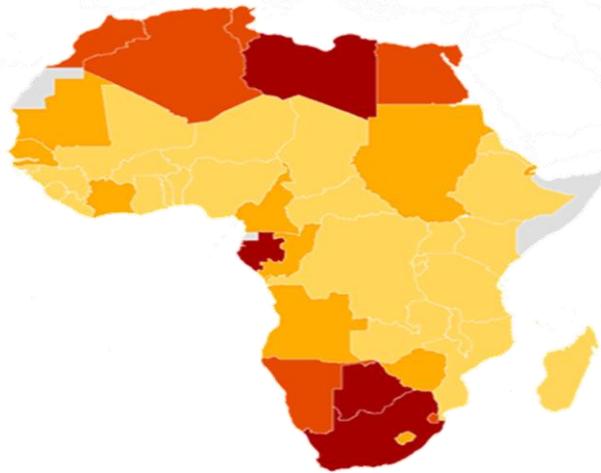


AFRICA INITIATIVE

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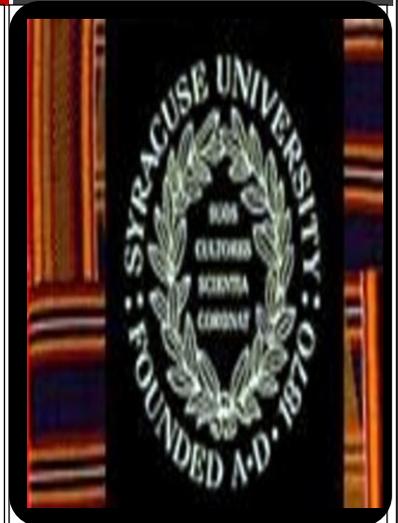
Of Syracuse University



Fall Report

August-December

2010



Department of African American Studies

ABOUT THE AFRICA INITIATIVE OF SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY

The Africa Initiative of Syracuse University is a University campus-wide project located in the Department of African American Studies in The College of Arts and Sciences. The purpose of the Initiative is to focus on Africa as an important site of knowledge by highlighting teaching, research and publication work by Syracuse University scholars representing a variety of disciplines including the arts, humanities, social & natural sciences, mathematics, engineering and others.

The Initiative aims at spearheading a revitalized interest in Africa, which has been on the wane in many institutions of higher learning since the end of the so-called "Cold War." In this respect, it is important to note that Syracuse University once had a vibrant African Studies Program that no longer exists, although notable resources accumulated during its existence, such as the East African Collection at the Bird Library, remain. Moving forward from this history, the Africa Initiative of Syracuse University plans on building upon relevant aspects of this previous experience, while adopting fresh approaches and charting new directions as dictated by the present global affairs.

The Africa Initiative's presence in the Department of African American Studies reinforces a critical site where the bulk of academic work on Africa at Syracuse University is done and where the Continent and the Caribbean are perceived as concomitant parts of the department's Pan-Africanist vision. In bringing together Syracuse University scholars from various disciplines, the Africa Initiative aims at not only promoting interdisciplinary exchange, but also reinforcing the university's ongoing effort to diversify and internationalize the educational experience of our students. In this regard, the Initiative places great emphasis on study-abroad programs in Africa, as well as the provision of financial resources to give students exposure to the Continent.

At The Africa Initiative of Syracuse University, we believe that such critical interventions, interactions and discourses will help alter the dominant perception of Africa as a continent ridden with perpetual crises and despair by providing an alternative vision and platform for constructive discourse on Africa and African peoples. Just as important, and in furthering this commitment, the Initiative offers a significant pool of experts specializing in various aspects of an extremely diverse and richly endowed continent.

AFRICA INITIATIVE BOARD

Dr. Horace G. Campbell	Director, Africa Initiative of SU
Dr. Kofi Appiah Okyere	Whitman School of Management
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Dr. Micere G. Mugo	Department of African American Studies
Dr. Peter Castro	Department of Anthropology, Maxwell
Dr. Subho Basu	Department of History Maxwell
Arkie Tassew	President, African Students Union

PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

Africa Initiative Reception

As part of our tradition, the Africa Initiative hosted a special reception to mark the official beginning of the semester's activities on September 9, 2010 in Sims 219, from 5.00 p.m- 7:00pm. The event was attended by the Africa Initiative board members, students and faculty members of the university along with members of the community.

The reception commenced with Chene Redwood, the new Africa Initiative Graduate Assistant for the 2010/2011 academic year, introducing himself and welcoming the attendees and guests. Dr. Horace Campbell, the Director for the Africa Initiative of Syracuse University, then extended further welcome and outlined the programs, goals and aims of the Africa Initiative of Syracuse University and the plans for the academic year 2010/2011. He explained the purpose of the Africa Initiative as focusing on Africa as an important site of knowledge and the revitalization of interest in Africa through scholarship and programs geared primarily towards the transformation process of the African and the Pan African world at large in the 21st Century.

