

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

**2003 Africa Conference Report**

*This report was prepared by the conference reporter, Dr. E. Mutua-Kombo. It brings together diverse perspectives discussed during the panel sessions.*

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**The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Africa/Diaspora Conference on Ethnicity, Religion and Conflict Diamonds in Africa, May 1-3, 2003.**

**PREAMBLE**

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Africa/ Diaspora Conference was held from May 1-3, 2003 at CSUS, with a stimulating keynote address by Dr. Charles Moore Wedderburn of the Universidade' do Estado de Bahia, Salvador, Brazil.

The keynote presentation was followed by plenary sessions focusing on the following thematic areas:

- The business of war and diamonds in Africa's conflicts.
- Specific case studies on conflict in Africa.
- Rethinking new directions and strategies for ethnic and religious conflict resolution in Nigeria.
- The impact of the Iraq war on U.S.-Africa relations.
- Women and development in Africa.
- Critical perspectives on politics and religion in the Diaspora.

These themes not only addressed root cause of the problem and its intrinsic costs to the African people but also explored ways in which to improve the situation. The main point discussed at length was the economics of war that was said to be exorbitant in a relatively poor region of the world. The focus was both why war happens as well as what can be done to ensure lasting peace among warring groups in the continent.

**Thursday, May 1**

**Plenary 1; Experiences of the Summer 2002 Fulbright-Hays Group Project in Uganda.**

**Presenters**

**Ernest Uwazie, CSUS; Cecil Canton, CSUS; Eddah Mutua-Kombo, CSUS; Lisa William-White, CSUS; Andrea Neves, Sonoma State University, Winsome Jackson,**

Sierra College, Rocklin, **Rudy Pearson**, American River College Sacramento, **Brian Thompson**, Whittier College, CA., **Pam Bodnar**, Marsh Jr. High School, Chico.  
**Chair: Lila Jacobs**, CSUS.

The panel was a reflection on the Summer 2002 Fulbright-Hays Groups Project Abroad Seminar on Democratization, human rights, peace and development in Uganda. The panelists shared their program highlights, major lessons learned, application of knowledge/lessons in teaching and research, and impact.

Nine of the participants presented excellent papers that included anecdotes from their travel and examples of how their trip has added to their curriculum in their respective school/college sites.

Examples of what presenters described were curricular on the transmission of culture, globalization, gender, HIV/AIDS, and geography on Africa.

Discussion afterward was very candid, and brought up the important issues involving the power of language, and the language of power—meaning that we often use terms that augment the colonial perspective without meaning to do so. Dr. Jacobs noted that as an outsider of both the African Diaspora and Africa groups, she was struck by the challenge of communicating across the legacy of historical events, often painful. Although this is sometimes not a comfortable discussion, it is an important piece of cultural exchange, rather than being a visitor who makes their own sense of another culture.

### **Friday, May 2**

#### **Opening ceremony**

The conference began with opening remarks by Dr. Ernest Uwazie, Director, CAPCR. Dr. Uwazie outlined the relevance of the conference in the context of the understanding of global social, economic and political processes. He thanked those who have been attending and participating in the conference since 1992, as well as the partners and friends from various parts of USA and Africa. His remarks were followed by welcome remarks by Dr. Cecil Canton, CAPCR Board Chair, Dr. David Covin, Director, Pan African Studies, CSUS; Marilyn Hopkins, Dean, College of Health & Human Services, CSUS; Dr. Jack Godwin, Director, Office of Global Education, CSUS; and Dr. Donald R. Gerth, CSUS President. Dean Hopkins welcomed all the participants and commended the impressive work of CAPCR, both internationally and locally. She urged students present to pay attention to the discussions at the conference in order to be enriched with new ideas and quest for knowledge on how to overcome the difficult times facing the world today.

In his remarks, Dr. Gerth expressed pleasure with CAPCR work and said that the conference had become an institution in the CSUS community. He particularly pointed out that CAPCR had fostered the understanding of cultures, history, and languages beyond the U.S. and western traditions and by so doing getting cultural interactions and understanding going locally and internationally. On the issues affecting the world, Dr. Gerth noted that we were all living in times of uncertainty, and indeed actual physical

conflicts that must all come to an end. He called for communities to work together to instill stability in the world. He concluded by applauding CAPCR for its contribution to this cause of making the world a better place to live.

