**UAO Releases New Community Resource Guide**

Kelley Johnson


The comprehensive guide contains rich content for a wide variety of categories including African restaurants, hair braiding salons, taxi companies and retail stores; African medical professionals, academics, lawyers and artists; and contacts for national community associations, religious organizations and diplomatic missions. It also includes a bibliography of published materials about the “new” wave of African migration to the United States.

Compiling the guide was no small undertaking. UAO staff and volunteers worked diligently over a period of several months to trace national community networks in order to identify entries in each category and then verify contact information. The hard work has definitely paid off.

**Why a Resource Guide?**

Until the release of the guide, tracking down information about the African community in Illinois often proved difficult. New arrivals to Illinois, whether coming directly from the African continent or from other cities in the United States or Europe, are often disconnected from the types of social and professional networks that help to facilitate adjustment. Everything from learning what stores to shop at for familiar foods from home or arranging child care or understanding the recertification process for professions such as medicine or law or getting advice about starting a small business can prove to be daunting tasks. Meanwhile, the potential burden of loneliness weighs heavily on them.

Those lucky enough to have family or friends in the area who have already “learned the ropes” may have someone to show them around and help them get connected. However, even these personal guides may only be familiar with a small set of the resources available and often struggle intensely busy schedules and their own set of challenges.

While staff in social service agencies dedicated to helping immigrants and refugees can make a big difference by helping people find medical care, English classes, or legal services, they are less likely to be informed about active social networks, cultural activities, or links to faith communities that also prove essential for adjustment to a new place.

Recognizing these gaps, the UAO designed the *Illinois African Community Resource Guide* as a tool to help Africans become more connected to one another and to raise awareness about the important contributions being made by members of the African community in all sectors. It is a strategic focus on raising the profile of the growing African immigrant and refugee community in Illinois.

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**L’ère Obama**

Jeune Afrique

L’investiture de Barack Obama, premier président noir des Etats-Unis, a suscité confiance et espoir chez la plupart des dirigeants politiques à travers le monde, témoins parfois de scepticisme sur sa capacité à relever les immenses défis auquel il va être confronté.

*Je pense n’avoir jamais vu la communauté internationale attendre autant de l’élection d’un président américain*, résumait mardi Madeleine Albright, secrétaire d’État sous la présidence démocratique de Bill Clinton.

Après la prestation de serment de M.Obama, le Premier ministre britannique, Gordon Brown, a salué le début d’un "nouveau chapitre dans l’histoire américaine comme dans l’histoire du monde".

Le président français Nicolas Sarkozy s’est dit "ravi à travailler main dans la main" avec lui pour "relever ensemble les énormes défis" du monde.


Le président de la République italienne, Giorgio Napolitano, a estimé qu’avec lui les Etats-Unis s’efforceront de retrouver "un consensus moral" estimant que "la force de l’Amérique s’appuie essentiellement sur la profondeur de ses convictions et de ses idéaux".

Le chef du gouvernement espagnol, Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, a affirmé placer "beaucoup d’espoir et de confiance" en Barack Obama, tandis que M. Sarkozy lançait: "On a hâte qu’il se mette au travail et qu’on change le monde avec lui!"

"C’est un moment extraordinaire pas seulement pour le peuple d’Amérique, mais pour tous ceux à travers le monde qui croient à la démocratie, à la liberté et au progrès", a déclaré le Premier ministre australien, Kevin Rudd.


Il bénéficie d’un "état de grâce mondial" mais n’a pas de "baguette magique", soulignait mardi le chef de la diplomatie française, Bernard Kouchner.

Son homologue iranien, Manouchehr Mottaki, attendait de
also meant to increase visibility for African-owned businesses and professionals and encourage those outside of the African community to learn about the unique cultures of this diverse, vibrant, and rapidly growing community.

As a grassroots advocacy coalition of African national associations, the UAO sees access to information as a key tool to empowerment. It is essential that the community build on the foundation laid by its many established members and that lessons learned along the way be shared with those just getting started. By putting information in the hands of the competent, creative and hard-working members of the growing African community and encouraging people to work together across national and ethnic lines, the chances for individual and community goals to come to fruition are greatly improved.

Furthermore, distribution of this information helps to raise awareness about the experience of a community that up until now has remained rather invisible or misunderstood. The “Bibliography on African Migration to the United States” is designed to create easy access to materials that will help policymakers and social service agencies inform their work in the African community, and will help the larger community to have a better understanding of their new African neighbors.

UAO also receives many inquiries from students, researchers, media, or other community members who have been searching for background information to help them understand African migration to the United States. All too often, their own investigations have been limited by the difficulty to find the small amount of materials published about the African community in the United States. By releasing the Illinois African Community Resource Guide, the UAO has removed a major obstacle to future knowledge production!

**Community Responses**

Since its release, the Illinois African Community Resource Guide has drawn a wide and positive response. Dr. Edwin Silverman, Chief of the Illinois Department of Human Services - Bureau of Refugee and Immigrant Services calls the guide “a unique and important step toward understanding the growing number of African immigrants and refugees integrating into the community at large, and toward forging a greater sense of solidarity among the diverse cultures of Africa in Illinois.”

“La crise économique et les conséquences sociales qu’elle génère constituent un défi gigan-
tesque pour le nouveau gouver-
nement”, a noté de son côté la présidente chilienne, Michelle Bachelet.

Le vice-ministre nicaraguayen des Affaires étrangères, Valdrack Jaencke, a souligné que M. Obama établirait une relation "d'égal à égal dans le concert mondial” avec "les pays plus petits et plus pauvres”.

Le Premier ministre israélien, Ehud Olmert, s'est dit certain que les Etats-Unis et Israël se-raient sous la présidence Obama "des partenaires à part entière pour promouvoir la paix et la stabilité au Proche-Orient”.

