Africa’s Gold Coast, now Ghana, stretch way back in history. The Ghanaian seat of government, in the capital, Accra, is housed in the original Christiansborg Castle - a slave fort built by the Danes in the 17th century.

Stored inside the Presbyterian Church in Accra’s Osu district are records from the 1850s, chronicling families with Danish fathers and Ghanaian mothers.

Eighty Danish surnames, like Svanekær, Richter and Holm are still in use today in Ghana.

Rapper Al Agami came to Denmark as a political refugee. He started on head to Africa-friendly Denmark.

‘Fear factor’

Al Agami was born in Uganda’s capital, Kampala, but grew up in Denmark. He also spent three years living in Afghanistan. His father was a soldier.

“I am a political refugee. I wound up in Denmark because of my father’s situation in Africa. Over it was scared, political refugees, like rapper Al Agami, who started to head to Africa-friendly Denmark.

continued on page 9
personal attention. As well as their lack of English skills, the African kids also face daunting cultural barriers. Elliott says explaining Halloween was a challenge. “They didn’t even know what Halloween was. They had no idea why we have this pumpkin, because pumpkins are something they eat; pumpkins are not used for recreation or for show.” Elliott’s program, funded by the Lutheran Wheatridge Foundation, runs five hours after school each afternoon. It currently has 30 low-income students, about half of them African refugees. Because of its success, there is now a waiting list.

Africans Adapt to Nordic Chill.
(continued from page 8)

stress with the Idi Amin [a former Ugandan dictator] era.” Al Agami is now one of the biggest names in Danish rap music. He recalls how Denmark in the 1970s was “very quiet” which he feels is a contradiction to his “can’t sit still” personality. He says he was weird because there were “no brown faced children” but there was “no fear factor”, unlike now.

Somali Khadija Faro works as a social adviser. When she arrived in the 1990s, she says things were different; but it was during the 1990s that everything began changing.

“Many, many Somali refugees came to Denmark and they were the biggest minority group,” Khadija says. That is when the fear factor, as Al Agami calls it, set in.

Shift in attitude
Hostility, resentment and friction rumbled for two years ago, tension spilled over when Muslims took to the streets outraged by cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper. “After the 11th of September [2001], I became a political issue and it is a big one here in Denmark, unfortunately,” explains Khadija. “I wish people would instead use their energy on other things like integration and making the second generation immigrants from feeling marginalized.”

Peace Kabushenga believes the problems have stemmed from the large number of immigrants arriving. “You have to bear in mind that Denmark is a very small country and so many new people have come in. I don’t think the Danes were surprised.

When he’s out there I don’t want him to feel like a foreigner. I would feel very sad if he told me, he was mistreated on the streets,” she says.

“Yes, he has a black skin but he has his roots here and he is very, very Danish.”

Mama Africa: Miriam Makeba (1932-2008)

On stage, Miriam Zenzi Makeba exuded an uncommon grace that was unforced just like the simple lyrics of her songs that has thrilled audiences across the world for decades. You need not understand the lyrics of her songs to appreciate both the intensity of their message, or the ingenuity that underpin them. They were simple country ballads and village lores that evoke memories of lost innocence, an idyllic existence that speaks to our shocking replication of brotherhood and community.

Yet, those innocent lyrics, devoid of any fiery rebuke, were considered atrocious by South Africa’s then apartheid government which revoked her citizenship and right to return to her home country, after her appearance in a riveting anti-apartheid documentary, Come Back Africa, in 1960.

Thus began a spell in exile that spanned decades from the United States (from where she fled after series of harassment from the authorities) and later Guinea. The Guinean government of Sekou Toure gave her all the courtesies a continent’s mother (she is popularly called Mama Africa) deserves, even asking her to address the United Nations General Assembly on its behalf. She did that twice, and on each occasion spoke out against the evils of apartheid.

More accolades were to come later: She was received by such world leaders as Haïlé Selassie, Fidel Castro, John F. Kennedy and François Mitterrand. Makeba has also toured with great singers such as Paul Simon, Nina Simone, Hugh Masekela and Dizzy Gillespie.

