

**The 16th Annual Africa/Diaspora Conference Summary.
April 25-27 2007.**

BUILDING A CULTURE OF PEACE: BEST PRACTICES AND MODELS

Friday morning, April 26, at the formal opening ceremonies of the 2007 Africa/Diaspora Conference, keynote speaker Nii Akuetteh (Executive Director of Africa Action) surprised everyone by proposing to amend the conference topic from *Best Practices and Models* to *Reconstructing Africa's Culture of Peace*. As an instance of indigenous African strategies of avoiding and resolving conflict--now eroded by external factors such as the slave trade, colonialism, and nationalism--he invoked "Sankofa," a term used today across the Pan African world to denote a return to African cultural roots in order to move Africa forward: hence the proverb, "it is not taboo to go back and fetch what you forgot." His was one among many models of peace proposed in the ten concurrent panels and five plenary panels convened over the three-day conference held at California State University, Sacramento, with over 300 people in attending.

As usual, several panels had already met Thursday afternoon preceding the formal, opening ceremonies. Created and chaired by CSUS Professor Ricky Green, Plenary I "The Influence of African Immigrants on Black Political Attitudes and Behavior in the United States," continued the tradition of featuring at least one undergraduate student panel at each annual conference. First off, Kenna A. Toney of CSUS read *African Born Residents Contribute a Renewed Sense of Communalism to African American Thought*. Both research and first-hand experiences informed Toney's sense of the tensions, amid hopeful prospects of mutually empowering reciprocity, between young African Americans and recent African immigrants. "Shared complexion does not mean shared culture or friendship," Toney observed. Nevertheless, the communal thinking of recent immigrants can restore not only a lost heritage to African Americans but also an empowering basis of solidarity between African-Americans and recent African immigrants.

Darryl Freeman's supplement to that paper placed greater emphasis on the American government as the major obstacle to peace and conflict resolution in Africa, because of its antipathy to communal economics. Yet, closer communal ties between Africans and African Americans can help to transform America, exemplified by the Somali-African American coalition indispensable to the election of the first Muslim member of the House of Representatives, Keith Ellison, in Minneapolis.

In her paper, *Cultural Connections between African-Americans and Africans*, Kimberly Folkes of the CSUS Cooper-Woodson College offered her impressions of the local movement to persuade local cable providers to offer The Africa Channel to subscribers. As portrayed by most American media, "Africa seems grim." But, The Africa Channel emphasizes "progress, development, urban African coming to life." Already available in Detroit, Atlanta, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans, The Africa Channel produces journalism, soap operas, documentaries, art, concerts, all in all "a daily window into African life" that effectively "dismantles stereotypes," offers Africans the

opportunity to “tell their own stories,” and serves as a catalyst for African and African-American entrepreneurial partnerships.

Toni Tinker-Bohanan spoke briefly on the pan-African call-and-response tradition as an indigenous, African model of peaceful, mutually empowering reciprocity that, throughout the diaspora, has survived despite the havoc of the slave trade. She affirms the value of recent African immigration as an opportunity for the divergent call-and-response traditions to join forces.

Plenary #2 “A Special World Bank ADR Project,” featured three leaders of the CSUS Center for African Peace and Conflict Resolution: CAPCR Director Ernest Uwazie, professional mediator/instructor David Yamshon, and CAPCR Board member Patrick Cannon. Aably covered by *rapporteur*, Kim Folkes of Cooper-Woodson College, Plenary #2 was a progress report, a “Compilation of Case Studies/Databases and Lessons on Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms in Post-Conflict Contexts.” It began with a review of the basic function of ADR to supplement the formal legal system by offering an alternative to the punitive, “one size fits all” approach to conflict resolution and criminal justice, facilitating processes by which rivals can begin working collaboratively to resolve disputes.

That background was followed by the definition of ADRs’ role in “post conflict” situations, i.e., to sustain cultures of peace after successful mediation, through conflict resolution training. Then, the Special World Bank ADR Project was described. In seven African countries, ADR programs have mediated, primarily, disputes over land and water rights. Results have been mixed, resulting in a hybrid of ADR processes.