Dr. David Covin, Director of Pan African Studies Program, CSUS, also welcomed the audience and introduced the keynote speaker Dr. Charles Moore Wedderburn. Dr. Covin informed the attentive audience about Dr. Wedderburn academic accomplishments as well as his international work experiences in the U.S., Africa, Caribbean and Latin America. Outstanding academic achievements by Dr. Wedderburn include; extensive scholarship in the area of Diaspora studies, holder of two Ph.D. degrees, fluency in five languages; Spanish, French, Portuguese, Creole, and English, author of several books and was senior editor of the prestigious African Presence in the America's journal.

### **Keynote Speech**

**“How to face the global African emergency, a partisan view toward an overarching blueprint for the African world”**, by Dr. Carlos Moore Wedderburn, Resident Scholar of the Universidade' do Estado da Bahia (Salvador, Brazil) and Honorary Research Fellow of the University of the West Indies (Kingston, Jamaica)

### **Abstract**

The various generations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will unquestionably be the witnesses to and actors of a re-structuring of the entire edifice of world affairs, as we knew it throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Political, social and economic indicators already point in the direction of an era that will be characterized by great instability and unpredictability with a great potential for generalized chaos. In and of itself chaos is not necessarily negative being the essential propellant of life in the universe and of course on our planet. But, the sort of chaos that could easily lead to the violent extinction of humankind, or a particular branch of it, is unacceptably horrifying.” For the first time, there will be a conscious global confluence of race and religion, culture and civilization, economy and politics, science and technology and the uneven distribution of natural resources and income. As a consequence, it is foreseeable that an era in which all sort of conflicting passions will imbricate, to the point of non-differentiation, over the still unresolved issue of the rational use of natural and/or synthetic resources as well as the judicious management of our planet's environment. The technology of war will therefore continue to be on the rise with world peace becoming more and more a fragile hope. Equally, a planetary economy bereft of the requisite checks and balances provided by ethics and moral values, will continue to advance. And broad aspirations that are grounded in a supreme attachment to life and the conservation of our planet's environment will also continue to clash with the forces of economic egoism, political violence, and civilizational homogenization and political hegemonism. Seen in such stark terms, is it realistic - or even possible - to envision a reorganization of the global African world along self-propelled and essentially differential lines? Striving toward an overarching blueprint for such a diverse and

widespread universe as is the global African world is not merely possible: it is an imperative prerequisite before the current situation of rapidly vanishing options. From that partisan viewpoint, it is vital to start by “going back to the blackboard” by prioritizing the *conceptualization* of at least the following interconnected core issues: 1) The increasingly negative impact of a “globalized Racism” upon all African and African-related peoples and societies throughout the world; 2) The necessity of rescuing *Tribalism* and *Ethnicity* as essentially positive forces inasmuch as they are the building-blocks of true nations; 3) The imperative architecturing of New Systems of Governance grounded on traditional structures; 4) The establishment of a Supra-national African Moral authority capable of voicing collective positions, engaging in meaningful third-party negotiations in the management and resolution of crises and emergencies, and responsible for the collection and synthesis of global African experiences for the purpose of coordinating strategic positions.

Racism and its global incidence on the social, political, economic, military and cultural welfare of the black peoples of Africa, southern India, the Caribbean and Pacific is a paramount question of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Scholars, scientists of all disciplines, and lay people alike, must now tackle and *resolve* the enigma: why is it that not only the phenotypic characteristics associated with African peoples-- color of skin, facial features, texture of hair-- but equally their aesthetic values, their music and dances, their ways of spiritual worship, their modes of behavior, and their very aspirations to equity and fairness in the political, social and economic spheres, elicits such a widespread repugnance?

Africans have too hastily adopted such theories as assign the origins -- and perpetuation -- of racism to ‘cultural infection,’ ‘ideological conversion,’ or ‘environmental fatality.’ The inherent *rationality* that has characterized racism throughout the ages -- at differing epochs, in various societies, in all sort of socio-economic structures-- belie any such assumptions. The vectors of racism have been religion, philosophy, educational systems, political structures, economic dispensations, and ideological paradigms. The 21st century novelty is that the *biological sciences* (molecular genetics, molecular biology, Human genome decoding, brain cartography...) have also become contemporary receptacle of this form of historical consciousness -- a consciousness that has its origins in primordial situations that the human mind no longer retains. I see the 21st century, with its phenomenal advances in genetics, molecular biology and brain cartography, as the only self-conscious and global moment in which it is possible to come up with credible answers as to why the African stock of humankind has had to bear the cross of being the most hated, feared, despised and maligned race of people walking the face of this earth. The easy “explanations” of the past – which have been “placebo explanations” – ought now to be challenged and abandoned in favor of a longview which considers racism to be an “ancient *form of historical conscious* -- a sort of meta-consciousness -- that *informs* ideology rather than being one.”

