The 24th Annual Africa/Diaspora Conference
April 23-25, 2015

Art donated by Daniel Yamshon

The African Family: Traditions, Transitions and Transformation

Location: University Union (UU), California State University, Sacramento

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By The Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution (CAPCR), California State University, Sacramento

In Collaboration with the Pan African Studies/Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program

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Final Review by Prof. Ernest Uwazie, Conference Director
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The Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution

MISSION

The Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution (CAPCR) was established in 1996 at California State University, Sacramento, to provide conflict resolution and reconciliation services for agencies, governments, institutions, businesses, civil society and community organizations and other groups through training, education, research, and intervention.

CAPCR develops curricular/materials and provides training on mediation, negotiation, arbitration, and other conflict resolution services for governmental and nongovernmental organizations, business and community groups, public and private agencies, educational institutions and allied professional associations (in US/Africa).

GOALS

- Develop and implement programs that educate and promote peace and conciliation among families, organizations, community groups, and governments, both in US/Africa
- Conduct research and evaluations on African conflict situations, and serve as a clearinghouse/resource center
- Establish institutional and community network of support in US/Africa on conflict resolution and assist in creation of indigenous conflict resolution institutes in Africa
- Assist in mediation/arbitration/resolution of conflicts among Africans, when possible and with consent of disputing parties.

Since CAPCR’s founding in 1996, CAPCR has developed independently, and in conjunction with other agencies, numerous major initiatives on conflict resolution, alternative dispute resolution and peace education. Our partners include the U.S. State Department and Department of Education, the U.S. Institute of Peace, USAID, JAMS Foundation, World Bank, California Wellness Foundation, the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies in Lagos, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, the Nigerian Human Rights Commission, the University of Ghana-Legon, the Ghana Bar Association , Judiciary and Ministry of Justice, the Ghana Association of Certified Mediators and Arbitrators, Ethiopia Dispute Resolution Association, Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)-Kenya and Ethiopia, National University of Rwanda-Butare, The Gambia Judiciary, Addis Ababa University, the University of Liberia in Monrovia, the University of Dakar in Senegal, the African Center for Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), Kaiser Foundation, among others.

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Pan African Studies at California State University, Sacramento is immersed in three worlds: (1) the African experience as represented in the United States, the Diaspora, and the continent; (2) academic excellence; (3) involvement in the Black community.

The unique synthesis of these three elements has established Pan African Studies in Sacramento as a program of distinction. Our curriculum addresses this dimension of life: What is the nature of the African world; under what conditions has it been formed; what adversities has it met in the past and what does it continue to meet; how has it been used to contribute to human civilization and well-being; and how can it be used in the effort to create a better world in memory of our ancestors, for us, and for those who come after us?

Students intellectually attracted to this synthesis can pursue a concentration in Pan African Studies as part of the major in Ethnic Studies.

Cooper Woodson College Affiliation with the Pan African Studies Program
Cooper Woodson College Enhancement Program and Pan African Studies work collaboratively. A certificate in Pan African Studies is available through the Ethnic Studies Department. Only students enrolled in the Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program are eligible for the certificate. The Director of Pan African Studies certifies those graduated of the Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program who are eligible for the certificate. Total units required for the Pan African Studies Certificate are 24.

About the African Student Association at CSU-Sacramento

The African Student Association (ASA) at CSU, Sacramento was founded in 1991 by a group of African students concerned about their under-representation on campus. These students decided to create an organization to unify all people of African descent, and socializing all members of the community.

ASA provides a welcoming and supportive cultural space for African students to build community at Sacramento State. We promote the academic and professional success of our members by expanding their networks on campus, and beyond. We deeply value our diverse cultural experiences, which we infuse into our interactive and informative events.
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April 23, 2015

Concurrent Panel A.1: Culture, Law, Religion and Family

The panel was moderated by Dr. Jessie Gaston, with speakers from Nigeria, Guyana, and Kenya. F.U. Chukwumzie of Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri in Imo State, Nigeria, presented a paper titled “The African/Nigerian Family in Diaspora: An Appraisal.” This paper compared familial legal cases filed in rural Nigerian courts to those filed in metropolitan areas to determine whether a preference existed for the western legal system or traditional regulatory methods. Within this paper, traditional behavioral regulatory methods were defined as one receiving counsel from elders of the community, or disputes settled in the company and with the input of family and friends. Nevertheless, this paper concluded that communication techniques from the west are not successful, and there needs to be a return to the utilization of African traditional methods.

Next, Ingrid Goodman of the P.A.T.O.I.S Women’s Refugee in East Coast Demerara, Guyana, presented her paper “The Law/Culture/Custom and Family: Responding to family/domestic violence” which outlined the background and mission of PATOIS. The PATOIS project is one that addresses cultural, ethnic, and religious reasons for domestic violence, or filial dysfunction in Guyana. This project arose out of the discovery that many familial issues in Guyana stem from cultural differences in origin amongst Guyanese populations of African, Indo, and East Indian descent. With an ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse population, Guyana as a nation struggles to grapple with the issues that arise when cultures clash. PATOIS strives to be a stabilizing force that can help mitigate domestic violence and dysfunction in blended families through promoting cultural and religious sensitivity.