Plenary #2 concluded with lessons learned:

- Very different conflicts have similar dynamics.
- African problems need African solutions.
- Many indigenous African models of peace are compatible with Western ADR.
- Where lost, traditional dispute resolution strategies should be revived if possible.
- Neutrality and confidentiality are crucial.
- All stakeholders should be involved.

In Jessie Gaston’s summary of Plenary #2, she clarified “neutrality,” i.e., the mediator is neutral who has no stake in the outcome of a dispute and who, while controlling the agenda, affords the interested parties the power to define the issues and control the process.

3:30-5:30, three concurrent panels convened: Panel I “African Women: Health, Law and Development”; Panel II “Alternative Dispute Resolution and Peacebuilding in Africa”; and Panel III “Conflicts and Resolution in Africa.” *Rapporteur* Kathy Skogberg covered Panel III, outlining primarily the presentation of Albaqir A. Mukhtar (Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Rights Development, Khartoum, Sudan) *The Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA): Lessons Learned from a Flawed Process*. Contemptuous of the DPA’s failure to slow the genocide in western Sudan, Mukhtar calls

the process “diseased,” complemented by a diseased educational policy, a diseased political administration, and diseased international trade relationships.

The climax of the panel was a joint resolution addressed to the United States government:

Participants and persons attending Concurrent Panel III at this Conference call on the political leaders in the United States, in collaboration with the governmental leaders of other countries affiliated with the United Nations, to collectively sanction the leaders of the current Sudan’s western region because of their criminal offenses against indigenous populations in the region of Darfur, so they will act to protect and end the conflict of the people of Darfur.

We must not again betray our commitment to humanity and to common human value by watching and waiting while another civilization in Africa is destroyed.

Then, Friday morning, following Nii Akuetteh’s keynote address, Vickie Butcher (founder and Director of Water for Children, Africa) rounded off Plenary 3 with her presentation, “Building Bridges between U.S.-Africa.” One of this year’s CAPCR Peace Award recipients, she testified to the water crises she has witnessed in Kenya, Tanzania, and rural South Africa. She introduced shocking statistics: “30,000 children die each day from contaminated water,” hence 10,000,000 each year. Then, she petitioned all present not only to contribute to her organization--that drills wells and brings water storage tanks to drought-ridden areas--but also to visit Africa, to “Go. See. Learn. Come back. Teach and tell” of the critical yet solvable water crises there.

After lunch, three concurrent panels convened, 1:20-3:20: Panel IV “African Culture, Natural Resources and Human Rights,” Panel V “African Culture and Justice,” and Panel VI “African Cultural Values and Peace Building.” Panel V, chaired by Godfrey N. Uzoigwe from Mississippi State University, Starkville, began with *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation Mechanisms: a Case of Anlo-Ewes in Ghana*, an anthropological description of the Anlo-Ewes conflict resolution tradition, read by Professor Setri Dzivenu of the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. Descended from the clans on the Ghana-Togo border, the first step in Anlo-Ewes conflict mediation involves community arbitration that, apparently, is not binding if both parties do not concur. If arbitration fails, then a religious oracle is consulted, who may require a trial by ordeal. Reconciliation rites may follow.

Nene A.O. Amagatcher (Ghana Association of Mediators and Arbitrators), having been unable to present in Concurrent Panel II, joined this panel, reading the paper, *A New Era for Commercial Court and ADR in Ghana*. Amagatcher describes the inefficient and expensive State court system in contrast to the private or “commercial” court that drives growth efficiently. The World Bank promoted privatization because the Ghanaian court system took, often, twenty years or more to resolve a case. In commercial court, the arbitrator is, for the most part, a mediator and, within a few weeks after the introduction of commercial court, one hundred cases were settled pre-trial.

Kisiangani Emanuel Nalianya of University of the Witwatersrand, Braamfontein, Gauten, South Africa was unable to attend, so Professor Uzoigwe briefly summarized the findings of Nalianya's paper "Transitional Justice and Peace Building: the Case of South Africa," noting the reduction in violence following the implementation of democracy.