On the question of tribalism and ethnicity, we trivialize these at our own peril since in true fact “they are the specific expressions of suppressed nationalism and frustrated nationhood in the global African world.” The founding fathers of the contemporary African “nation-states,” “performed a great disservice in accepting and re-legitimizing the fictitious

colonial borders left as a legacy by colonialism, and/or the slave system, throughout the global African world.

The question of governance posed yet another formidable unresolved issue to content with. Politics and governance in the African world is a reproduction of the political systems imposed by, and inherited from, the colonial period. Either as a one-party system, a two-party system or a multi-party system, the results are the same: a winner-takes-all system which has transformed politics and governance in the African world into a sort of sport in which a sizeable part of the population feels alienated whenever its particular team loses power. On the other hand, that situation generates a socio-political anomaly whereby the losing party reacts as a defeated team whenever it loses control of government. The overall interests of the nation which should be at the heart of all politics, then become secondary. Opposition parties spend their time seeking to ambush the governing party, or parties, to discredit it before the eyes of the populace and rejoicing over whatever blunder the governing party, or parties, commit. Obviously to continue along those lines will lead countries to the sort of social divisiveness, that breeds strife, coup d'etat and even civil wars as the African continent has demonstrated over the past thirty odd years of independence. For one cannot forget, nor ignore, that all African countries are plural nations, entities composed of various ethnic communities and cultures, which no one single party can pretend to represent with an equitable measure of justice and concern for all.

Given the circumstances, it would seem logical that certain lessons be drawn from recent experience, indeed painful experiences such as in Liberia Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Somalia, just to name a few where political parties secreted private militias of armed thugs who kill, maim and victimize the citizenry for the sole purpose of grasping power. Such acts of violence result into an ever-widening situation that depicts a growing threat in terms of the abrogation of the minimal sovereignty achieved with decolonization. The political, and not only structural, recolonization of African territories and countries is a troubling and distinct possibility for Africans as they navigate through the dangerous waters of the 21st century. It would therefore seem logical that African peoples construe new systems of political representation and governance consistent with the plural character of their society. National consensus is best achieved through all-inclusive coalitions and collective bargaining, than through a winner-takes-all system that makes sections of the citizenry feel defeated, humiliated and fearful when a dominant party takes control of government and acts as if the state was its monopoly until the next electoral round.

In view of the above, each of the four issues enumerated with equal critical force while calling for the need for a “global African dialogue” need to be the focus in the search of remedial solutions for Africa’s socio-economic and political fragility. It would seem reasonable to propose that the answers to our multiple and complex economic problems is to be sought nowhere else than within ourselves, our communities, our nations. Our only salvation is in turning inwards, in a new exercise of initiative that the Jamaican scholar, Rex Nettleford, has termed “Inward Stretch, Outward Reach.” But how can we turn inwards by disregarding our cultures?” Culture, is the fountain of all creativity and values. Culture is the singular

and distinctive essence of the human life; the very expression of our humanity. Striving to imitate others is a reflection of self-negation; a reflection of an absence of culture. When culture is absent, destruction sets in and we end up in the sterile arms of...folklore. No one needs folklore anymore in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. People and societies that cannot stand on their own cultural, economic and political foundations simply will perish.

### **Plenary 2: The Business of War and Diamonds in Africa**

This plenary was typified by robust discussions following a presentation by Dr. George Ayittey of American University, Washington, DC. His paper “The business of war and diamonds in Africa’s conflict: assessing the effectiveness of Kimberly protocols” provided a perspective that demanded African governments to take responsibility over their actions and not to blame colonialism for their ruthless actions of corruption and greed. The paper began by highlighting the wealth of Africa, which was not used to benefit a majority of the African people. Africa has the world’s 40% hydroelectric power, 30% uranium, 50% gold, 90% cobalt, 50% platinum, 8% petroleum reserves, 15% copper, 70% cocoa, a bulk of world’s diamonds and the list goes on!

It was noted that African leaders take advantage of the diamonds and other resources in Africa to enrich themselves and fund wars rather than support millions of people in abject poverty. Dr. Ayittey illustrated his point by explaining how UNITA controls 80% revenue of Angola’s resources to fuel the civil war. He noted that such bypasses the government treasury into pockets of warlords and corrupt presidents. In Angola where the civil war has gone on for more than twenty years, public resources are used to purchase weapons. Dr. Ayittey argued that Europeans were no longer doing this ruthless exploitation of Africans. Now, it is Africans exploiting other Africans. This exploitation is ever worse now because, firstly; the level of brutality and scale of destruction are exceedingly vicious in modern times due to highly lethal and advanced weapons, and secondly; modern exploitation is extremely destructive and leaves nothing behind, so to speak, the roads, hospitals, schools and universities that European left behind. The latter applied to the situation in former Zaire during the reign of Mobutu.

