



International Association of African Educators

IIIIAA 2013

IAAE Newsletter, Fall 2014

IAAE is a registered non-profit organization that aims to foster professional collaboration and network of African educators in the diaspora. It is organized to operate exclusively as a charitable, benevolent, scientific, literary, cultural, and educational purpose. Its mission is to create a productive and professional network of African educators that builds a sustainable, supportive, professional collaborative network and academic space for African educators (<http://iaae.org>).

EDITOR'S CORNER

By Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers

Happy new academic year! The summer was fruitful for IAAE. We had our first roundtable meeting or conference in Lawrence, KS. Papers presented at the meeting affirmed the mission of IAAE, which is to enlarge the circle of diversity in education to include African-born students and educators. Educational issues that exclusively pertain to African-born students and educators have been left out of the larger education discourse. The roundtable was all about educational issues of African-born piece, the roundtable meeting crystallized that all the hard-work of putting an organization together was worth it! In her contribution, Dr. Ukpokodu provides the state of the organization report. Dr. Harushimana shares her passion for scholarship that centers classroom experiences of African-born students in U.S. classrooms.

Dr. Ifedi's contribution reminds us not only of commonalities between the United States and Nigeria in the inequities that exist when it comes to educating students who are economically disadvantaged and economically advantaged, but also our responsibility to our home countries in Africa. Dr. Ifedi's piece urges us to remain restless as long as educational inequities exist, be it in Nigeria, any African country or the United States!

Dr. Nkabinde's story is about her experiences as a visitor in Hong Kong and mainland China in the summer. She writes that she felt tolerated but not accepted as an African. Dr. Nkabinde's story reminds me of my experiences in Madrid, Spain this summer. Madrid is a beautiful city, filled with tourists from all over the world except Africa. The only times I saw people who resembled me in Madrid was at night when informal street hawkers, all African men, were out hustling- similarly to the Chinese to whom Dr. Nkabinde refers in her story. The difference between hard-working Chinese hustlers in Hong Kong and hard-working African hustlers in Madrid was that whenever I saw these men, the police were not far away. I was embarrassed by the undignified way Madrid police chased these hardworking men. Every night, there was a spectacle of African men being chased by the police. As an African, this conveyed a not so welcoming message to me. I know that the African street hawkers were engaging in an illegal enterprise of selling on the streets or selling counterfeit goods, but the message I received was the same: your kind is not accepted here. I started

avoiding venturing out at night. Nevertheless, I enjoyed summer vacation with my children. Beside Madrid, Spain we spent some time in Paris, France and London, England. It was a wonderful summer. I am looking forward to a pleasant fall semester. I hope you enjoy this newsletter issue with its new feature of upcoming conferences and other events related to Africa.

Message from the Founder and President Dr. Ukpokodu



Greetings!

The Vision Comes Alive!

For decades, I thought and envisioned an organization that would bring together committed individuals who will network and become the voice of equity and social justice for African immigrant educators, students, and their families in the diaspora. We all know that until a thought is acted upon, it remains only an idea a dream and vision. About five years ago, I knew that my idea of forming the International Association of African Educators (IAAE) must be acted upon. In 2011, I braced myself for the challenge, went to work, and initiated my vision of the IAAE. I invited many individuals to join me in realizing my vision of an IAAE. Initially, only four other individuals embraced my vision and joined me. Today, I am delighted to say that many people are embracing my vision and have joined me to grow the association. Each person I have reached out to about the

organization has enthusiastically expressed gratitude to me and offered encouraging remarks. People like the noble goal of the IAAE and see it is a blessing for African educators, students, and community.

I am excited to say that the membership is growing, and that old and new members are enthusiastically committed and working to taking IAAE to the next level of making it a premier organization that I envisioned it would be. This past spring and summer IAAE welcomed five new board members. I am delighted to welcome to the board, Ms. Mercy Agyepong, (*University of Wisconsin, Madison*), Dr. Rosaire Ifedi (*Ashland University, Columbus, Ohio*), Dr. Peter Otiato Ojiambo (*The University of Kansas, Lawrence*), Dr. Zandile P. Nkabinde (*New Jersey City University, New Jersey*), and Dr. Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers, (*Nazareth College, Rochester, New York*). I am also excited to welcome new members who are public school teachers and graduate students who have embraced IAAE's vision and goals. I am happy to report that a group of highly committed, energetic new and prospective members is organizing a regional (the Midwest) chapter of IAAE that is on its way to be chartered. I am deeply heartened by the work of this group. What a remarkable achievement and news!