Le roi Mohammed VI du Maroc a souhaité qu'il oeuvre à un règle-
ment du conflit au Proche-Orient qui mette fin au "drame du peu-
palestinien” alors que le président tunisien, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, s'est dit "convaincu" qu'il ne ménagerait "aucun effort" pour l'instauration de la paix dans la région.

Le pape Benoît XVI a souhaité qu'il se fasse "le promoteur de la paix et de la coopération entre les nations".

After receiving her copy of the guide, Jenn Kons, Project Associ-ate for the Outreach and Interpre-
tation program at the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refu-
gee Rights (ICIRR) stated enthu-
siastically that “this is a great re-
source for the African community because it is so comprehen-
vive. It covers everything from fun and entertainment, to reli-
gious institutions, to social ser-
vices. How great to have so many resources in one place!”

John Henry Assabill, President of the Ghana National Council, sees the guide as "an excellent community asset for networking and collaboration.”

Gaye D. Sle, Jr., of the Liberian community, who serves as Execu-
tive Director of African Human Services and Chair of the UAO Board of Directors, calls the guide "an amazing resource for service providers and businesses in the community.”

Father John Mukasa of the Ugandan community expresses "profound appreciation for the execution of such a remarkable project by the UAO.”

According to Albertine Scray of the Cameroonian community, "the resource guide shows that the UAO is the best all-African organization in Illinois.”

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Ghana: Presidential Elections
The Pride of African Democracy

By Hakeem J. Janiu

At last, Africa has something good to celebrate. It is a big relief that it is not all bad news from Africa. Ghana last week made the whole of Africa proud when against all expectations; it carried out a free, fair and transparent election in which an opposition candidate defeated a candidate of the ruling party.

The election and subsequent declaration of Professor John Atta-Mills as President-elect has shown that Africa is capable of conducting an internationally acclaimed free and fair election. It also shows that not all African leaders are afflicted with the bug of sight- tight syndrome and do-or-die politics. The Presidential election was keenly contested between Professor John Atta-Mills of the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and Nana Akuffo-Addo of the ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) that produced the outgoing President John Kufuor.

The first round of the Presidential election held on December 7, 2008 did not produce a clear winner though Akuffo-Addo had a slight lead but it was not enough to return him as winner. Therefore, a run-off election was held on December 28 and it became controversial as there were claims and counter claims of electoral malpractices from both parties but there were not enough prove to back them up. In the midst of the controversy which surrounded the run-off election, results sneaked out that Professor Atta-Mills had won; an information which sent his supporters into wild jubilation.

The Ghana Electoral Commission (EC) was quick to tell the supporters of Akuffo-Addo that results of the election were yet to be officially announced. This was even when voting did not take place in the Tain region and unpleasant report of malpractices in the Ashanti and Volta regions.

The Ghana Electoral Commission did not announce the result of the election until election was conducted in the Tain region on January 3, 2009. The ruling NPP went to court to stop the EC from conducting election in the Tain region but the court refused its application. Therefore, the NPP boycotted the election but it held all the same. At the end of the polling, chairman of the EC, Dr. Kwadwo Afari-Gyan declared Professor Atta-Mills winner with 4,501,466 or 50.13 per cent votes to beat his rival Nana Akuffo Addo who polled 4,478,411 or 49.87 per cent.

There is no doubt that this margin in a Presidential election is close. It is worthy of note that throughout the election, there were no incidents of ballot stuffing, ballot snatching or multipurpose thumb printing. Also incidents of thugs backed by the coercive powers of the state harassing voters and disrupting voting in the process were not recorded.

When I reflected on the outcome of the Ghana Presidential election, I felt ashamed of my own country, Nigeria and the shameful conduct of the April 2007 election now brought home the fact that Nigeria’s INEC Chairman Professor Iwu, ex-President Olusegun Obasanjo and the ruling Peoples Democratic Party were responsible for the present parlous state of our democracy as they had visited untold and unpardonable electoral heist on Nigeria. Ex-President Obasanjo grossly abused, manipulated and bastardized the power of incumbency, Professor Iwu betrayed Nigerians as he became an instrument in the hands of Obasanjo and the PDP by making sure that almost all PDP candidates were returned. If what happened in Ghana were to happen in Nigeria under President Obasanjo, the result of the election will never see the light of the day. Professor Atta-Mills would have been arrested by the EFCC on trumped up charges. Iwu’s INEC would have restructured and announced the candidate of the ruling party as the winner, more so when the margin is so close to make manipulation easy.

Obasanjo would have derisively asked those who are not satisfied with the results to go to court. It is inconceivable and unthinkable for the candidate of the ruling PDP to lose an election and for a President like Obasanjo to remain neutral as President Kufuor did by allowing the mess to continue. Of course, the result of the election might not win. This is how democracy is run all over the world contrary to the wuriwuru (fraudulent) democracy of Obasanjo which he dubs - home grown democracy.

There is nothing like home grown democracy. Democracy all over the world is universal and it is the main source of legitimacy for governments which has its main element as periodic elections that must be free, fair and transparent. Anything short of this is not democracy and it cannot confer legitimacy on any government emerging from such a sham as we had in Nigeria in April 2007.

We should congratulate Ghana for emerging as one of the countries with an enduring democracy arising from strengthening of its institutions. One does not need any seer to know that leaders like President Kufuor would be in hot demand by international organizations for many noble assignments unlike some of his peers who have become mere idle, irrelevant and lonely after leaving office.

Ghana does not need to go scouting for foreign investors but her democratic credentials as a stable country is all she needed to attract them; more so when her state of infrastructure is not that bad. While welcoming Ghana to the comity of decent nations, the question remains, when will Nigeria get it right?