How effective is the Kimberly Protocols? The intentions of the protocol were to control the sale of bloody/ conflict diamonds as well as cut off the lifeline of rebel movements. The effectiveness to ensure an international certification system was marred by the following two difficulties; tracking diamond sales especially in the wake of countries like Zambia and Gambia that do not produce diamond were selling the commodity, and diamond diggers who were less formalized and were actively involved in illegal diamond mining as a livelihood.

What happens when Africans realize that their resources are exploited for selfish ends? The immediate result is chaos. The situation at the Niger Delta area in Nigeria was used as a good case to illustrate this point. In addition, people get frustrated and sabotage the social order.

How does Africa begin to focus on the needs of its people? Dr. Ayittey used Botswana as a model of a diamond producing country that has succeeded because it has a better system of governance, does not squander its wealth, exercises the rule of law, ensures democratic accountability all of which need to be established in Angola, Sierra Leone and Democratic Republic of Congo.

In conclusion, Dr. Ayittey believes that corruption must stop at the government level, and African leaders need to take responsibility for their actions. While it is true that the West go to Africa to pursue their own interests, it is more reason that accountability and political conscience come into play to serve the needs of the majority of the people. The point made here is that Africa may not have total control over the actions of the West but she can exert ways to hold her leaders accountable for their actions. This is what is not happening in Africa and hence the tendency to blame the past, or the future, instead of controlling leaders actions in the present. A lesson well articulated was that Africa may not succeed in controlling the actions of the US as it tries to control who is elected as the head of state, but her people, through democratic elections can control who is elected to present the genuine needs of the majority of the people at both local and national government levels.

### **Plenary 3: Africa Conflict Case Studies**

#### **Presenters**

- **Oluchi Florence Ema-Etikudo**, University of Pert Harcourt, Nigeria: Women in conflict with oil companies in the Niger Delta: A case study of Gbaramatu/Egbema oilfield blockade.
- **Smile Dube**, CSUS: Economic development and the state: Olson's stationary versus roving bandit model.
- **Roshan Gujar**, UC Berkeley: A method to the madness of Anthropology: Reflections on fieldwork in Malawi.
- **Michael Akampurira**, Law Development Centre, Kampala, Uganda. Africa indigenous justice: the Ugandan experience.

**Chair: G. N. Uzoigwe**, Mississippi State University, Starkville.

The plenary underscored the economic underpinnings of the conflict diamonds in Africa. It was recommended that African governments should:

- a) Ensure that foreign companies contribute meaningfully to the economic development of their communities in which they operate.

- b) Legislate that an agreeable percentage of government revenues should be retained by local communities for their development
  - c) Ensure that a machinery is set up by the central government that such revenues are properly used for the purposes intended and accountability made
  - d) Resort where appropriate to indigenous African methods in dealing with conflict situations taking into account of course a balanced account of relevant areas of jurisprudence. Further research into different methods of conflict should also take into account minority concerns as well as highlight the limitations of the indigenous justice system so as not to romanticize it. Such limitations need to be noted to determine what practices to be discarded and/or incorporated into modern justice systems.
- In regards to ways of understanding the real sense of Africa people, researchers were urged to recognize the indigenous knowledge of African people and use that to foster a better understanding of local cultures locally and internationally.

**Plenary 4: Roundtable discussion on ethnic and religious conflict resolution in Nigeria: thinking of new directions and strategies for national reconciliation and mutual co-existence.**

**Presenters**

**Ernest Uwazie**, CSUS; **G. N. Uzoigwe**, Mississippi State University, Starkville; **Robert Dibia**, CSU Fresno; **Charles Moore Wedderburn**, Universidade do Estado de Bahia, Salvador, Brazil; **Rose Acholonu**, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria.  
**Chair: Austin Ahanotu**, CSU Stanislaus.

The plenary underscored the structural arrangement of the Nigerian political system (federal, state and local) as the major cause of ethnic and religious conflict in the country. The discussions highlighted issues of concern in addressing the conflict situation in Nigeria.