The final speaker, Gordon Onyango Omenya of Pwani University in Kilifi, Kenya presented a paper entitled, “Legislating Sexuality and Marriage Relations: A Reflection on the New Constitution of and Gender Justice in Kenya.” This paper examined the impact of Kenya’s new constitution and its enhancement of women’s rights in relation to the power women chose to exercise or not exercise in their marital relationships. This paper contended that while there is legislation in Kenya that regulates gendered experiences for citizens, the hope for the future is that women can gradually find freedom in their legal rights granted under the constitution in their everyday lives, and especially their marital experiences.

Concurrent Panel A.2: Women, Gender Relations and Culture.

The second concurrent panel was moderated by Dr. Sylvester Bowie. The first speaker, Sacramento author Aleta Kazadi, presented her paper “Congolese Kazadi, presented her paper “Congolese Solutions for Congolese Women.” Kazadi lived in the Congo for over a decade following the death of her Congolese born husband. During her time there she was involved with many non-profit organizations (NGOs). Through her experiences she came to the
conclusion that the solutions to many problems she witnessed were to be found not outside the country but from within. In her presentation she spoke about three small Congo based organizations that work to aid and empower women: Provivi, the Catholic University of Kinshasa, and the International Women’s Club of Kinshasa. Each of these three organizations is working to change the status quo by educating women on their legal rights, providing training, funding small entrepreneurial ventures, and supplying legal/emotional/financial support to women who are victims of physical or sexual violence. It is Kazadi’s assertion that all three of these groups have demonstrated positive outcomes for the populations they serve despite being small in size and resources. All three of these groups reside in Kinshasa, their financial support comes from Kinshasa, and they are making a difference in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a whole.

Chinyere Nnorom, of the University of Lagos, Nigeria, presented her paper “Patriarchy and the Women’s Condition in Nigerian Families: The Need for Cultural Reevaluation and Legal Rebalance.” This paper examined the various dimensions of women’s deprivations within the family by the forces of patriarchy, and pushed for cultural reevaluation and legal rebalance with the goal of unlocking the woman from patriarchal inspired socio-cultural pillories. In her discussion Nnorom cited cultural practices that were inherently demeaning to women. She gave the example that in some parts of Nigeria when a husband dies and his body is washed, his widow and daughters are made to drink the dirty bathwater. Practices like this are continued because in a patriarchal system, the male is thought to represent strength, security, and continuity. However, the treatments that stem from this belief are at the core of the miseries suffered by most women in the family, and by extension the community. Nnorom provided some recommendations that she believed could start mitigating the negative effects of patriarchy, including: the creation of enlightenment programs aimed at educating females on their constitutional/civil rights, introduction of social security schemes in Nigeria for non-working widows, the compulsory completion of senior secondary school for females, and the reorientation of values at the familial level.

Next was a presentation by Browne Onuoha, also from the University of Lagos. Onuoha’s paper was entitled, “Re-thinking Youth Development in Africa: The Case of Nigeria.” Onuoha argued the youth groups are social groups working to build, support, and protect communities. Nevertheless, some groups are used as pawns in manipulative political games. Thus, Onuoha suggested that there should be a rethinking of youth development because there is no overarching unifying force in the fight for independence. With the lack of national priorities, focus, and ideologies, the youth groups need direction. It was his recommendation that there be two years of national services to help the young people develop a sense of national pride and commitment.

The final presenter was by Joanna Davidson from Boston University, with her paper titled “The Problem of Widows.” Davidson started her presentation with a narrative about widows in Guinea-Bissau, noting that they comprised a significant proportion – sometimes up to 30% -- of village neighborhoods. In the region of her study, there was no term for a ‘widow’, so a woman who is widowed might be described as a woman whose husband has died. In discussing widows’ lives and the reactions to widows by other members of their rural community, Davidson challenged conventional social scientific analyses of widowhood by considering what it meant that widows, themselves, did not think of themselves as members of this category. Rather than focus on the “problem of widows” as one that takes their poverty, exclusion, and social mandates to re-marry as the central foci that define widows’ lives, Davidson instead
observed that widows who refused to be problematized as such might demand that we re-think scholarly approaches to gender, kinship, and commonplace understandings about African marriage and the family.