Janiu is a media consultant and columnist.
Immigration Matters

Temporary Immigrants: Forging Enduring Ties

Maria Sacchetti
Boston Globe Staff

BROCKTON – Gonlkapor Gonkpala was a bright-eyed college student from Liberia when he arrived in the United States in 1982. His stay was supposed to be temporary. But with a civil war raging in the West Africa country, he and thousands of other expatriates were allowed to remain until it was safe to return home. As the years rolled by, his American life assumed an aura of permanence. He married, honeymooned in the Poconos, had an American son, and bought a sea-green house in Brockton.

Now, Gonkpala's time is up.

His stay of deportation expires in March, and the US government could either force him and 3,500 other Liberians nationwide to go home or delay their removal another extension under a controversial federal program that is attracting growing criticism on both sides of the immigration debate.

"If I leave here and go to Liberia today I am a stranger," said Gonkpala, a graying 56-year-old parking garage attendant with a weary voice. "I've been here in the United States for 27 years, pretty close to half of my life. The only home that I know now is America."

His predicament is shared by more than 300,000 immigrants from seven nations in the United States as a result of the Temporary Protected Status program. It was launched in 1990 to allow immigrants who are already here and whose nations were overwhelmed by war or natural disaster to stay and work here temporarily. It was not meant to lead to citizenship.

Critics say the status often lasts too long, is applied arbitrarily - Hondurans received it after a hurricane, but not Haitians - and at worst serves as a de facto amnesty for people here illegally.

Roy Beck, president of NumbersUSA, which favors strict limits on immigration, said protection should last no more than six months. "You just can't extend these things forever," he said. "They should send them all home."

Even advocates for immigrants fault the program because it lacks a permanent residency path. There are no pending for green cards for Liberians, Salvadorans, Hondurans, and others because they have remained so long - and because their nations are racked by unemployment.

Torli Krua, chief executive of the Liberian-based National Immigration Rights International, said his group is lobbying Congress for Liberians, and Somerville-based Centro Presente is launching a campaign to press for green cards for Central Americans.

“These are people who have US citizen children. They've been contributing for years and paying taxes,” said Maria Montes, executive director of Centro Presente. “These people live in perpetual anguish.”

David Santos, spokesman for US Citizenship and Immigration Services, which oversees the program for the Department of Homeland Security, defended it as a way to help people in an emergency and pointed out that many emergencies linger. Central American nations, for instance, are still struggling to rebuild from earthquakes or hurricanes that left thousands dead. He said it is always clear that the protection is temporary.

"As the name implies, that's what the benefit is," he said. But for many immigrants, temporary begins to feel permanent in real life, if not on paper.

José Aguirre, a 31-year-old from El Salvador, got temporary protected status in 2001 after a series of earthquakes there. A shy, hardworking man, he dropped out of school as a child to work in the cornfields and was smuggled illegally into the United States at age 18 to work.

Since he got the temporary status, he has bought a stake in Curly's Restaurant, an Irish pub across from the police station in Chelsea, and has two American sons. Now 38, he is a part of a diverse community: He supports local children's causes and sponsors soccer teams. Salvadoran pupusas - thick, handmade corn tortillas - are on Curly's menu, though shamrocks line the walls.

The thought of returning to El Salvador next year makes him queasy. He hasn't seen his family there since he left, but they still depend on the money he sends.

"We haven't thought about going back," he said, sitting in a wooden chair in his restaurant. "If you think about it, you could make yourself sick."

Across the United States, immigrants from six countries in addition to Liberia have temporary protection - and all are facing its expiration in 2009 or 2010: 300 Liberians, 500 Sudanese, and 300 Somalis, who received protection because of armed conflicts; 3,500 Nicaraguans and 70,000 Hondurans because of Hurricane Mitch in 1999; and 229,000 Salvadorans.

Liberians have been whipsawed with on-and-off temporary protection since 1991. At least eight times, they have faced deportation only to get a last-minute reprieve. Each time a deadline approaches, a gloom descends on Gonkpala's house in Brockton.

Inside the ranch house, every-thing looks and feels permanent from the green family room with flowing drapes, to the framed family photographs and his 8-year-old son's honor roll certificate on display.

Gonkpala tries not to think about the letter his boss received alerting him that Gonkpala's work permit will expire in March. "All the time you've got's you've got over your shoulder," Gonkpala said, "It's humiliating."

Returning to Liberia is unimaginable for him now. The war ended in 2003, but 85 percent of the workforce is unemployed and living conditions are stark. His paycheck helps support his family in the capital, Monrovia. And Gonkpala feels American. Liberia and the United States have deep historical ties - Liberia was founded in the 1820s by freed slaves and the nation's capital is named after US President James Monroe.

"Why is the United States turning away from us now?" Gonkpala asked. "After all this time?"

International

Dangerous Trek to Israel for African Refugees

Liam Stack

Sadiq Sahour Abkar paid human traffickers $750 to smuggle himself, his 28-year-old wife, Hajja Abbas Haroun, and their infant daughter Samar over a remote dirt road leading from the Sinai Desert into Israel last year.

The smugglers, however, dropped them along with four pregnant women, eight men and numerous children - all Sudanese refugees - several miles from the border. As the African migrants neared the frontier, they heard a patrol of Egyptian border guards and lay down quietly on the ground, waiting for them to pass. Suddenly a baby in the group began crying.

"We were soon surrounded by flashlights and heard the police yelling," said Abkar. "I yelled to my wife to keep her head down, but it was too late. They shot her in the side of the head, and she died right there."

The Sinai Desert has become a major thoroughfare for desperate Africans seeking asylum in Europe. The Sinai Peninsula is a sensitive area - the capital is named after US President Abraham Lincoln - with deep historical ties - Liberia was founded in 1820 by freed slaves and the nation's capital is named after US President James Monroe.