This past summer, June 27 and 28, IAAE held its historic Roundtable Forum and Retreat. The forum was held at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. I was thrilled to sponsor this conference event and I am still reeling from the success and

memorable experience we had. The forum was very productive and successful. I would like to sincerely thank the board members—Drs. Rosaire Ifedi, Immaculee Harushimana, Peter Otiato Ojiambo, Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers, and Zandile P. Nkabinde—and others who generously gave their time and resources to attend and present papers that were enlightening, thought-provoking, passionate, inspiring, scholarly and entertaining. The theme of the conference was: *Transnational Journeys of African Immigrant Educators and Students: Enduring Legacies*. Papers presented included: “Still Seeing ‘Color’ But Seeing Challenges as Opportunities & Possibilities (Dr. Omiunota Ukpokodu), “Experience of an African-Born Chair and Professor in American Higher Education” (Dr. Zandile P. Nkabinde), “As We Enter: Troubling and Transforming U.S. Education from the African Transnational’s Perspective” (Dr. Ifedi Rosaire), “What does not kill you makes you stronger: Finding Voice in Linguicism and Afrophobia” (Dr. Immaculee Harushimana), “My Transnational Journey: Shocking Cultures” (Dr. Emmanuel Ngomsi), “Education Field: My Entry by Serendipity and the Gift of Many Great Teachers” (Dr. Peter Otiato Ojiambo), “Negotiating identity politics with Ubuntu philosophy” (Dr. Shirley Mthethwa-Sommers), “My Enduring Journey and Refugee Experience” (IPHD Student, Abdul Baker), and “Perspectives on Nigerian teacher education” (Dr. Diane Arubayi). Kudos to the presenters! My deepest gratitude goes to the Department of African and African-American Studies at the University of Kansas, for co-sponsoring the event, and Drs. Immaculee Harushimana and Peter Otiato Ojiambo for their assistance and coordination of the event.

Join IAAE and Recruit Members:

I have heard from many, if not all of you, that IAAE is the best “gift” to African immigrant educators, students, and community. Now is your chance to help

IAAE reach its full potential. Become a member today. If you are already a member, recruit others to join the association. I am looking forward to welcoming you to IAAE and working with you!!

Co-Founder: Dr. Harushimana



African-born student research: A field in the making...

Five years ago, I made a bold move by submitting my first grant proposal to work with African-born immigrant youth, their families and their teachers. Never did I anticipate that one day I would be receiving communications from like-minded peers sharing with me their interest in researching the integration and adaptation experiences of African immigrant youth!

I cannot explain the degree of frustration and sadness that I felt each time I spent nights and nights reading articles on the educational performance and achievement by ethnic minority students in America. Despite the noted breadth of cultural and linguistic diversity in America, I always got a feeling that ethnic minority students who are acknowledged are mainly of Hispanic American, Native Americans and African American descents. Even prominent African-born researchers, such as late John Ogbu, chose to focus on the schooling of African-American students. At one point, I myself was caught in that web until I discovered the acuteness of the underrepresentation of African-born immigrant youth in US Educational research literature. I must admit that my choice to focus on African and Middle Eastern scholars and their self-conceptions of

professional writing development for my Ph. thesis had no connection with my current focus on African-born youth in US education. I simply found the topic original and self-gratifying.

When in 2008 submitted a grant proposal to study the adaptation of African-born youth in US secondary schools, I had no idea I was among the first people to come up with the idea. My eyes were opened to that reality when my multiple searches for publications on that topic barely yielded any hits. I had a sense of relief when one name came up— Rosemary Traore— author of *This Isn't the America I Thought I'd Find*; I immediately emailed her thinking that she was an African professor. Well, even though the exchange of pictures told me the opposite story; my excitement that I had finally found a like-minded peer was undiminished. Professor Traore immediately took under her wing and promised to mentor me, which she did so well.

Today, I am pleased to share that, along with Dr. Janet Awokoya—another mentee of Dr. Traore's; I have now become the face of African-born immigrant youth research. During the month of September alone, I was contacted by two African-born faculty from within US academia who professed allegiance to research on the schooling and academic performance of African-born immigrant youth, and expressed their interest in research collaboration on the topic. Of course I seized the opportunity to invite them to join IAAE, the public space where our shared interest can be adequately nurtured. One of them has already joined me in the compilation of an annotated bibliography of the scholarship on the education of African-born youth in the diaspora. I feel so gratified that the risk I took by arguing that African-born immigrant youth also deserve to have a place in the US racial minority education debate was not in vain.