At the reception, attendees listened and participated enthusiastically to the lecture given by the distinguished Micere Githae Mugo, poet, playwright, literary critic and Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence at Syracuse University. In her speech entitled *Affirming Indigenous African Sites of Knowledge: Possible theoretical and methodological paradigms*, she expressed the need, validity and capability of 'orature' as a critical site of knowledge for scholarship on Africa and The Pan-African World.

The reception concluded with a vote of thanks being given by Dr. Horace Campbell, the Director for the Africa Initiative of Syracuse University, during which special acknowledgement was given to guest speaker Micere Githae Mugo; Africa Initiative Graduate Assistant Wilbert Mahenge, Assistant Professor of History, Martin Shanguhya and Chene Redwood the new Africa Initiative Graduate Assistant. From this juncture attendees were treated to refreshments during which they engaged in pleasantries and enjoyed Afro-Caribbean cuisine.

The Eduardo Mondlane Brown Bag Lecture Series

Named after the founder of the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), doyen of Mozambique's independence movement and former faculty member at SU, The Eduardo Mondlane Brown Bag Lecture Series was one of Africa Initiative's most important undertakings. Throughout the fall semester, four Brown Bag lectures were held providing a platform for SU researchers, teachers and graduate students working on Africa-related issues to share their scholarship and work with the larger Syracuse University community. The Brown Bag Lecture Series also aimed to provide a space for and to motivate discussion consistent with current events, issues and developments in the African continent. Some dominant themes were: peace, security and social transformation, leadership, the African Union in the context of regional/global integration, technology, business, investment and entrepreneurship, social justice, gender, environment, education, African history, culture and arts among others. The following Brown Bag presentations were fully supported by faculty members, students and members of the wider Syracuse community.

The Eduardo Mondlane Brown Bag Lecture Series commenced on, October 22, 2010 with an engaging presentation given by visiting guest lecturer Dr. Efemini Andrew from the University of Virginia in Sims Hall Room 319 from 3- 5pm. Dr. Andrew's presentation entitled *The Politics of Nigeria and the Development of the Niger Delta Region* marking a significant undertaken in light of the struggles the people of the Niger Delta region and the Nigerians in general has had for the past fifty years of their independence. In his presentation Dr. Andrew establishes and takes off from the common assumption that there is a relationship between politics and development. In assessing and understanding the crisis of development and volatility of the Niger Delta region and Nigeria, he articulates that the current challenges and complexities arise from colonial history; one that produce a undemocratic and war-like politics that continues to the present resulting in self-sufficiency for the ordinary Nigerian being thwarted despite the monies generated from oil refineries. Dr. Andrew articulated that to address the crisis of development which is confronting the Niger Delta region, the democratization process must be pursued and promoted in such a way that the ordinary people become the real driving force of the process. Achieving this will require the reconstitution of the Nigerian State in such a way as to enthrone true federalism, fundamental rights of citizenship and citizens.

The second Eduardo Mondlane Brown Bag Lecture was held on November 4 2010 in Tolley Room 304 featuring Meredith Professor of Teaching Excellence Joanna O. Masingila from the Department of Mathematics and the School of Education at the Syracuse University. Dr. Masingila's presentation entitled *Kenyatta University and Syracuse University: Afric –U.S Higher Education Initiative Partnership* focused on a partnership project between Syracuse University and Kenyatta University in Kenya East Africa, with the goal to prepare and support teachers to

become proficient in their subject matter and instructional design, while also assisting with the development of learning communities and establishing a framework for continuous professional growth of teaching practitioners. This partnership was hailed by Dr. Horace Campbell, the Director for the Africa Initiative of Syracuse University, as important in the transformation of Africa in light of the importance of education in developing and maximizing the African human and natural resources.

The third Eduardo Mondlane Brown Bag Lecture witnessed joint presentations by Syracuse University's African-American External Fellow Charlie Tuthill of the Maxwell School and PhD candidate Solomon Mungure of Sunny ESF on November 11 2010 in Sims Hall Room 319 from 3-5pm. The two presentations focused on two geographical spaces in Southern Africa where the question of resources, like in many African countries, is central to the politics of those countries. Charlie Tuthill in his discussion entitled *Community Forest Management in Mozambique* articulates that community forestry and wildlife management is one of the strategies that the government of Mozambique has adopted to promote the sustainable use and conservation of the country's forest resources. Under new policies and legal framework, local communities are recognized as legal entities responsible for the use and conservation of forests and wildlife resources in their areas of influence. Nonetheless, he asserts, despite the benefits and inclusion of the community there exist gaps with the community receiving miniscule reward. Solomon Mungure investigated *The Dynamics of Conflict in Illegal Diamond Dealing in Chiadzwa Zimbabwe*. He cited the changes in the economic and social environment—hyperinflation, high unemployment and persistent drought—and argued that these pressures pushed people to begin looting diamonds in Chiadzwa. He further asserted that the trade resulted in an increase in conflict, ranging from those within local families to those in global trading markets.