"This is a violation of the right to life and a violation of international police standards, which says you only use lethal force when you need to protect lives," the Egyptian government says.

Illegal border crossings pose a threat to its national security. The Sinai Peninsula is a sensitive area that contains oil fields, 1,000 U.N. peacekeeping forces, thousands of Egyptian soldiers and police and the nation's largest beach resorts. It also is home to sporadic violence from Bedouin residents, who have long complained of police repression and job discrimination in the tourism and petroleum industries.

As a result, the Egyptian government views anyone illegally crossing the border as a potential provocateur.

"We shoot infiltrators" "We do not shoot migrants. We shoot infiltrators," Lt. Cmdr. continued on page 5
Millions Displaced in Central, East Africa

There were 9.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Central and Eastern Africa region as of December 2008, according to a newly released United Nations report, 400,000 less than at the end of June, but because of the fluidity of the situation officials advised against laying too much stock on the reduction.

They noted that IDPs are sometimes continually moving, either returning home or being uprooted a second time.

The number of refugees forced to seek haven outside their homelands as of December stood at 1.8 million, with most of them hosted by Chad, Tanzania and Kenya.

Half the IDPs - 4,576,250 - are in Sudan alone, with 2,700,000 of them in the war-torn Darfur region, according to the Displaced Populations Report for July-December 2008 by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Displacement in the region is triggered mainly by intra-State conflicts and natural disasters such as floods and drought, with 72 per cent in the Greater Horn of Africa region, reflecting mainly the combined internal displacement from the strife-related crises in Sudan and Somalia.

Frequently, several of these causes affect a country or region at the same time, creating complex humanitarian emergencies. Scarcity of resources, limited access to land and inconclusive peace and reconciliation processes create multiple challenges for the process of return, according to the report, which covers Burundi, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, Republic of Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

Humanitarian response to both acute and long-term displacement is often hampered by lack of access to the affected people due to ongoing conflict and persistent high insecurity including targeting of humanitarian workers and assets, the report notes.

Data was obtained from UN agencies, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Red Cross family, governments and local authorities.

On December 18th, marking the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes launched a global campaign to raise awareness about the plight of IDPs. The campaign focus in 2009 will be on preventing displacement and finding solutions to the problem.
By Claudia Braude

Helen Suzman, who died January 1 at 91, has been praised world-wide for her long career and courage as an opposition politician in South Africa’s apartheid-era parliament. A daughter of Lithuanian Jewish immigrants, she was licensed by Jewish organizations in the United States and elsewhere as an exemplar of Jewish principles of equality in the face of the racism that opposed the nonwhite majority of her country.

But at home, Suzman’s Jewish identity was a more vexing, much less embraced dimension of her persona — according to South Africa’s Jewish community and Suzman herself.

In 2007, when the South African Jewish Board of Deputies gave her its seventh annual humanitarian award, which recognizes the work of a Jewish community member, Suzman, typically forthright, raised an eyebrow regarding the belated honor. “It’s about time,” she said bluntly.

Earlier, Suzman told one interviewer, “I thought that the Jewish Board of Deputies should have acknowledged was no simple working with, the way her life was spent was more in a political environment,” Browde said.

Nevertheless, she was often perceived by apartheid supporters as a troublesome Jew and subject as antisemitic vituperation.

Some of her Nationalist parliamentary counterparts saw her, Suzman said, “as just another cheeky little Jewish girl,” Browde told an interviewer. Along with other strong responses that her liberal views elicited from members of the public, Suzman received anti-Semitic hate mail. In letters addressed, for example, to “The Yiddisher-Bantu Expert,” she wrote to her daughter in London, “my anonymous admirer, Yok…” literally bombard’s me with his charming postcards addressed to der Yiddisher Know-All from Houghton and advising me to go stick my long Jewish nose in the Knesset and leave nice Christian parliaments to nice Christians.” In fact, for several decades, Suzman courageously fought the inequities of apartheid from within South Africa’s apartheid parliament, paying close attention to their impact on the lives of millions of ordinary South Africans.

The difference is crucial to understanding Suzman’s relationship to her own community.

While Suzman was critical of the SAJBD’s political quiescence, her thinking in regard to the relationship between her political career and her Jewish identity was, ironically, consistent with the SAJBD’s view.

“I never, ever spoke officially as a Jew!” Suzman said.

The SAJBD denied that Jews had the right as Jews to be politically involved; Jews who opposed apartheid, it said, did so as individuals, not as members of the Jewish community.

In her personal life, Suzman understood Yiddish and was very pro-Israel. But according to Selma Browde, her longtime friend and political colleague, “Helen never felt part of the Johannesburg Jewish community as such.” Suzman was totally uninterested in religion and never attended synagogue.

“There were no rabbis who ever had any influence in my life,” she once told an interviewer.

“Her world was a political world, really. The people that she worked with, the way her life was continued on page 7

Helen Suzman - Anti-Apartheid Campaigner

Suzman courageously fought the inequities of apartheid from within South Africa’s apartheid parliament, paying close attention to their impact on the lives of millions of ordinary South Africans.

The timing of the communal acknowledgment was no simple oversight. During the era of apartheid, which ended only with South Africa’s first free elections in 1994, the SAJBD promoted a policy of political non-involvement as the best course of action to defend South African Jewish interests. For decades, the SAJBD maintained a cordial relationship with the apartheid government. Believing that Jews should not compromise their group interests by opposing the ruling powers, the board’s leaders discouraged criticism of apartheid.

This contrasted strikingly with the stance that American Jewish organizations took, in varying degrees and forms, toward racial segregation in the American South during the 20th century. Civil rights was a cause they embraced, even at the cost of discriminating Jews living in areas where the Jim Crow laws reigned.