- The need for intense training in peace education and conflict resolution.
- Efforts to bring harmony in Nigeria need to go beyond sovereign national conference previously used to engage diverse interest parties in a national forum/dialogue. The session did not come to a conclusion in defining what a sovereign national conference is-attempts were made but not conclusive.
- The 2003 elections in Nigeria was said to have been influenced by ethnicity and religion via the ethnic/political activities of organizations namely Arewa, Afanifere and Ohaneze.
- The African Leadership Forum (formed by Obasanjo before he became the president) was expected to have an effect on the nation's governance and leadership. However, the ideals of the forum have not been fulfilled due to the ethnocentric view held by some ethnic groups that they were "born to rule".
- It was agreed that conflict resolution efforts should attempt to collaborate with African Forum, oil companies and women's organizations.

- The importance of the rule of the law was reiterated. The judiciary-if they do their job- could straighten out the problems.
  - The idea of possibly recognizing group rights was mentioned but not discussed at length.
- In conclusion, the session recognized the fact that diversity of opinions and viewpoints exist and therefore all parties involved in promoting peace and co-existence needed to have an open mind and the willingness to dialogue.

**Saturday, May 3**

**Plenary 5: Roundtable discussion on the impact of the war on U.S-Africa relations.**

Plenary Session Five: 8.10-9.40 am Saturday

“The Impact of the War on US-Africa Relations”  
 Chaired by Benjamin N. Lawrance (CSUSB)

Presenters:

**Ernest Uwazie** (CSUS)

**David Covin** (CSUS)

**George Ayittey** (American)

**Benjamin N. Lawrance** (CSUSB)

**Andrea Neves** (Sonoma State)

**Maria Alexandrino** (CSUS)

**Rose Acholonou** (Imo State University, Nigeria)

**G. N. Uzoigwe** (Mississippi State)

**Michael Akampurira** (Law & Development Center, Kampala, Uganda)

This panel was devoted to the recent US-led invasion of Iraq and the impact of this invasion for US-Africa relations. It began with an attempt on the part of the chair to frame the discussion by defining the nature of the conflict and the style of the conflict. Panelists then spoke for approximately five minutes each and concluded with a series of questions.

Ernest Uwazie spoke about his concern about the effects of the conflict in terms of Africa-United States relationship. He was also concerned whether the doctrine of pre-emptive strike by a super power could have a snowball effect in Africa. He also asked the very pertinent question, which country is next on the US government’s list of terrorists? For example would the Niger-Delta conflicts lead to the labeling of the protesters as terrorists?

Andrea Neves spoke about the illicit conflicts that are on-going in Africa at the moment and the involvement of US forces in those conflicts. She spoke about the presence of US

troops in Uganda and the “training exercises” in the north of the country and the presence of US troops in dozens of countries around the world.

Maria Alexandrino spoke about the role of oil in the conflict and the struggle to control the resources of African nations. After the war, a renewed effort by US-led multinationals to control and exploit African oil and gas reserves seems likely.

David Covin spoke about his concern about the war and read the press release issued by the Association of African American Political Scientists issued after a recent meeting in Oakland that disapproves of the war.

Michael Akampurira addressed the issue of passage back and forth for African scholars and researchers and the increased hardship many people in his legal field encounter. He also spoke about daily life in Uganda and the on-going low-scale civil war in the north.

G. N. Uzoigwe spoke about oil in Nigeria and provided some historical background on the exploitation of African resources by outside nations, occupiers or otherwise. He connected the imminent accelerated exploitation of oil to the colonial period.

Benjamin N. Lawrance spoke about his concern that visa and travel and travel restrictions may increase for Africans. After the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania members of the State Dept. proposed creating super-embassies in certain parts of Africa to serve many nations. This would make it more difficult for Africans to enter the US on student, tourist, emigrant or business visas and make it much more difficult for Africans to conduct business with the US.

George Ayittey spoke about the new partnership for oil exploration and exploitation that he and some colleagues are working on and how local control of resources may minimize the conflicts that ensue. He hoped that the types of violence in the Niger Delta would not be revisited in new sites of oil exploration on the West coast.

Rose Acholonou addressed the issue of oil in Nigeria and the war conflict and resource struggles affect men and women differently.

Lively questions and discussion focused on Africa and development, how to maintain and sustain locally governance of development programs, Africa’s role and participation in the UN and the legacy of slavery, colonialism and the issue of reparations.

## **Plenary 6: Women and development in Africa**

### **Presenters**

**Jessie Gaston, CSUS: Women Folk in Tanzania’s Development**

**Barbara Anne Bush & E. Mutua-Kombo**, CSUS: Rwandan women communicating in a Post-Genocide Era.

**Winsome Jackson, Sierra College**: Reflections of Uganda: Women in the political arena.

**Assumpta Oturu**, KPFK Radio, Los Angeles: Women and democracy in Africa

**Maria Alexandrino**, CSUS: The role of women in Post-War Reconstruction

**Rose Acholou**, Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria; Women, Igbo religion and peace

**Chair: Arline Prigoff**, CSUS.

The topic of gender is an important dimension in considering current conditions in Africa, in observing changes that are taking place across the Continent, and in assessing the impact of those changes on both problems and opportunities that now challenge African families and nations. After a very brief introduction of the Plenary topic: “Women and Development in Africa” by the Chair, presentations were made by the panelists in the order listed below.