**Conference Opening**

The 24th annual Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution (CAPCR) Conference was called to order by Dr. Marlyn Jones, as the Mistress of Ceremonies, after some African drumming by Mr. Tyehimba Kokayi, and followed by the opening by the Center’s director, Dr. Ernest Uwazie. Dr. Uwazie welcomed the audience, both recurring and new guests/participants. He briefly explained the choice of the theme of the conference on the family, by reading a passage from the CAPCR’s current project on the African Family for Health for Peace about the African family: “The source of our pride and support, essence of our being, life wire of the community, and builder of the nation. A healthy family is a peaceful home.” He quoted an African adage that the “Ruins of a nation begin from the family,” and then he officially declared the conference open. The opening statement was certainly fortuitous as many of the panels featured presentations that discussed the emotional, physical, and spiritual health, or lack of health, of the African family in the diaspora. Following the director’s opening remarks, the CSU- Sacramento Provost, Frederika “Fraka” Harmsen, and the dean of the College of Health and Human Services, Dr. Fred Baldini, contributed some kind and encouraging words. Both Provost Harmsen and Dean Baldini highlighted the fact that the CAPCR annual conference has become a vital institution contributing to the cultural vitality of the University, with commendations to Dr. Uwazie for his vision and leadership, the CAPCR board and the Conference Planning Committee for their consistent, steady support and services in ensuring success of the annual conference. Provost Harmsen challenged the students to take full advantage of the rare opportunity provided by the conference presentations and international guests, as part of their memorable learning experience at CSU-Sacramento.
Keynote Address

CSU-Sacramento Dr. Data Barata introduced the Keynote Speaker, Dr. Yewoubdar Beyene of the University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Beyene, who was born and raised in Ethiopia, is a professor of medical anthropology. Her research focuses on women’s reproductive health, aging, HIV/AIDS in the US and abroad, as well as the use of traditional healers in the aforementioned ailments. Dr. Beyene’s presentation reflected the theme of the conference: “The African/Diaspora Family: Traditions, Transitions, and Transformations.” This presentation focused upon the development and retention of familial ties as they apply to immigrant parents/grandparents and subsequent generations within the African diaspora. Beyene organized her information around four major themes: Culture/Tradition, Gender and Tradition, Transition and Illness, and New generation immigrants and their parents. For the purpose of this presentation, culture and tradition can be either static (fixed in the past) or dynamic (ever evolving but maintaining purpose). Nevertheless, in the diaspora new generations find themselves either assimilating to new dominant societal norms, or acculturating themselves into their new environments while retaining the cultural influences and customs of their family’s homeland. Beyene proposed that tension can arise between those who assimilate and those who acculturate themselves in the diaspora in the areas of gender norms and illness. For young women, straddling two cultures while acting out their engendered roles in their family and current environment can be especially complicated. In addition, beliefs in terms of health, medicine, and aging can also be deeply rooted in tradition and can find themselves in opposition to the varying societal milieus of the diaspora. The children of African immigrants from all over the continent may find themselves at odds with the tradition that their families want them to carry on from their culture of origin and their current home. In sum, it would seem that Beyene left her audience with the message that it is up to each family and each new generation to decide at what points they are willing to assimilate to the dominate culture, and at what points it is best to acculturate and keep tradition alive yet adaptable in the diaspora.

Concurrent Panel C.1: African Philosophy Student Research and Presentation

Adjunct Professor Darryl Omar Freeman moderated a panel consisting of four students from his African Philosophy and Religions course at California State University, Sacramento. He opened the session highlighting the modern urban achievements throughout the continent of Africa with a short video entitled "The Africa They Never Show You". The students then presented summaries of their research papers regarding the social, political, religious and economic conflicts between traditional African philosophies and practices and colonial, post-colonial and modern western philosophies. Ms Iyawe cited evidence that those ethnic groups in Africa that adhere strictly to traditional practices often impede the social development of their communities, especially in regards to the advantages of modern medicine. Ms Williams Capponi explored how post-colonial land use practices by western entities operating in different African countries frequently stifle the ability of traditional subsistence farmers to feed their families and
earn a living. Mrs. Salimi examined how modern religions are in conflict with traditional religious practices and are the cause of dual religious identity conflicts among many African people. Finally, Mr. Smith advocated the invoking of an "Ubuntu" practice of collaboration and community in order for African people to resolve political turmoil in their societies.

**Concurrent Panel C.2: Women, Church and Family Case Studies**

Longtime CAPCR partner, Daniel Yamshon, Esq., moderated this panel. Funmi Bammeke of the University of Lagos, presented her paper entitled “Issues in Marital Conflict and Violence: Sociological analysis of narratives of selected Yoruba women.” Each of the 42 Yoruba women contacted for the study had suffered from domestic abuse. 28 women continued on to the end of the study, and were from varying educational and economic backgrounds. The fact that these women were Yoruba was of importance because it is widely accepted that Yoruba culture prioritizes a woman’s silence as well as her physical/emotional endurance and forbearance in a marital relationship. Problems usually arise within the domestic sphere, and women are generally expected to follow the direction of her husband without contestation. Bammeke affirmed that literature would assume that the education level of a woman would directly impact her tolerance for domestic violence, but the study found this was not the case. This study suggested that the Yoruba community as a whole needs to start holding men accountable for domestic violence and not overlook it, as familial intervention was not shown to be effective.