Veteran anti-apartheid activist Helen Suzman with Nelson Mandela at his South Africa home in 1990

Photo - AP

Human Rights

Cameroon: Dissent Violently Repressed

Amnesty International

Cameroon’s government has routinely used killings and torture to repress political dissent, according to a new Amnesty International report.

During a 10-year spell of gross human rights violations, Cameroonian security forces have habitually used excessive and unnecessary force – and the perpetrators have almost always enjoyed impunity.

“Political opposition is not tolerated in Cameroon,” said Tawanda Hondora, Amnesty International’s Deputy Director for Africa. “Any dissent is suppressed through either violence or abuse of the legal system to silence critics.”

In late February 2008, security forces killed as many as 100 civilians during demonstrations against the escalating cost of living. Amnesty International has received photographs and testimonies suggesting that some of the victims were shot at point blank range, without any effort made to arrest them.

“Unfair trials, intimidation and harassment, including death threats, are routinely used by the authorities to quash criticism from politicians, human rights defenders and journalists,” said Tawanda Hondora. “The silencing of the media is particularly worrying. If a journalist is deemed too critical of the government they are silenced -- and radio and TV stations are shut down.”

Journalist Michel Mombio was arrested in September 2008 and spent 10 days in custody. He was then transferred to the central prison in the capital, Yaoundé, and charged with fraud and blackmail. He was still in custody without trial in January 2009.

Journalists covering street protests in February 2008 were assaulted by members of the security forces. The victims included a cameraman from Canal 2 International television, who was beaten and arrested and then had his camera destroyed. He was only freed after soldiers forced him to pay a fine.

The report, Cameroon: Impunity underpins persistent abuse, also exposes the appalling prison conditions in Cameroon. Jails suffer from inadequate food and medical care, as well as overcrowding. Minors are often held together with adults and there is inadequate separation of males from females, which has led to sexual and other forms of violence and exploitation.

Prisons are reported to be infested with rats and cockroaches and some inmates have resorted to sleeping in the toilets for lack of a place to rest.
Helen Suzman’s moral struggle for civil rights in South Africa, through her vision, Suzman saved each year by trading economic, social development, and political integration. While Africans have been striving for a continent without economic or trade borders for decades and despite the troubled history of African unity, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission believes that the current leadership can achieve the dream.

In an exclusive interview with BuaNews during the African Union (AU) summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Dr Ping spoke about how African Heads of State can bring Africa into the global economy, integrate politically and economically, and politically united continent.

The 67-year-old chairman said regional integration was an essential stepping stone towards achieving effective and more equal participation in the global economy. Proponents of regional integration would help in minimizing the cost of Africa’s infrastructure investment. For example, $2 billion could be saved each year by trading energy supplies across national borders.

According to Alex Rugamba, co-ordinator of the Infrastructure Continuum for Africa, more efficient infrastructure will result in lower costs, freeing up domestic finance for development and encouraging more outside investment.

Dr Ping said the first step in implementing regional integration would be through adequate infrastructure. “Infrastructure has been long identified as a key requirement for regional economic growth,” he explained, noting that Africa’s infrastructure, in its current state, requires to be developed to an adequate and efficient standard. The AU, which is tasked with coordinating, harmonizing and providing leadership on the continent’s economic and social development and physical integration, will seek to give infrastructure development its rightful place at this year’s annual summit - at the top of its agenda.

The theme for the summit is “Infrastructure Development in Africa”. Infrastructure development and the effects of the economic crisis on the continent are expected to be major topics for discussion.

The discussion sessions of the summit will enable the pan-African organisation better plan and address the challenges. “I believe that infrastructure development is one of the number one priorities from the start,” said Dr Ping. “With an integrated and connected system, it could have been easier for Africa to meet its goals on poverty reduction, economic, social development and integration.”

Explaining how this could be put into practice, Dr Ping said the union must use the summit to appreciate member states on the continent’s infrastructure’s constraints and how they can improve infrastructure development.

“One of the things we aim to obtain is guidance and commitment from member states for continental infrastructure policy interventions and programmes and see how we can appeal to development partners for cooperation and funding these projects.”

Despite the calls, observers have insisted African leaders must act fast to become more independent internationally, especially on agricultural development to safeguard food security. This, Dr Ping believes is where the Group of Eight (G8) most industrialized nations can help the African continent.

He said African leaders were looking to the G8 to turn their existing promises into action. “The credibility of international commitments is at stake. There are many development success stories across Africa that can be replicated in more countries through better funding. With the momentum and commitment generated in many African countries, increased commitment to domestic resource mobilization and improving governance and better policy performance, Africa could still achieve the Millennium Development Goals by the year 2015 and be a better place, he said.

However, the chairperson was quick to highlight that the continent also needs bigger markets, especially during the global economic meltdown which has affected aid into Africa. However, he said there were still “missing links” in their implementation.

“Some of our countries are too small and too weak,” he said, adding that Africa was a big continent rich with raw materials. Also hampering the AU’s efforts in developing the proper infrastructure to make it possible for the continent to achieve some of its goals is the fact that countries thrive under the same level of development.

“This big continent is divided by about 165 borders into 53 countries; even the voice of a larger continent does not ring true. Africa by itself is inadequate in international negotiations on world trade. Only collectively can we bring change to the millions of Africans in this continent.”

He said it would be impossible to ignore 53 countries with almost one billion inhabitants speaking in one voice, adding that the AIDS epidemic, which is a continent.
was a clear manifestation of the continent's collective demand for standing together and addressing problems on a continental scale.

Dr Ping admitted that Africa has had to overcome many challenges through various peace processes. However, African leaders were still struggling to find a way to sustain peace agreements, which in fact required determination not only from the AU but among the parties themselves.