Board member: Dr. Zandile Nkabinde



The Perspective of an African's visit to Hong Kong

This summer in August 2015 I was fortunate enough to visit Hong Kong for the first time in my life. What struck me about this tiny island country is their patriotism. The country is clean even trains are very clean. I observed that even the elderly were cleaning the streets and you do not find the litter in public places. You are better off if you speak Cantonese and or Mandarin otherwise simple tasks such as finding the bus stop can be problematic. While people of Hong Kong are generally polite I also found some to be impatient if you do not speak the language.

While in Hong Kong I also had the opportunity to visit China. The work ethics of Chinese is indeed a model for economic transformation that all nations must look at adopting. Everybody hustles in China, for example when coming out of the border gate in Kowloon to Shenzhen an army of traders both formal and informal are awaiting to meet you. They are all selling their products from watches to shoes and or any kind of garment. There is a huge plaza right as you exit Hong Kong and enter mainland China where you can buy almost everything. The dress or suit of your dreams can be made within days all you need is a pattern and or materials to make it and you will have it within days. Some stores have signs of "original copy" which I found very hilarious.

While my stay in these two countries was enjoyable I could not help but notice that if you are an African/foreigner they is also prejudice. While walking the streets of China in Shenzhen I noticed people staring at me as if I was lost. In some instances, people will point at you and you could tell that they were commenting about you. The behaviors made me uncomfortable and also fearful. I visited a spa and the man in the spa kept telling about the tip and I told him that I was going to give him a tip after the service was rendered. Soon other customers who could speak broken English started telling me how much the tip was which was equal to the prize of the service. I told them it does not work that way. In other words people were quick to overcharge me since they knew I did not understand the language. However, once I explained myself they left me alone.

A fellow South African who volunteered to take me to the market in Hong Kong and who happened to speak fluent Cantonese was busy giving me a brief history of the country while the driver of a metered cab was on the phone. When we reached our destination Steve (not his real name) gave the driver the fare and started talking to him in Cantonese. The driver made this big laugh and I asked Steve what the joke was all about. Steve explained to me that the driver was insulting us in the phone not knowing that he understood the language. The laugh was that of shame because he was caught.

In my personal experience and having lived in America more than half of my life, outside of South Africa the country of my birth America is still the best country to live in. In Hong Kong as well as in China my experience while good most of my visit indicated to me that as long as I was a guest I was tolerated but not accepted. I know Chinese are a closed nit culture and I respect that but I am sure I can only visit and not live there. It is good to visit other parts of the world because it enriches your experiences. Another tip is to learn the language of the country you are visiting because it changes your whole experience.

Board Member: Dr. Rosaire Ifedi



The State of Our Schools (and Our Democracy) in Nigeria

On a recent visit to the motherland, I took it upon me to drop by schools in whatever location I found myself. I wasn't able to document in pictures all the visits, but I was successful in engaging in conversations with administrators, teachers, and sometimes students. On occasion, I also connected with political leadership at varying levels—local, state, and federal. Without offering any simplistic overtones, I share some of those conversations here. Overwhelmingly, it appears that the aspirations of the general population, the common masses, and the significant citizenry are not figured in into what's going on in education. While those who can afford it are sending their children into hugely expensive private or privately operated schools, the poor are left at the mercy of poorly resourced and hardly-supported public schools. The sad truth is that people in the leading ranks seem unconcerned about what this bodes for Nigeria's democracy. What is the future of a nation that continues to ignore the doctor's prescriptions that will cure her ailments and put her on a course of wellness?

One leader repeats the various explanations and rationalizations of the state of affairs after another. As in many other nations, governing authority is split between local, state, and federal bodies. While local governments supervise primary education,

the state is supposed to oversee the affairs of the secondary education. Consequently each level is hard-pressed to point fingers at the other levels as the cause of the poor conditions in elementary and secondary schools. In one classroom in the state capital Abuja, a hardworking teacher was saddled with more than 60-80 students in one classroom. You need not ask what she did in that situation because nothing could deter her from doing exactly what she could: Teach in the circumstances.

One solution proffered by many Nigerian leaders short of pointing out the failures of the next branch of government or calling out other people's responsibility is to ask Nigerians in the Diaspora to do their part. This is not a tall order for them to make because in reality, all kinds of effort are being made by town associations and alumni organizations to do just that. However, can a nation truly depend on such sporadic and inconsistent efforts to build and support the education of the majority of its citizens? Can Nigeria build a healthy democracy and citizenry without a growing and healthy system of public education?