Next, Abraham Ali of Hawassa University in Ethiopia presented a paper entitled, “I Got Peace and Stability: Women’s Perception of Contraceptive Use in Sidama, SNNRP, Ethiopia.” Ali’s aim with his work was to determine what impact contraceptive use had on the lives of rural women in Ethiopia, along with whether the use of contraceptives leads to feelings of woman empowerment. In addition, Ali sought to find out when current user began using contraception and what the power dynamic is like between couples where the woman utilizes contraception. The study affirmed that in practice contraceptives helped these women avert birth mortality as well as manage post birth better. The study also noted that 26-30% of the women expressed that they would needed contraceptives but did not have access to them. Ali’s findings were conclusive to the idea that access to contraceptives had a transformative and emancipatory impact on the women served.

The last speaker, Fr. John Enyinnaya, is a Catholic priest from the All Saints Catholic Church in Avutu-Obowo in Imo State, Nigeria. Enyinnaya discussed the major themes outlined in his paper “The Changing Role of the Church in the African Family: Lessons from Nigeria.” Enyinnaya stated that in Nigeria there are some failures in the religious leadership. Currently, there are many charismatic leaders in the religious community that do not effectively support the families that are in need of stronger faith. In essence, Enyinnaya affirmed that religion can be used to better serve the people, but this can only be achieved with effective leaders devoted to the good of the community.
A Special Student Dialogue: Bridging the Gaps

This special panel was organized by the CSU-Sacramento African Student Association, moderated by Camilla Avugwi, and it featured eight CSU-Sacramento students who were of either direct African heritage or of African descent in the diaspora.

Immediately before the panel, Dr. Uwazie called for a moment of silence in memory of the young Ms. Lesego Mosupyoe, whose sudden death a few days earlier has been painful to her friends and family, especially her mother, Dr. Boatamo Mosupyoe, Director of Pan African Studies/CWC-CSU-Sacramento.

Although the topic of the discussion was planned to be about bridging cultural gaps in the black community between Africans of the soil and those of the diaspora or blood, the dialogue quickly turned towards a conversation of identity. The students who had a direct link with their African roots could speak affirmatively about their identity in terms of where on the continent their families resided currently and in generations past. For them it was easy to self-identify with being (for example) either Kenyan and Kikuyu or Nigerian and Igbo. For the students of the diaspora, it was easy for them to identify as black and American, but their cultural affiliation was always hybridized in a way that the identity of the African students was not. Diasporic cultures are almost always hybridized by the nature of their birth. For the African students, they expressed difficulty in assimilating themselves to American culture and spoke to the same tensions of transitions/transformations of culture that Dr. Beyene explicated in her keynote address. The challenge to resolve the traditions of your past with your new present can be tangible challenge for first generation Africans and those who immigrate as a young age alike. At the close of the discussion nearly all of the students agreed that cultural understanding through education is the key to bridging the gap between Africans of the soil and those of the diaspora. When each can understand the history that shaped and molded their shared present they can grow closer in the future. At conclusion, Dr. Uwazie challenged the youth discussants to take one positive step to bridge the gaps, and be prepared to share the results at the 2016 conference.

Participants: Irisha Gibbs, Reuben Kibuguchi, Nya Lam, Eunice Mwangi, Terence Whigham, Camilla Kanali, Nova, Kanukai Chigamba.

April 24, 2015

Panel 3: Contemporary Issues in African and Diasporic Family

Adjunct Lecturer Elizabeth Mukiibi moderated the panel which provided an interdisciplinary look at contemporary issues in the African and diasporic family. Sanyu Mulira of CSU Sacramento, presented her paper “The Disappearing Act of the Family and Tradition in The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me.” Mulira’s paper explored a literary work by Calixthe Beyala about a young girl growing up in urban Douala, Cameroon. The main character is submerged in an environment where traditional values and the traditional notion of family are nearly absent. As a result, the character believes that men are the central cause of the turmoil and instability in her community. In the end, the main character’s desire to build a world void of men leads her to become mentally unhinged and she murders a random man after her best
friend dies of a botched abortion. Mulira suggests that The Sun Hath Looked Upon Me can be read as a piece of radical black feminist literature that can arise in the absence of family and tradition.

“Understanding the African Diaspora’s Transnational Socio-Political Pathology” was presented by Felix Ntim of Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany. This paper was a study of the political networks of Africans in the diaspora. The central question that Ntim wanted to answer was: what do Africans in the diaspora want when they get involved with the politics of their countries of origin? He discovered that Africans in the diaspora have elitist value orientations. Diasporic political associations are organizations with financial power to influence elects in the country of origin, however these associations have both private and communitarian interests. Ntim’s paper suggests that diasporic political associations are able to shift some of the emphasis on private interest to communitarian interest, and have a favorable overall impact on their country of origin.