Agreements can be sustained by taking into consideration that the quest for unity for ordinary Africans is a powerful draw factor. However, the real challenge leading to the development and application of these concepts or principles is how to ensure that these principles can be scaled up to bring about positive change to the whole continent taking into consideration a history which is littered with failed institutions and initiatives that have not been followed through to completion or promises that have been broken. Dr Ping said this requires institutional capacities and effective coalitions.

By building an effective African continent, this will have a tremendous impact in breaking this cycle of raised hopes and then disappointment. In contrast to the past, governments and Heads of State are now more mindful of the value of civil society, which is an asset to the governance and development of the continent. Africans, more than at any other time, are yearning for the deliverables, on democracy, development and institution-building.

"Unity in Africa has a deep historical resonance. It was the goal of the fathers of independence and has remained the basic aspiration of African citizens across the continent." A unified Africa was an ideal to which all leaders would aspire during the sessions at the African Union Summit over the next three days, said Dr Ping, adding that by the end of the summit, initiatives will be highlighted and endorsements for future actions will be taken. Looking into the future, he said that there was far-reaching plans to set up a human rights court, a central bank and monetary fund, and by 2023 an African Economic Community with a single currency and a single central bank and monetary fund.

"AU vision is one of a common future, that will ensure the economic well-being, improvement in the quality of life, freedoms, social justice and peace and security for the people of African continent," said Dr Ping.
Black Inventors: Crafting Over 200 Years of Success

Keith C Holmes
Sokari Ekine

Two of the prolonged myths about Africa are that her history is limited to the continent's colonial past and secondly Africans have contributed little to the development of the world's science, technology and agricultural innovation. Keith Holmes and Sokari Ekine have published which do mention Black inventors rarely cite inventors outside the US. Keith Holmes sets out to counter those omissions and in doing so, he provides us with a comprehensive catalogue of Black inventions and inventors as well as a glimpse into the socioeconomic and political history of Black people. This book, to include the “Motherland” and the whole of the African Diaspora. It is not surprising that the book has taken a long time to write as it includes inventors from Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, Russia, Australia, Native America as well as the United States over a two hundred year period. The book is organized into three parts. Part One covers the role African civilizations have played in developing innovations, Part Two, identifies inventors who originated in Africa and Part Three provides a geographical breakdown of inventors. I can’t understand why the author chose this format as Part One is only 4 pages of mainly tables covering inventions in Ancient Egypt and pre-colonial Africa. It would have been far better if Part One had been written in a discussion format using the tables to supplement the text rather than the other way around. In Part Two, the author chooses another format which is essentially a series of short essays and although the information is interesting, it seems to me that it would be far more engaging and reader friendly if it was written in a more conversational style, rather than the style of paragraphs built around themes. Sometimes the mixture of writing styles makes the book appear disjointed and scattered which is a shame as it contains very valuable and previously unpublished material on the history of Africa and her descendents. Part Three is the meat of the book, where we really come to see the value of the content. This is where the author sets out the detailed material - invention, country, gender, of hundreds of inventions. He has gone to great lengths to present the data in an easy to read table format supported by text, under a range of categories. We are able to see at glance the date of an invention plus the number of inventions by Africans in the various European countries or by women across the various states of the US. We are able to see how our environment shapes the inventions we create. For example, a Black Australian is given a patent for the improvement of sheep shears, an Ethiopian for adapting the typewriter to the Ethiopian script, a Jamaican for applying steam to a sugar mill, and a Nigerian for improving extracting machines for palm oil. There are so many pleasing surprises to be found in the pages of Black Inventors. One example is everyday utility items to specialized machinery. In 1862, a Black man from New Haven, Connecticut invented the ironing board. In 1923 the pneumatic tube was invented by a Black woman. The contribution of Black women is also documented and though the author states that more research needs to take place, he does record patents held by people of color. In one case, the author rightly points out, was developed to prevent Black people from identifying each other. Thus we have Black people as African, Afro, Black, Colored, Caribbean, Kaffir, Negro, Mulatto and so on. On the problem of specifically identifying a patent as being Black, the author would have to rely on census information and cross check that with each patent which gives you an idea of the amount of work involved in producing a book such as this one. Black Inventors is a huge resource and is particularly useful to teachers, students, researchers and librarians who wish to discover inventions from a particular time period, geographic location right down to cities, by gender, type of technology. It is not just a list of inventions along with names, nationalities, gender and country. The book is also a geosocial and colonial history of Africans and their descendents. Black people are largely unaware of the contributio1ns Black Africans have made to the economic growth of the industrial West. Some of the inventions have generated billions of dollars such as the two patents held by Norbert Rilleux two hundred years ago which are used in the food and beverage industry. As the author writes, “it is important to correct the myth that savages and uncultivated people were transferred from their homelands to other lands in order to redress their misfortune”. On the contrary, Africans brought with them ideas, craftsmanship and the desire to design and create new things. Black Inventors is published by Global Black Inventor Research Projects Inc. www.globallblackinventor.com
email: info@globalblackinventor.com

As we walked out a mother said, “We don’t need more help as aid. We only need peace. Then we can take care of ourselves.”

Economic Exploitation

(continued from page 8)

chase minerals from Bisie would be to support these human rights violations by the 85th.

However, in contrast to the MPC claims of concern for human rights abuses at Bisie, according to a CREDHDO report shared with CPT by Bihamba, MPC exported 3,395.67 tons of cassiterite from Bisie between 2003 and 2007. The 85th Brigade has controlled Bisie since 2005, according to the Pole Institute. So why did MPC become concerned with human rights in 2008 and not in 2005, 2006, or 2007? Further, the UN reports that MPC “assisted Rwanda’s commercial military wing to funnel the Democratic Republic of the Congo’s mineral wealth across the border during the war.”