It is no secret that privatization is occurring the world over. Charter schools in the U.S., academies in the U.K. and all such configurations that offer choice with competition built in –sometimes healthy, sometimes not—can be debated. Nonetheless, in these advanced economies, the public system remains a fairly viable option. Concerned educators, advocates, and political leaders have continued the fight to ensure that remains the case. On the contrary, the successes of previous eras in public education are continually eroding. The state of affairs is dire. Allowing the public system of education to completely fail in Nigeria is a troubling trend. I have been invited by other colleagues to join the private school movement by starting new schools back home. Again, there is absolutely nothing wrong with this entrepreneurial initiative. However, as a product of public education myself, I find that invitation unappealing. I find the prospect of a non-existent public education

in Nigeria frightening, especially for the sake of bright minds, albeit from poor families, who cannot have access to the well-equipped schools. Someone has to take up the cause of our voiceless Nigerian children and their families. Nigeria must consider and intentionally seek the democratic outcomes that can only come from a healthy public education system and from the majority of its children being properly educated.



**Exterior View of a Public School in the Vicinity of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.



**Interior View of a Public School in the Vicinity of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

(**Identity of schools in the photographs withheld)



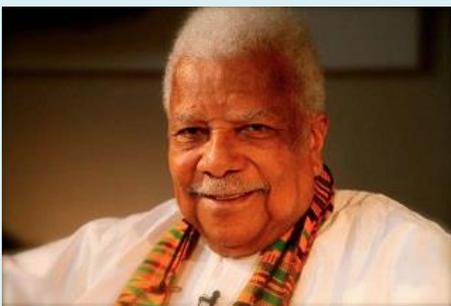
**Exterior View of a Private School, very close to the Public School pictured above, also in the vicinity of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.



**Interior View of a Private School, very close to the Public School pictured above, also in the vicinity of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria.

(**Identity of schools in the photographs withheld)

Remembering an Intellectual Giant



Professor Ali Mazrui

Professor Ali Mazrui, born in Kenya, Africa passed away Monday in Binghamton, New York at the age 81. Mazrui was one of Africa's intellectual giants. In 2005, he was named one of the 100 most intellectually influential people in the world. His work on religious identities of people on the African continent has been seminal in understanding historical roots of present religious diversity. Mazrui authored several books, numerous articles, including the television documentary *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*, which addressed Western, Islamic and African religions impact on Africa. At the time of his passing, Professor Mazrui was an Albert Schweitzer professor in the Humanities and the director of the Institute of Global Cultural Studies at Binghamton University.

Rest in peace Prof. Mazrui!

Upcoming conferences and other events related to Africa

- African Studies Association of the United States: [57th Annual Meeting of the ASA, "Rethinking Violence, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation," November 20-23, 2014, Indianapolis, Indiana](#) (via Rutgers University, Piscataway, New Jersey)
See especially: [2014 Preliminary program](#)
- [African Studies Centre, Leiden University -- Events, Seminars, and Conferences](#)
(Leiden, The Netherlands)
- Columbia University -- African Studies Events (New York)

[Columbia University Institute of African Studies -- Events](#)
- [Dakar 2014--XVe Sommet de la Francophonie, du 29 au 30 novembre 2014, Dakar, Sénégal](#)
- Harvard University, Committee on African Studies: [Calendar of Events](#) -and-

[Africa Workshop](#) (Cambridge, Massachusetts)

- New York University, Africa House: [Events](#) (New York)
- Royal Africa Society: [Events](#) (London, UK)
- Rutgers University: [Center for African Studies -- Events](#) (New Brunswick, New Jersey)
- SOAS--School of Oriental and African Studies: [Centre of African Studies -- Events](#) (University of London, London, UK)
- University of Pennsylvania: [African Studies Center -- Events](#) (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)
- The University of Texas at Austin: [2015 Annual Africa Conference -- "Development, Urban Space, and Human Rights in Africa," April 3-5, 2015 -- Call for Papers](#) (Austin, Texas)
- [West African Research Association & WARC Conferences: Summer Institutes & International Symposia](#) (via African Studies Center, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts)
- Yale University: [Council on African Studies -- Events](#) (New Haven, Connecticut)
- York University, Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migration of African Peoples: [Upcoming Events](#) (Toronto, Canada)
- [18th Annual Zanzibar International Film Festival -- Festival of the Dhow Countries: "Waves & Visions of Hope" 18-26 July 2015](#) (Zanzibar, Tanzania)
General information on a wide variety of events and links to related websites. *Plus, information from the 2014 festival and earlier.* "ZIFF is a non-profit organisation based in Zanzibar [founded in 1997] which aims to promote film, music and arts from

the Dhow Countries (African Continent, Gulf States, Iran, India, Pakistan and the islands of the Indian Ocean). The organization is working throughout the year and seeks to include people from all sectors of society, with special programs for women, children and people in rural areas."

For more information go to: <http://www.iaae.org>