Next, Chinyere Nnorom of the University of Lagos presented her paper “The Challenge of Youth Development in Nigeria: Implications for Leadership and National Development.” Nnorom’s paper looked at the impact that poor youth leadership development has had on the economic state of Nigeria. Nnorom stated that the youth of Nigeria have been truly impacted by the lack of leadership due to political and institutional failure across the nation. Nigeria being an oil rich nation, it ranks low in the level of development compared to other rich countries. Majority of the citizens are indeed living in poverty, 85% surviving on the equivalent of $2 USD a day. In addition, youth are 60% of the population and they have 50% unemployment rates. She also suggests that where leadership has failed, it is plausible to assume that poor development has been intentional to keep youth from rising up in opposition to the ruling class. To effect overall change in the entire nation, youth need to be considered assets to assist in institutional improvement and have their skillsets harnessed for national development. However, it depends upon the government’s willingness to invest in the youth and allow for financial success to be more widespread from the hands of a few to the hands of a few more.

The final presenter on this panel was Anne Obiora from Anambra State University in Nigeria. Her paper “The African/Nigerian Family in Diaspora: An Appraisal” highlighted the importance of family as a socializing agent and a foundation of society as a whole. Values are taught within the family, and without the family people grow weak. Obiora proclaimed that even society and the state exist for family and within the foundation of marriage. The presenter pointed to the role of post modernity in causing problems in the family structure, particularly the alarming rate of divorce among Africans in the US. In all the changes that result in the process of diasporic movement, the rules that surround understandings of family are suffering. Obiora called for youth to take marriage seriously and think before entering a union that is intended to be life long—divorce should not be considered an option under normal circumstances.
Dr. Data Barata moderated this panel mainly consisted diverse perspectives on how youth receive information of the diaspora and how children of the diaspora acclimate to their environments. The paper by Dale Allender of CSU-Sacramento, asked the question: How do the students of the African diaspora experience stories of diasporic folklore when presented as counter-narrative in US schools? The findings explicated in Allender’s paper, “Touching the Diaspora Spirit in High School English Classrooms”, were that overall students received these stories with enthusiasm. In fact, many students were baffled as to why they did not know about African and African American counter narratives before. Going forward Allender expressed that he hopes that his findings will progressively become part of the mainstream US curriculum and add diversity to literature used in the academic setting.

Next, Elizabeth Mukiibi of CSU-Sacramento presented her paper “Children of African Immigrants and their school experiences: Identity constructions and academic achievement.” With this paper, Mukiibi examined how the experiences of African immigrant college students affect their scholastic motivation and achievement. Many of her students interviewed felt that they were a ‘double minority’—that they were seen negatively as black and African. These students were teased about both their blackness and their africanness by other African American students and other American students alike. However, engaging in activities such as sports helped some students integrate themselves into the mainstream. The overall message of this presentation was that negative stereotypes can negatively affect the morale of immigrant students. One of the solutions can be to keep the dialogue of cultural differences open in safe spaces, so that they are not only mentioned in derogatory comments and jokes.

Chinwe Oriji from the University of Texas- Austin, presented a paper titled “Raised Abroad: The Development of Racial, Ethnic and National Identities for Second-Generation Nigerian Young Adults in Britain” looked at some of the differences in the identity construction of second generation African youth. Oriji stated that children of immigrants usually identify as both Nigerian and British at the same time. This generation picks and chooses aspects of their parents’ culture to fuse with the British contemporary culture that they live in. Oriji also highlights the fact that gender can play a role in which traditions are
transmitted to girls rather than boys. For example, a young girl would be more apt to learn to cook traditional Nigerian dishes than her male counterpart. Nevertheless, each child is going to find their own way to conceptualize how they straddle the line between their Nigerian background and their British environment.

The final speaker in this panel was Bola Amaikey from the University of Lagos: “Patterns of Intergenerational Social Supports among Retired Older People in Lagos State, Nigeria” discussed the issues of elderly care and family support. In this paper Amaikey provided an important insight into the condition of elderly persons in Nigeria within the framework of changing intergenerational relations. This paper contended that intergenerational support is essential to cope with the various crises that arise throughout life. Because of the shift in economics and employment opportunities, elder persons are in effect caring for the youth into the stages of life where the roles where historically reversed. At this point, the youth are not financially able to take care of their elders in the ways of generations past when employment was more readily available. Thus, the care of the elderly is not just a problem to be resolved within singular familial units, but it is linked to the overall economic stability of the Nigerian state.