A website created to honor accomplished South African national (zar.co.za) notes: “The ban on her records was lifted in South Africa in 1988 and she returned to her homeland in December 1990. Four years later, she started a charity project to raise funds to protect women in South Africa. Her first concert in South Africa (1991) was a huge success and this was a prelude to a world-wide tour which included the USA and Europe.” She was married to Stokely Carmichael, a radical Black Panther leader. She had also been married to Hugh Masekela.

Although well received on the American culture scene, the love turned sour after her marriage to Carmichael in 1968. The US never placed a formal ban, but her once thriving concert deals suddenly dried up. It is remarkable that she lived through the trauma without a whiff of bitterness in her songs and comments.

The test of true art is in its ability to stay evergreen. Makeba’s music has remained appealing decades after, surviving the onslaught of disco, hip-hop and the sub-cultures they have inspired in Africa.

Since her death was announced, there has been an endless stream of eulogies. It’s no surprise given the accomplishments of this simple but exceptional woman whose music was - and still remains - a signature tune for all Africans. Born 1932 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Makeba’s first shot to limelight was as a vocalist with the Manhattan Brothers in 1954. She would later quit to record with her all-woman group the Skylarks while touring Southern Africa with Al Herbert’s African Jazz and Variety, an 18-month tour reputed to have launched the careers of many African artists.

But it was a talent that blossomed much earlier when as a 13-year-old, she was adjudged winner of a talent show at a missionary school. The town took note; often inviting young Makeba to sing at weddings and other social functions.

In 1959, Makeba starred as female lead in the show, King Kong, a Broadway-inspired South African musical. She would later sing at President John Kennedy’s birthday, working in New York with Harry Belafonte where tunes such as “The Click Song” and “Pata Pata” were created.

Performances in Europe and America brought her to the attention of Harry Belafonte and Steve Allen who helped catapult her to fame. In 1959, she won a Grammy award for the album An Evening with Harry Belafonte & Miriam Makeba.

Her other awards include, the 1966 Dag Hammarskjöld Peace Prize and the UNESCO Grand Prix du Conseil International de la Musique.

In 1967, one of her most popular tune, Pata Pata, was released in the United States and scored an instant hit worldwide. Other popular and commercially successful songs include Welela, Malaika and several memorable tunes that were just the perfect anthems for a black world in the turbulent ’60s seeking for a voice capable of giving meaning to the expression, black is beautiful.

Makeba surmounted challenges including the effects of several car accidents, a plane crash and even cancer. But there is always a time to take the final bow and exit the stage. Makeba has just succumbed to that eternal rule. The ovation remains as it was when she first walked into our lives - and stole our hearts.

Where the evil wrought by apartheid made life seem hopeless for her fellow black South Africans, her music offered a soothing relief and gave them reasons to smile and cling onto life.

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Liberia: President Adopts New Tactics in Fight against Corruption
Abdoulaye W. Dukulé

No country can ever claim to have eradicated corruption totally. However, governments can put in place measures to bring the phenomenon under control, and in her recent policy statement on the issue President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia seems to have placed herself on the path to finding long-term solutions to a scourge that has permeated Liberian society and government from its founding days.

Elected three years ago with the fight against corruption as one of her most important campaign planks, Johnson Sirleaf has complained often about endemic corruption in all branches of government – sounding, at times, on the brink of desperation. But her new policy statement is a clear departure from her past utterances, when she and others in the government have seemed at a loss for what to do.

In her landmark speech the president welcomed collaboration from the media, the general public and political commentators. This is a novelty, and a departure from the defensive approach she has adopted in the past, when she sometimes gave the impression she was protecting some people. She also recognized the fact that corrupt practices are part of the very foundation of Liberian institutions. Finally, she pointed to the issue of impunity – the fact that some have seemed immune to the consequences of their corruption. In addressing these issues, the president seems to have reconnected with her campaign promise to find ways in which to fight against theft, waste and graft in the public domain.