The Eduardo Mondlane Brown Bag Lecture series culminated in a presentation by visiting Research Specialist Dr. Tanya Solomon from University of Illinois, Chicago on December 3, 2010 in Sims Hall Room 319 from 3- 5pm. Dr. Solomon's lecture titled *Balancing Acts: African American Youths' Constructions of Science Learner Identities* interrogated the factors related to African-American youth's underrepresentation in science-related fields. In her discussion she postulated the need for a revised teaching method that incorporated cultural and social mechanism, such as music, as a medium through which interest can be generated and knowledge transmitted resulting in closing the present gaps in representation of African-Americans and other minorities in science.

Symposia and Conferences

Symposia and conferences provide a platform for a much deeper and broader engagement of issues relevant to the pursuit of our mission. Subsequently, the Africa Initiative frequently hosts major symposia and conferences to enable its work in reaching a broader audience as well as to benefit the Syracuse University's community with a richer diversity, experience and expertise. Within the fall semester 2010 the Africa Initiative hosted two important events. These include:

W.E.B. DuBois and The Crisis Magazine Symposium

In partnership with the Newhouse School of Public Communications, the Africa Initiative of Syracuse University hosted the afternoon-long symposium *Who's Been Telling Our Story? W.E.B. DuBois and 100 Years of The Crisis Magazine* on Tuesday Oct. 26, 2010 from 1p.m -5:30 p.m. in the Joyce Hergenhan Auditorium in Newhouse 3. The Symposium explored the legacy of W.E.B. DuBois' *The Crisis* magazine, a pre-eminent journal of civil rights, politics, ideas and culture published by the NAACP, founded in 1910. The event began with a screening of "*The Black Press: Soldiers Without Swords*" followed by a panel discussion moderated by Newhouse's Dean Lorraine Branham. Panelists include Dr. Horace Campbell, professor in AAS, and Dr. Francis Ward, professor in the Department of Newspaper and Online Journalism at Newhouse. Dr. Herbert Ruffin, Assistant Professor in African American studies then spoke on "*W.E.B. DuBois and The Crisis*" after which students lead in a panel discussion "*What's the Crisis Today?*" focusing the issues and events that shape this generation and how they're covered by the media today. The symposium came to a close with Jabari Asim, current editor of *The Crisis* magazine, delivering the keynote address. For the African Initiative, the symposium was crucial because for 100 years *The Crisis* has been the magazine of opinion and thought leaders, decision makers, peacemakers and justice seekers. It has chronicled, informed, educated on the civil rights, history, politics, and culture and seeks to educate and challenge its readers about issues that continue to plague African Americans and other black communities.

African Initiative of Syracuse University International Human Rights Celebration

One of the key events of the fall semester was the organization and hosting of the celebration of International Human Rights Day 2010 on December 10, 2010 in Sims Hall Room 319 from 5p.m -7 pm. The event was well attended, not only comprising faculty, staff and students of Syracuse University but also members of the Liberian Community. The event was crucial as it celebrated the passing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations representing the universality, humanity and the importance of human rights as the foundation of freedom, peace, development and justice. Additionally, Human Rights Day is an occasion to salute the courage and achievements of human rights activists everywhere and the pledge to do more to safeguard the dignity of human beings. The Africa Initiative was privileged to have as guest speaker, Jerome Verdier, the chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

who spoke on *Advancing Human Rights Protection in the Work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia*.

Community Engagement

The Africa Initiative emphasizes the building of relationship between our work in the academy and the expanding Pan-African community in Upstate New York. Our activities, programs and goals remain in tandem with Syracuse University's stated commitment to Scholarship in Action, a holistic educational approach that commits scholars and students to an awareness of, and a connectedness with the immediate community that surrounds the university. Towards this end, A.I. works closely with community organizations, like the Pan-African Community of Central New York (PACCCNY) that brings together many nationality-based community organizations. Similarly, the Africa Initiative join hands with the Onondaga County's Beauchamp Library in events that target the youth and adults, including public lectures on topical issues delivered by SU faculty, students as well as invited guests whenever resources may allow. Other partners in the past have included the Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), the African Students Union (ASU).

Refugee Literacy Program

The city of Syracuse and Central New York in general has become home to many resettled refugees from many parts of the world in the past decade. The refugee population has continued to rise as the city remains one of the preferred destinations for these new Americans from Liberia, Burundi, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). However, the literacy rates among most families are very low and the children often require remedial help with their schoolwork. Towards this end the Africa Initiative has partnered with the Syracuse University School of Education and the African Students Union to provide much-needed tutoring services to help the young people in English Language and Mathematics and to help them adjust to life in America's educational institutions.