Panel 5: Critical Issues in the African American Family

This luncheon discussion panel on the status of the African American family was moderated and coordinated by Dr. Sylvester Bowie. The four featured discussants were community leaders from the Sacramento area. Each discussant highlighted what they felt were the critical issues affecting, influencing, supporting, and burdening the African American family. Dr. Teiahsha Bankhead of CSU-Sacramento stated that the mental health of people of African descent was a major uphill battle. Bankhead cited economic instability and vulnerability as the as the main threats to African American mental health. Many of the economic gains that black Americans had made were place in peril in the economic crisis of 2008 and the subsequent years. As African Americans have the lowest household median income and lower marriage rates in the US, it has become increasingly difficult for black youth to have equal access to higher education. The focus of the second speaker’s dialogue, Financial Adviser Kofi Dodi, was on issues that are unique to families he called “The first generation African American family.” This is the African
American family with immigrant parents and American born Children. Mr. Dodi discussed the challenges these families face helping their children reach their educational and social goals. Often, immigrants come to the US with the expectation of giving their children the best of both worlds by impacting on their children their culture and core values, and helping them achieve the highest level possible academically. In so doing, they tend not to factor in the social impact on their children’s individual goals and expectations and hence, force on them their personal agenda. This can create rebellion among the children. If the children are not able to accomplish or go along with what the parents want, most often they tend to see this as a personal failure in parenting.

Dr. Deborah Simmons of the South Sacramento Christian Center and St. Joseph Business School Sacramento began her dialogue by reminding the audience of the origin of divisive racial tactics that were employed during the early days of slavery to mentally and socially subjugate people of African descent. In the 18th century, William Lynch declared that if slave masters could exacerbate the differences between the enslaved populations rifts could be created to destroy familial bonds between enslaved peoples—they could keep the bodies for labor and destroy the minds. Simmons asked the audience to ponder on to what extent African American communities are still left fractured by differences. Pastor and Civil Rights Activist Mervin Davis of True Love Baptist Church in Fairfield, California, informed the audience of the grave realities of our fractured African American community. Davis cited that 90% of killings in urban areas are black on black crime, that black youth are still divided by minor differences. Davis called upon church communities to act as supportive agents to individuals who are in the process of re-acclimating themselves to society. To make steps forward, the African American community needs to mentor and refocus the direction of its population to focus on bridging gaps instead of harboring negativity based upon differences.

**Panel 6: Round table discussion of the African Family and the Care and Protection of Vulnerable Members: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow**

Dr. Maggie Beddow moderated this panel which mainly consisted of diverse perspectives on how the African family has been beset with crises emanating from modernization, leading to changes in the traditional structure that provides care and protection for the vulnerable group. The vulnerable persons in this discourse include women, children and older persons who are the most affected in the family. The discourse is geared towards exploring the state of vulnerable persons during the pre-industrial period, the changes that have taken place in the family with modernization as well as the challenges and prospects of
the African Family in this Millennium. Dr. Maggie Beddow was the moderator of this round table of scholars from the University of Lagos where the overarching question was: can public policy provide social and economic protection to vulnerable members of families? In addition, how to gender roles factor into this equation when modern women are often working full time and outside of the home?

Funmi Bammeke offered a historical perspective and overview of the topic of care and protection. Traditionally, immediate and extended family members all used to share caretaking responsibilities. However, now with increased migration and modernization, some of the burden should be elevated by the state with some sort of support systems. Next, Chinyere Nnorom added that even with the shift from women working within the home to outside the home, grandparents have still served as the primary caretakers of young children. What has become an issue is the availability of family members to take care of the elders when so many youth are migrating to city centers for work after they have been raised by said elders. Urbanization has left the elderly unattended vulnerable members of society. Furthermore, when young people leave their family networks to inhabit urban centers, they are far more vulnerable to sexual and economic abuse. Bola Amaike highlighted the lack of political and civic support for those who are left void of filial ties in this age of migration and urbanization. Governments have not made provisions to fill the gaps that the deterioration of the communal and extended family network has left in many countries. Informal support systems are especially fragile, and their breakdown can be especially disastrous when there is no formal support system in place to supplement the loss. Browne Onuoha was the final speaker, and he focused his discussion on the need for government leadership and advocacy to implement social protection policies for vulnerable youth and elderly persons. However, the government should never be expected to completely replace filial relationships nor community organizations. Nevertheless, there is a strong need for individual and collective empowerment to promote sustainable social protection and change within the government and at a grassroots level.

April 25, 2015


The panel on “Seeking College Admission and Student Financial Aid,” facilitated by Ernest Uwazie, was presented by Mr. Charles Cole, Senior Associate Director of Admissions and Outreach at CSU-Sacramento, and Ms. Patti Colston, Communications Manager of the California Student Aid Commission. Mr. Cole revealed that about 35,000 students applied for undergraduate studies at CSUS for fall 2015, and only 7000 students will be admitted, given the impaction and recent focus on timely graduation as well as state funding decisions based on retention and graduation performance records. He advised prospective students to be “College Ready” to increase their likelihood of admission into their priority campus, especially at CSUS, by having good scores on ACT/SAT exams, record of participation in international baccalaureate programs, enrolling in honor classes, successful experience in extra-curricular activities that demonstrate speaking, writing, and leadership skills, and earning 60 transferable units from the community college; and to be “Career Ready” by having a good sense of future career and internship experience. A prospective student/applicant is advised to consider whether the intended university “is the right fit” for him/her by examining the university’s financial aid, academic programs
and services, campus life and environment, and should avail him/herself of the benefits of campus admission fairs/workshops and online tools.