Jessie Gaston presented her paper on *Women Folk in Tanzania’s Development*. She noted that the era of the President Julius Nyerere was the beginning of a turning point of the women’s movement in Tanzania. It was recognized that before the onset of the colonial period, traditionally, African women enjoyed more social status within the family and society at large. The high status accorded was based on their roles as mothers, caregivers, nurturers and producers of food. However at the advent of colonialism, gender subordination was much greater up to the neo-colonial period. Nevertheless, this did not eschew women from fighting for gender equity given the support the first president of Tanzania, the late Julius Nyerere gave to women to work for both economic and political reforms and greater equality in society.

A number of women’s organizations continue to bring women together to work towards their own empowerment. The major goal of such endeavors is to eliminate gender discrimination and to protect human rights. There are evident strides towards women’s political participation. The representation of women in the parliament is admirable.

In spite of the fact that a number of strides have been made, there are still struggles that women experience and have to lobby mainstream decision making structures in order to improve the status of women in Tanzania. For instance, the laws in Tanzania have failed to address the extra burdens carried by women in their homes as well as the evident gender inequalities in every sector of society. Capitalism and patriarchy tend to reinforce each other, in defining the roles and status of women.

The presentation on women and communication in post-genocide Rwanda argued for the recognition of communication as a tool for conflict resolution. Ms. Bush provided a good historical background on the genocides that happened in

1959 and 1994. She also outlined cultural and ethnic identity issues that led to the series of conflicts that people in Rwanda have experienced since the advent of Belgian colonialism. What about the identity/ image of the woman in post-genocide Rwanda? Bush noted that it is in the gap between the image and knowledge of women as killers and the other image of women as dissenters and survivors that a new identity is still being born. She argued for the need to recognize as well as institutionalize the use of traditional forms of communication that allow the rewriting of peoples history that focuses on reconciliation rather than trauma caused by the experience of genocide. Informal forms of communication such as story telling was noted as a way to heal the wounds.

Mutua-Kombo spoke on the need to rethink the dominant paradigm of mass communication to recognize the dimensions of human communication that would place women as key players in the reconstruction of post-genocide Rwanda. She noted that emerging literature on the role of women in post-genocide Rwanda points to the direction that the future of Rwanda lies in the hands of its women. Communication scholars, government and NGOs sectors as well as the local communities were urged to recognize the relationship between human communication and reconciliation. A challenge was posed for African mass communication researchers to focus on the benefits of interpersonal and intercultural communication besides mass media to foster reconciliation among the people of Rwanda. It was noted that the distrust of the media following the genocide experience should set scholars to review the practice of communication media in the country. At the same time, the media were seen as useful tools for women's empowerment if used appropriately. She urged all stakeholders involved in the process of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda to look at communication as a foundation of every sphere of life, a foundation of the personal relationships that we develop with others, and as a foundation of civic life and a healthy society.

Winsome Jackson presentation on *Reflections of Uganda: Women in the Political Arena* outlined the common themes for political work by women's organizations in Uganda as follows:

- Gender Equality
  - Struggle for emancipation (past, present, future)
  - Struggle with patriarchal institutions
  - Achievement of Political and Social Changes

The presentation was a showcase for women's active participation in political reforms in Africa. Women's actions were seen as a means to dismantle barriers that for a long time come into their way of advancement in their communities. Reference was made to Sylvia Tamale's book (1999) whose title *When Hens begin to Crow* clearly captures the transforming roles women in Uganda and in general Africa, play in making the continent a better place to live. The metaphor of the crowing hen defies all barriers that for a long time have placed women in a

subordinate position in the society. Another illustration of how women in Uganda have become the crowing hens was the activism and advocacy of Miria Mitembe. Ms. Mitembe is a member of parliament who is commonly known as 'the big mouth shouting for women'. Mitembe is a strong advocate of gender equity and has fearlessly brought the gender question to the forefront of national politics in Uganda.

In addition, the Ugandan government and in particular president Museveni was applauded for recognizing the role of women in Uganda. The Ugandan constitution guarantees 39 seats to women in the Parliament in addition to institutionalizing Affirmative Action Policy in 1989 that has elevated the status of women in the political arena.