Masika Bihamba told CPT that mineral traders, the Congolese military, rebels, and importers “don’t want to end the war because they profit from it.” And what is the result? Just since September, 250,000 people have been displaced, and a total of approximately 1.5 million displaced people, many of whom live in “IDP” (internally displaced persons) camps or board with challenged neighbors, relatives, and sometimes near strangers. Local community organizations we spoke with told us that those who live with host families aren’t provided with food, medical care, and other services, except by the Red Cross. To receive services from the UN, they need to move from one camp to another, which is typically a step down in terms of housing. Those who have been displaced told us how hard it is to be away from their land. One family in Kahe village told us how their fields are ready for harvest now in Masisi but they can’t go back. They are afraid someone else has taken over their land but they don’t know. In another village, we visited a family with one room that sometimes takes in three or four additional people.

A community leader there said, “People who want power bring us trouble and take our kids so they can have more power.”

“Don’t need more help as aid. We only need peace. Then we can take care of ourselves.”

As a community leader in the eastern Congo is uncertain, and many are unsure what will happen next, these organizations, church groups, and coalitions will continue to work for positive change, whether they make the news or not.

Wendy Lehman (Chicago, Ill.) was a part of CPT’s initial field team in Congo during the month of December. Also on the team until the end of February 2009 are Cliff Kindy of North Manchester, Ind., Rosemarie Milazzo of Maryknoll, N.Y., Jane Mackay Wright of Providence Bay, Ont., and Andrea Siemens of Torroント。
The inauguration of President Barack Hussein Obama created unprecedented jubilation in the African community in Chicago and on the continent. To mark this historic event, the United African Organization and partners organized the Chicago International Inaugural Ball at the South Shore Cultural Center on Tuesday, January 20, 2009. The event was planned by a diverse coalition of African Diaspora communities in Chicago, and over 600 participants from all walks of life attended the ball. The community celebrated the inauguration with international music, food and live cultural performance by groups from the global African community. “The Chicago International Inaugural Ball was well-planned and provided an opportunity for people from all ethnic backgrounds to savor together the immense meaning of this extraordinary inauguration,” said Alexander Gbayee, Consul General of Liberia in Chicago. “I never dreamed that I would live to see this day in America when I first arrived here from Africa decades ago.” The broad representation of many community leaders in planning the Chicago International Inaugural Ball gave it a special flavor. Performers included the world-renowned artist Brother Kelan Phil Cohran, cultural groups from Uganda and Sene-Gambia, as well as Baba Olu’s classic drummers.

ECAC Program Prepares Graduates for Job Market

On January 13, 2009, the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago (ECAC) graduated twenty-three (23) students from its Electromechanical Assembly Training Program (EMAT). The ten-week program is the first of its kind in the Chicago-land area, and provided the students with both theoretical and practical training in electrical, electronic, and mechanical assembly. The training was organized in collaboration with manufacturing agencies in Chicago area.

The training provided by ECAC is customized and industry-approved. It targets and responds to the needs of electromechanical device-manufacturing agencies in the Chicago area. It highlights those skills sought out by the manufacturers, including soldering, blueprint reading, electrical and electronic component identification, electrical wiring, workplace English, and mechanical assembly; and ensures that the trainees will be able to perform their duties effectively and successfully in spite of any difficulty they may have with the English language.

The electromechanical assembly training program also responds to the needs of job-seeking immigrants and refugees who are striving to attain economic self-sufficiency. By providing them with training for positions in electromechanical assembly, which are in high demand, ECAC is affording them the opportunity to seek appropriate and available employment that will allow them to pursue meaningful and rewarding career opportunities.

Recent graduates are interviewing for jobs with various manufacturing agencies throughout the city and the vicinity of Chicago. ECAC’s Employment Program staff is continuously networking with other organizations in the field in order to help place EMAT students in gainful employment. ECAC is confident that the training that participants received will enable them to be efficient and productive assemblers with potential for professional growth and development.

Should you be interested in hiring EMAT program graduates, or if you would like more information on the EMAT training program, please contact Yohannes Tegegne, Program Instructor and Job Counselor, at 773.728.0303 ext. 22 at Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago. www.ecachicago.org

SAVE THE DATE

United African Organization Presents:

Saturday, April 4, 2009
1:00 - 3:00 pm
Jacob Carruthers’ Center for Inner City Studies
700 E. Oakwood Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60653

All are invited to join the United African Organization, members of the African community, and members of the African American community in discussing the connection between the African Liberation Movement and the African American Civil Rights Movement. Activities will include a cultural performance, speakers, questions and answer sessions, and an open dialogue.

For more information please contact: Britannia Smith
(312) 949-9910
Britannia.Smith@unitedafricans.org

Guests at the UAO Inaugural Ball

Participants in ECAC Job Preparation Program
African International House USA, Inc. and the 20th Annual Chandler Financial African Festival of the Arts

Invite You To

**History, Traditions, Legends!**

**AN EXHIBITION**

of the African Festival of the Arts Featured

Fine Art Collection: 1993 to 2008

Additional Special Passes from Farahani ANTique

Nia Chi, Front Porch, Samuel Mutukok, Dolton Brown, Baye Adeleke, Dorin Sybaris, Melon King, Dany Lesrus, Uma Huffman, Samuel Lind.

**Opening Reception:** Friday, February 20th, 2009

5:00 PM to 9:00 PM

African International House, Inc.