Ms. Colston outlined four major scholarship/financial aid programs for California students in higher education (public universities and community colleges, as well as private and proprietary institutions), including the Cal Grant, California Dream Act for undocumented students (without social security numbers), the low and middle income family financial aid programs, plus the federal Pell Grant and student loan options; approximately $1.8 billion annually; of which $152 million is for middle income families with $150,000 annual income (through discounts for tuition and fees). Students are strongly advised to use loans only as a last resort and after exhausting the no loan financial aid/scholarship programs, and strongly advised to consider the lower interest rates and manageable repayment terms of the federally guaranteed student loans vs. private ones. The main goal of the financial aid is to make college education accessible and affordable. She pointed out some special financial aid programs by certain individual universities (e.g. Stanford) that attempt to attract certain groups, especially low income/underrepresented populations. She strongly encouraged prospective students/families to correctly/completely fill out the standard FAFSA (between January-March) each year, which is the basis of all or most (government) financial aid applications. She revealed that only $58 million of the available $107 million in the first year of the middle income financial aid program was disbursed—based on applications, and that 50% of the FAFSA forms submissions are not completed, while 53% of eligible students/families don’t apply. The key message is Apply! See further www.Calgrants.org, or Get schooled Foundation.


The unfortunate and tragic deaths of black men in the hands of the police in Ferguson, Missouri and Staten, New York, to name a few incidents, has raised alarm over police relationship or treatment of people of color. The public outrage resulting from the said cases has justifiably created a mass protest across racial/ethnic and gender boundaries in the US to demand that Black lives matter! The main purpose of this forum was to increase the level of understanding and positive engagement about police-minority relations, conflict de-escalation and effective communication strategies, basic citizen rights in their
interactions with the police and mechanisms for ensuring accountability and discipline in cases of police abuse.

Speakers for this forum were Francine Tournour, Director of the Office of Public Safety Accountability for the City of Sacramento, Lt. Marc Coopwood who leads the Internal Affairs unit at the Sacramento City Police Department, and Attorney Arthur Bowie with the Sacramento County Public Defender’s Office. Moderated by Darryl O. Freeman, the discussions centered upon what each of their offices are currently contributing to insure the safety of Sacramento residents of color who are often most vulnerable to potential issues with law enforcement members. In her position, Tournour re investigates cases of misconduct that are brought against law enforcement employees and rules whether the Office of Public Safety and Accountability agrees for disagrees with the Police or Fire Department rulings. At the end of the day, Tournour says that her job is to make sure that citizens are able to walk away from encounters with law enforcement with their dignity, whether it be physical or emotional—that their treatment fits the suspected crime/situation. Lt. Coopwood highlighted that most of the complaints from the community against law enforcement are based upon the use of excessive force. Coopwood stated that he feels it would be beneficial for all officers to have some sort of cultural immersion within the communities that they serve. That it is not acceptable for new officers to have their initial contact with communities different from their own within the context of confrontation.

In his discussion, Attorney Arthur Bowie was able to speak with the audience from the perspective of someone who fights for justice on behalf of citizens who feel their rights have been infringed upon by law enforcement. Bowie insisted upon the importance of each citizen knowing their civil rights and how to communicate with officers that may be overstepping their boundaries. Bowie stated that the more educated law enforcement members are, the less likely they are to usually find themselves in precarious situations with the general public. All three speakers agreed, that education level relates directly to the quality of law enforcement, and that educational requirements should be made stricter.