President Johnson Sirleaf may have disappointed Liberians hungry for drastic measures by failing to suspend or fire individuals, or recommend prosecutions based on recent audits by the General Auditing Commission (GAC). Their frustration in a country accustomed to kangaroo courts and flashy judgments is understandable. But Liberians will have to outgrow their taste for fast gratification.

In the past, leaders have practiced the politics of scapegoating, using crowd-pleasing judgments to get rid of foes. Now, we must wait for the legislature to review the audit reports in their entirety. This is the first time Liberians will have been given access to the full results of professional audits; they can wait a few more weeks to see what recommendations were made and how the executive responds. Only once that has happened, and the president has failed to act, can she be accused of “playing favoritism.” Corruption is the mother of nearly all ills in Liberia. President William Tolbert cited it as an evil it whenever he could. When those who overthrew him stormed the Executive Mansion, killed him and later executed members of his government, the soldiers needed just one phrase to justify their brutality: “rampant corruption.” Later, the government they established would turn out to be even more corrupt than the one it replaced. The administration of Charles Taylor simply turned government into a criminal enterprise, with international ramifications. What Taylor did was not much different from what past administrations had done; only he took it to a different level. Just 10 years ago, Liberia was off the charts of the world’s most corrupt nations.

After Gyude Bryant was appointed in Taylor’s place to preside over the transition to a democratically-elected government, some opposed taking the “Gang of Bryant” to court too hastily because we thought his administration should be given a chance to clean up its own house. But too many people wanted to see “blood,” the government gave in to the pressure and Bryant and others were taken to court precipitously. Up to now nothing substantial has happened because of the weakness of the judiciary. Now, the same noise-makers are expecting Sirleaf to Johnson to make the same hasty decisions.

Since 2005, new institutions have been created, all empowered to fight one or other aspect of the weaknesses of the Liberian state. The GAC, the Governance Commission, the Commission on Contracts and Procurement and the most recent, the Anti-Corruption Commission: all have a mandate to combat waste in government, close loopholes that make theft possible and recommend ways in which public institutions can be reformed. These commissions all seem to be taking their cues from a broad reform agenda, but they have operated in little pigeonholes, rarely or never coordinating strategies.

For the first time in Liberia’s history, there is a government is sidestepping sound bites and formulating a workable national policy against corruption. The GAC, the Governance Commission (GC) will be playing a bigger role. Collaboration between this commission and the GAC could lead to a triangulation in which the GAC uncovers loopholes and the GC makes recommendations and the executive takes corrective measures. Similar collaboration could be instituted between all the commissions. A major weakness of the current system – and one that creates the impression of an imperial presidency – is that all agencies in government have an umbilical link to the Executive Mansion, with little horizontal inter-agency collaboration. Just as the new commissions...
Epilepsy: A Neurological Condition

Rosemarie Mamei Tamba, RN, BSN, MSN

The word epilepsy is derived from the Greek "epilepsia" which means "to take hold of" or "to seize. Epilepsy affects people of all ages, races, and nationalities. About 2.7 million American have been treated for epilepsy in the past five years which is 8 or 9 out of every 1,000 people. More men than women have epilepsy. New cases of epilepsy are most common among children, especially in the first year of life. The rate of new cases gradually declines around the age of ten and then becomes stable. Approximately two-thirds of the 125,000 people who are newly diagnosed each year are adults.

Epilepsy also known as seizures disorder is a neurological condition that produces brief disturbances in the normal electrical functions of the brain. It is a sudden alteration in normal brain activity that causes distinct changes in behavior and body function. Seizures are thought to result from disturbances in the cells of the brain that cause cells to give off abnormal, recurrent, uncontrolled electrical discharges. The pathophysiology of the seizures is unknown. The brain has certain metabolic needs for oxygen and glucose. Neurons also have certain permeability gradients and voltage gradients that are affected by changes in the chemical and hormonal environment. A seizure may manifest itself as an altered behavior, motor, or sensory function relating to any anatomical location in the brain. It cannot be caught by someone else.