Assumpta Oтуру spoke on *Women and Democracy in Africa*. She decried the continued political, economic and social exploitation of women in Africa due to absence of basic tenets of democracy in Africa. The true meaning that democracy is a government of the people by the people for the people is a myth. She noted that what is evident is not people's (read women) participation in decision-making, but representative government, and elected representatives. She argued that colonialism stripped women of their high status in society, which continued in the post-colonial era.

The traditional roles that women played in families and clans changed but that did not stop women from showing their commitment to achieving dignified status in society. Ms. Oтуру cited the case in Kenya where activism under the leadership of a renown woman environmentalist Prof. Wangari Mathaai came together and stopped the construction of a media complex in a public park in downtown Nairobi. She urged all women in varied positions of power to take advantage of their positions to influence policies.

Maria Alexandrino presented her paper on *The Role of Angolan Women in Post-War Reconstruction*. She discussed the political history of the war-torn Angola from the era of Portuguese colonialism to present day rule. She focused on the gender analysis of conflict arguing that the role of women in every manner of social, political and economic reconstruction in post-war Angola has to consider the dimensions of gender. She argued that such an approach uncovers new insights to initiating peace-building initiatives. She outlined the major results of the war that have left women and girls as the major victims as: 1) hunger, 2) poverty, 3) mutilation, and 4) lack of access to education. Since it is women who are most impacted by the war, they should be the ones most involved in the Post War Reconstruction.

Rose Acholonu presented her paper on *Women, Igbo Religion and Peace*. She explored ways in which the religion has institutionalized the low status of

women in Igbo society. She began by discussing the traditional role of women before colonialism where women had power in the society. She said that Ibo woman was brought up to be proud as a wife, mother and/or daughter. Her centrality in society was evident in the anti-colonial resistance movement and continues today in resisting exploitation by multinational oil companies in the Niger Delta area.

In post-colonial Nigeria women continue to fight for social justice that builds and protects their families and communities. Currently, women's organizations are gaining support in their campaign to recommend 1/3 percentage of women in Parliament. There are now only 39 women among 300 representatives.

In regard to religion and how it affects the status of women, Acholonu argued that Christian religion (Catholicism) has been detrimental to the position of women in society. Marriage as an institution in society has lost meaning given that the rates of divorce are in the increase something that was not common in the traditional Igbo society. Ethnic politics, traditional practices such as bride price/dowry and economic hardships have changed the dynamics of the role of women in the home and society at large. Women now have to compete with men. There is still pressure on women to maintain their traditional role in the family, trying to preserve the traditions of Ibo people and more so maintaining the core of the society, which is the family.

Given the changes in society today, women have had to resist any form of suppression and opted to discard their positions as colonial or neo-colonial wives. The changing role of women is seen in their new roles as activists, committed to gender equity and social and economic justice. At the same time, they are working to ensure that they do not rock the marriage boat. Women are doing it all – taking on public roles, plus the responsibilities of the family.

### **Plenary 7: Critical perspectives on politics and religion in the Diaspora**

#### **Presenters:**

**Marlyn Jones**, CSUS: The dynamics of crime and religion in Jamaica.

**Yaw Oheneba-Sakyi**, CSU Fresno: The African Family: A triple heritage.

**Jahahara Alkebulan-**, San Francisco: Reparations now!

**Robert Dibie**, CSU Ma'at, National Coalition of Blacks for Reparations in America Fresno: Critical analysis of ethnic conflict, religion and politics in Nigeria.

**CHAIR: Robert Dibie**

The panel critically examined the dichotomy between Islam and Christianity in African politics. The panel contended that there was a trade-off between African traditional religion and foreign ethnocentric religion in the continent. This trade-off constitutes the

root of political and religious conflicts in the African continent. Post independent states in Africa and Jamaica seem to be struggling with whether to enact public policy on the separation of church and state.

The panel also addressed the issue of who should be responsible for social justice and morality in Jamaica and the 54 African nations. A consensus was reached that Africans in Diaspora should rely on a comprehensive democratic political system in which appointment to political positions is based on elections. Under such democratic system, all ethnic nationalities should be encouraged to pursue their political mission through the inter-play of democratic forces instead of the highly static notion of zoning, rotation and power shift. African governments need to be completely overhauled. A crucial place to begin is with the institution of horizontal accountability. This is the process by which some state actors hold other state actors accountable to the law, the constitution, and norms of good governance. Some of the key institutions, in this regard, are the judiciary, the central bank and related oversight institutions, and the electoral commission. The most urgently important institutions of horizontal accountability are the ones directly charged with controlling political and bureaucratic corruption. Corruption is to some African nations what the blood supply is to a human body. Cut it off and the human body will shrink and die. Reduction and deterrence of corruption will be reinforced if an elected commission can produce sufficiently clean elections to enable citizens to turn out of office the most corrupt public officials. Citizens should be re-educated on how to demand accountability and transparency from public officials. The panel also agreed that there is the urgent need for an effective enforcement of the rule of law in several African nations. No body should be above the established laws of a nation.