The panel, moderated by Ernest Uwazie, had 3 discussants: Associate Professor Browne Onuoha(Political Science) and Senior Lecturer Bola Amaike(Sociology) of the University of Lagos, and Professor Uche Stevina Ugbah(College of Business) of California State University, East Bay. The panelists concurred that the March 28, 2015 national elections, coupled with the state legislative and governorship elections, were relatively peaceful and fair; they outlined key reasons for the historic electoral outcome where the ruling party/incumbent president lost and conceded quickly and gracefully---to the general relief of Nigerian. There was general high tension in the country, given some predictions about Nigeria’s break up in 2015 with the elections, threats of violence by some key figures in the Niger Delta if President Jonathan was not re-elected, Boko Haram insurgency and kidnapping of the Chibok girls that galvanized international community and united Nigerians across region/religion, postponement of the election from the original date of February 14, and clear difference in the party manifestos of the leading presidential candidates: Change(General Buhari’s-APC ) and Continuity (President Jonathan-PDP).
Key elements that contributed to the peaceful election include, the January 2015 Peace Pledge by the Presidential Candidates (facilitated by Kofi Annan), where the candidates were constantly watched and reminded of their or their party leaders’ actions and statements that negated or disturbed the pledge; the National Peace Committee headed by former Head of State General Abdusalami Abubakar that constantly monitored the conduct of the presidential candidates and intervened (privately and publicly) as needed; the fervent national Prayer for Peace by the various Christian religious groups throughout the country; the vision and focused leadership of the INEC Chairman Jega, massive sensitization of the electorates against nonviolence, interparty stakeholders meetings and consultations by the INEC, social media campaign by notable celebrities aimed at the youth for nonviolence, and ultimately the timely concessional speech by the losing candidate (President Jonathan) that his ambition is “not worth the blood of any Nigerian.” The alliance of a Moslem/northern and Christian/Southern candidates of the winners: General Buhari and Mr. Osibanjo (VP) demonstrates that no particular religion or ethnic group can win the presidency alone in Nigeria’s political landscape. Overall, the election demonstrated more matured and determined electorate and increased the confidence of the people to hold their leaders accountable.

Panel 11: Conference Summary and Closing.

The 24th Annual Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution Conference, The African Family: Traditions, Transitions, and Transformations, saw panel and paper presentations that shared may articulations of the family. Some presenters spoke about the enduring strength of the African family, others about its fragility, and others about its transforming shapes in various diasporic locations around the globe. Nevertheless, one notion was constant throughout all the presentations, the institution of the African family is still the paramount foundation upon which African and diasporic identity is built. Over the three days of this conference, speakers and audience members discussed and debated the collective and communal spirit of the family, the importance of youth in retaining historical supportive networks of the extended family, and the impact of nostalgia for an idealized image of family upon new generations of Africans on the continent and the diaspora. What could be identified as the largest unanswered question of this conference is: how can the gaps (both spatial and generational) be filled in an attempt to build a larger family of the diaspora where we no longer draw hard lines between those of direct African heritage and those of distant African descent? Perhaps this is a question to keep in mind for our 25th conference in 2016.

In his conference closing remarks, Dr. Uwazie proposed and the audience accepted to dedicate the conference to the victims of the xenophobic attacks in South Africa and terrorism in the Mid-East, and African migrants lost in the Mediterranean Sea enroute to Europe. The conference resolution called on the South African government and international community to ensure the safety of the lives and property, protect victims of the violence, and increase efforts to achieve to peace and justice.

With the 2015 conference now officially closed, all were invited to the 25th Anniversary of the conference, April 21-23, 2016, on the theme of Peace and Conflict Resolution in Africa, 25 years later…., and the concluding peace awards dinner.
CAPCR 2015 Peace Awards Dinner and Dance

It has become a tradition, that on the final night of the African/Diaspora Conference there is a large dinner and dance where community members and conference participants alike can mingle and dine, and to honor deserving peacemakers. This year saw record breaking attendance from the community, as the hall was packed! Attendees were able to fill their bellies with African food by Lilyz Catering, and have a chuckle from the jokes of MC Mr. Edwin Okongo and listen to the sensational voice of Ms. Idara. There was also a unique guest performance by nationally awarded spoken word poet, Kane Smego. The main event was the presentation of the CAPCR 2015 Peace Maker Awards to 10 couples, as role models for healthy marriage relations and family peace, as the conference theme was the transformation and endurance of the African/Diasporic family. Couples originating from Nigeria, Uganda, Ghana, Jamaica, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Kenya, and Sacramento were honored for their commitment to their partners, their families, and their communities. While accepting their awards from Dr. Robin Carter, Associate Dean of the College of Health & Human Services and Dr. Ernest Uwazie, each couple offered the audience insightful words of wisdom for happy and long lasting marriages, to the delight of the audience. As one of the honorees said: “My wife and I agreed at the beginning of our marriage that only person can make the final decision; she’ll make the small decisions, and I’ll make the big ones. After 43 years of marriage, I’m yet to make a decision.”

After the award presentations, the attendees were able to dance the night away.
Peace Awardees:

Mr. Salisu & Mrs. Naomi Bargoma (Nigeria)
Mr. Isaac Kwesi & Mrs. Matanah Buoh (Ghana)
Mr. Edrine & Mrs. Juliet Ddungu (Uganda)
Mr. James & Mrs. Loise Gathairu (Kenya)
Mr. Berhanu Zergaw & Mrs. Ehite Gebre (Ethiopia)
Mr. Isiah & Mrs. Helene Harris (Jamaica)
Chief Emenike & Chief/Mrs. Beulah Iroegbu (Nigeria)
Professor Christopher & Mrs. Molly Lubwama (Uganda)
Mr. Kana Alex Murara & Mrs. Josepha Muyango (Rwanda)
Bishop Esley Simmons & Dr. Deborah Simmons (Sacramento)