What causes epilepsy?

There are systems that limit the spread of electrical activity and there is a balance in the brain between factors that begin electrical activity and factors that restrict it. During a seizure, these limits break down and abnormal electrical discharges can occur and spread to whole groups of neighboring cells at the same time. This linkage of electrical discharges creates a "storm" of electrical activity in the brain (seizure), which may be due to one of the following:

- Trauma to head or brain resulting in scar tissue or cerebral atrophy
- Tumors, cranial surgery, metabolic disorder, drug toxicity, central nerve infection, circulatory disorder
- Drug withdrawal states (alcohol, barbiturates), congenital neurodevelopmental disorders

Types of Seizures:

- Generalized (or Grand Mal) Seizure: the whole brain is affected. There may be lapse of consciousness and convulsions. Motor function and bladder or bowel control may also be affected.
- Partial Seizure: abnormal electrical activity occurs in only a part of the brain. It does not affect consciousness; however, specific effects depend on the part of the brain involved. The effects may include lip-smacking or jerking movements in a certain part of the body.

What are the risk factors?

Babies who are small for their gestational age, babies who have seizures in the first month of life, babies who are born with abnormal brain structures, bleeding into brain, abnormal blood vessels in the brain, serious brain injury or lack of oxygen to the brain, brain tumor, infections of the brain: abscess, meningitis or encephalitis, stroke resulting from blockage of arteries, cerebral palsy, mental handicap, seizure occurring within days after head injury ("early post-traumatic seizures"), family history of epilepsy or fever-related seizures, Alzheimer's disease (late in the illness), fever-related (febrile) seizure that are usually long and use of illegal drug such as cocaine.

Management:

There is no known cause for epilepsy. According to the Epilepsy Foundation of America, seizures can be successfully controlled by appropriate medication and treatment in 50 to 80 percent of the cases. The treatment is aimed at the underlying cause. In some cases, surgery may be indicated in order to remove the epileptic focus, the part of the brain which produces the seizures.

Things to do to help someone when someone has a seizure:

- Stay calm
- Check if the person is wearing a medical alert bracelet
- Help the person to lie down on their side (turn head/ body sideways to protect airway)

- Place something soft under the person's head
- Do not force the person's head down (a soft surface preferred)
- Take the person's glasses or backpack off
- Loosen any tight clothing near the neck
- Do not place an object into the person's mouth during the seizure
- Do not restrain or hold the person or to stop his/her movement
- Move objects, especially sharp or hard ones away from the person
- Stay with the person until the seizure ends
- Talk with the person in a calm, reassuring way after the seizure is over.
- Observe the event and be able to describe what had happened before, during, and after the seizure
- Offer to call a friend, relative or taxi to help the person get home
- Call 911 if the person having a seizure is known to have epilepsy.

RESOURCES:

- www.epilepsyfoundation.org
- www.epilepsy.com
George Weah believes the CNDP and Laurent Nkunda must halt their insurrection against the democratically elected government of the DRC and, instead, make their grievances known through the country's political institutions.

1. The CNDP and Laurent Nkunda must halt their insurrection against the democratically elected government of the DRC and, instead, make their grievances known through the country's political institutions.

2. The United Nations must deploy a rapid-response military operation which will bolster the capacity of the UN peacekeepers and deter acts of violence against civilians.

3. All warring parties, especially the CNDP, must stop the targeting of civilians, open humanitarian corridors to give aid agencies access to the displaced people, and return to the peace-process that led to the UN-sponsored "Goma Accord" of February 2008.

4. The Congolese government must step up efforts to reform its security forces so that they can protect civilians and defend the country's territorial integrity with professionalism, and it must severely punish those members of the armed forces who engaged in acts of violence against civilians, including assassinations and rapes.

5. The United States government must provide significant humanitarian aid to the displaced people and assist in the process of reforming Congolese security forces.

6. The governments of Rwanda and DRC must honor their pledge to refrain from providing support to armed groups hostile to each other, including the CNDP and the Hutu militia of the FDLR.