No ethnic or religious group needs a political party formed by it for the purpose of promoting its agenda in Nigerian politics. What happened to the Alliance for Democracy should be a lesson for the Ndigbo and the Arewa ethnic social groups in Nigeria. They do not need a political party for the interest of Ndigbo, Afenifere or Arewa in Nigeria.

The panel examined the debate on reparation. It argued that African nations owe no-body rather it is the western industrialized nations that have been exploiting the African continent since the 15<sup>th</sup> century that owe the African people. In order for Africans to achieve their reparation quest and leave peacefully, it was agreed that they must learn how to always water their roots as well as co-exist in harmony.

Finally, the law enforcement agencies have failed in their duty to prevent and manage religious conflicts in the African continent (especially Nigeria). Many of these conflicts brewed for days before they were executed. Yet, the law enforcement agencies always preferred to wait for the situation to go out of hand before responding. When arrests are made at all, they often terminate in police stations rather than the courts. All these should worry the African Union and the National government of Nigeria, if it really desires a permanent solution to religious violence.

### **Plenary 8: Conference Summary and Conclusions**

### **Presenters**

**Wedderburn, Ayithey, Dible, Taylor, Prigoff, Ahanotu, Eddah Mutua-Kombo, Lila Jacobs, Uzoigwe, Lawrence, Covin, Uwazie and Gaston.**

The last session allowed the panelists to highlight the lessons learned from the conference that point to future directions to promote peace and reconciliation in Africa. The relevance of the conference was said to be significant in view of events taking place in the world such as racism, violence, religious fundamentalism, poverty, HIV/AIDS, challenges of the information age etc. Participants were able to engage in useful dialogue on some of the solutions to improve the situation. Some of the efforts commended included the strides underway to consider developing communication models and African indigenous justice systems that fit the realities of the African environment.

African leaders were urged to focus their attention on the needs and suffering of the people and by so doing create a public image that upholds democratic accountability. Similarly, scholars and all African people were asked to develop the ability to nurture and sustain the unique Africa's worldview and push for the moral authority suggested by the keynote speaker. The idea that questions that arise require answers was a key to pointing to scholars to create knowledge and contribute to already existing knowledge, and apply the same knowledge for the good of the African people. Such efforts towards reexamining existing practices by various stakeholders would see an end to continuing exploitation by multinational companies thus opening way for transformative movements as illustrated by women's struggles against injustice in most countries in Africa. The active role of women in the public sphere is an indication that they are willing to participate in processes that define their destiny and help to reconstruct their communities.

Broadly, it was suggested that the conference organizers needed to consider bringing in more people outside the academia to reflect the interconnectedness of the African world. It was suggested that considerations be made to create ways to promote the interconnectedness of all people of African descent.

The panelists highlighted the lessons learned from the conference that point to future directions to promote reconciliation and harmony in Africa and among Africans

There is a need to look at the future by reviewing past and present experiences of each African country.

The relevance of the conference was noted in view of events taking place in the world over among others racism, violence, religious fundamentalism, poverty, HIV/AIDS, and challenges of the information age. Africanists and African leaders were urged to continue to highlight the needs and suffering of the people in Africa. It is about time Africans overcame self-denial and acknowledge that there is lack of democratic accountability in most of Africa.

Overall, the conference concluded on a very positive note suggesting that the set objectives were met. The discussions explored opportunities for and challenges of developing a culture of peace and democratic accountability in Africa. With the vibrant environment that the conference and indeed CSUS provided in promoting discourse on the conference theme, the lesson learned was that we are all participants in the process of making the world a better place to live in.

CAPCR Director Uwazie concluded by thanking the presenters and participants for contributing to the success of the conference. He charged all present to share the knowledge gained from the conference with others and use the information for the improvement of African peoples and organizations. He gave an example of the CAPCR work on judicial reform in West Africa via alternative dispute resolution and how the landmark mediation week in Accra courts led to the resolution of almost 200 cases in 5 days in April 2003, using CAPCR trained mediators. Finally, he invites all to send him suggestions for the theme of the 2004 conference by end of May 2003.