6200 S. Drexel Avenue (Harris Park)

Chicago, IL 60637

773-955-ARTS (2787)

www.africaninternationalhouse.org

African Highlife Music by Koji Bempem

**Save the Date!**

**AFRICAN FESTIVAL**

**LADDRESS WEEKEND 2009**

**Friday, Saturday, & Sunday**

**Further details to be released.**

**History Traditions Legends.**

**Sponsored by:**

Chrysler Financial, Heineken, Chicago Park District,

4th Ward (Toni Preckwinkle), 20th Ward (Mike Cotechin)

**“Africa for Everyone” — A Weekend of Unity**

for all races and ethnicities

...focusing on the cultural and spiritual contributions of African peoples—from food, to worship, to an American President.

**Saturday, February 21, 2009**

8:30 PM — Reception

1-3 p.m. — African Bazaar: Vendors & Exhibitors of Spiritual and Cultural Items from Many Nations; Refreshments served

3-4 p.m. — Seminar on African Spirituality & Unity

Presented by: Alix Kabafo, Executive Director of the United African Organization

**Sunday, February 22, 2009**

12:30-1:30 p.m. — African Spirituality for Everyone:

Persons Speak on the Impact of African Culture and Spirituality on Their Lives

1:30-3:00 p.m. — Taste of Africa & The World

An International Potluck Feast

Friendship United Methodist Church

305 E. Boughton Road, Bolingbrook, IL (630) 972-1011

Sponsored by the African-Style Fellowship and the Cultural Crossings Committee
**Health Matters**

**ASTHMA**

**Renee D. O’Connor, RN, MSN, BSN**

An asthma attack can be life-threatening. Knowing how to handle the attack is important and critical. Asthma disproportionately affects children and African Americans. It affects females more than males in the general population but among children it affects more males.

According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), asthma is one of the most common chronic conditions in the United States. It is on the rise. It can start in childhood, resolve, recur or develop in adulthood. About 20 million people in the United States have asthma, and 70 percent of people with asthma also suffer from allergies. Nine million children less than 18 years old suffer from asthma and many outgrow it in their teen years. It is the third leading cause of hospitalization among children under the age of 15. And 5000 people die from asthma each year.

**What is asthma?**

Asthma is a chronic inflammatory condition of the bronchial airways.

This inflammation causes the normal function of the airways to become excessive and over-reactive, resulting in production of increased mucus, mucosal swelling and muscle contraction in respond to one or more triggers. The triggers could be environmental stimulators such as allergens (thing that one is allergic to), tobacco smoke, cold, or warm air, perfume, pet dander, moist air, exercise or exertion, or emotional stress. The airways become narrow. The bronchial linings overreact to one or more of these stimuli, causing episodic spasms and inflammation that severely restrict the airways. The inflammation narrows the airways which allow trapping air as it becomes occluded by thick secretions, and the lungs become hyper-inflated.

**Risk Factors**

Risk factors include a family history of asthma, allergies (substances to which people are allergic to), premature birth or low birth weight, viral respiratory infection in early childhood, maternal smoking, exposure to job-related irritants, health problems such as obesity, sinusitis, and living in urban areas.

**Symptoms**

- Wheezing
- Coughing—chronic or recurring
- Pain or a tight feeling in the chest
- Shortness of breath
- Flaring of the nostrils when breathing in (especially in children)
- Interrupted talking
- Agitation
- Hyperinflation (appearance of hunched shoulders, hunching forward or preferring not to lie down).

**Managing Asthma**

The goal of asthma control is achieving the condition where in the asthmatic person can do more activities with fewer interruptions related to asthma attacks. Asthma cannot be cured but it can be controlled with proper medical management resulting in good quality of life. It is not just about treating the symptoms; it’s about having few or no symptoms. Short-term medications are used to relieve the symptoms. Persistent asthma symptoms require long-term medication daily to control the underlying inflammation to prevent symptoms and exacerbation. Find out what triggers the asthma. Keep a log for a week and note when an asthma attack occur.

**Resources**

**Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America:** www.aafa.org

Phone: 1-800-727-8462 (1-800-7-ASTHMA)

**National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Information Center**

Phone: 1-301-251-1222 or www.nhlbi.nih.gov

**American Lung Association:**

Tel: 1-800-586-4872 or www.lungusa.org

**Sports**

**AFRICA: New World Cup Draw Promises Thrillers**

Aliou Goloko

Dakar — The line-up for the five African groups in the third and final round of qualifying games for the 2010 Fifa World Cup was finalized at Fifa headquarters in Zurich on Wednesday.

The countries were drawn in second-round qualifying games for the 2010 Fifa World Cup was finalized at Fifa headquarters in Zurich on Wednesday.

The countries were drawn in second-round qualifying games for the 2010 Fifa World Cup was finalized at Fifa headquarters in Zurich on Wednesday.

The combined elimination matches for the 2010 World Cup and African Cup of Nations tournaments will see five African countries qualifying for the World Cup. As host nation, South Africa will bring to six the total number of African teams in the tournament.

**Group A**

- Togo
- Cameroon
- Morocco
- Gabon

**Group B**

- Mozambique
- Benin
- Egypt
- Tunisia

**Group C**

- Rwanda
- Algeria
- Kenya
- Zambia

**Group D**

- Ghana
- Benin
- Sudan
- Mali

**Group E**

- Côte d’Ivoire
- Malawi
- Burkinabé
- Guinea

**In West Africa, neighbors Côte d’Ivoire and Guinea are set to produce an explosive thriller.**

Danny Jordan, director of the 2010 organizational committee, and Mustapha Fahny, the CAF secretary-general, had no say in the proceedings.

The draw will present soccer fans with some epic encounters between neighbors, such as a Cameroon-Gabon clash in Group A. The matches between Kenya and Mozambique in Group B, Algeria and Egypt in Group C and Mali and Ghana in Group D also promise to produce African classics. **Distributed by AllAfrica Global Media (allAfrica.com)**

**August 2009**