Rapporteur, Kaylene Ekeh covered Concurrent Panel VI "African Cultural Values and Peace Building." Two presenters attended: Dr. Ibarra Francois of NEPAD, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo and Hala-Asmina Ibrahim of Ohio University, Athens. In his paper, *Building a Culture of Peace in Congo-Brazzaville*, Dr. Ibarra Francois argued that economic degradation in the Congo is due to economic problems extant prior to the more recent armed conflicts. Therefore, to achieve an enduring peace, the political regime needs to enact specific economic reforms: lower prices of alimentary goods and building materials; allow the free movement of people among the various sectors; use the profits from the oil trade to rebuild the infrastructure and the educational systems; and reintegrate the militia in order to control the military. Moreover, he recommends free elections and a more independent and efficient judiciary.

In her paper *A Nation in Turmoil: Is Education to Blame? An Analysis of Sudan National Primary School Curriculum* Hala-Asmina Ibrahim lamented the civil war from 1980 to 2004, pitting Southern Sudan against Northern Sudan. She traces the background of the civil war to the colonial period, when the British colonizers encouraged Islam in the North, while Southern Sudan was ruled as a colonial territory where Sudanese traditional culture and Christianity were encouraged and English was the national language. Then, after independence from Britain, the Arabic language became the national language and Sudan became an Arab-Muslim state. Education became the tool of religious, social, and cultural domination by Northern political regimes and Islamic zealots. Education and the Sudan's national primary school curriculum continue carry out the Northern agenda, thus, perpetuating conflicts with Southern non-Arabic/Muslim groups.

She proposed returning Sudan's educational system to a secular model, keeping religion out of its curriculum, and keeping religion and state separate.

Chaired and summarized by CSUS professors, Jessie Gaston and Erin Stiles, Concurrent Panels VII "Peace Building in African Culture, Family, and Diaspora" and VIII "Truth and Reconciliation Commissions & Democracy in Africa" combined for "a lively session that sparked a great deal of discussion on questions of justice, leadership and identity." It began with *Africa Diaspora Dialogues* by Nunu Kidane and Derethia Duval of Priority Africa Network, Berkeley, California, which aims "to create dialogue among Africans and African-Americans in the Bay Area. The organization addresses issues of identity, education, health care, and community. Their focus on both individual and community identity sparked spirited discussion and debate in the Q&A session." The charm of Kidane's and Duval's presentation lay in its dialogic mode, meriting a few lines of transcription:

"Over the past ten years alone, African immigration has exceeded the numbers brought during slavery. We are seeing a neo-diaspora," began Kidane.

"The sixties generation in America saw Africa as a spiritual homeland . . .but that aesthetic was devalued by the majority," answered Duval.

“America political ideology inculcated opposition between African Americans and Nigerians, Ugandan, Ghanaians, etc.,” rejoined Kidane.

“Unaware of their African clan of origin African-Americans identify ourselves as black, as a strategy for coping with the racism and motivated assimilation of the majority,” answered Kidane.

“When Africans fill out statistics forms, they do not check African-American but ‘Other’ (Nigerian, Ugandan, etc.), subverting the political potential of an African/African-American coalition,” replied Duval.

“Nevertheless, African immigrants and African-Americans have interests in common, such as specific health concerns, sickle cell anemia and high blood pressure,” replied Kidane . . .

The next paper, read by Dr. J.K. Ayantayo was titled *Ancestry: Symbolical Elements as Instruments for Resolving Inheritance/Property Conflicts among Yoruba People, Nigeria*. Dr. Ayantayo proposed using traditional Yoruba ideas of ancestry as a means to peacefully resolve disputes concerning property—even those between Christians and Muslims. He argues that, despite challenges to traditional mechanisms brought through colonialism and modernization, there is a need to embrace more traditional community-based means of resolving disputes.

The third paper, read by Dr. Andrea Grove, *Resisting Change: Mugabe against the People's Struggle in Zimbabwe 1995-2000*, considered the nature of political leadership and the characteristics of recent African leaders. Her discussion of recent events in Zimbabwe and the characteristics of Mugabe as a leader sparked lively discussion.

The closing paper, “Transitional Justice: Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in Africa,” was presented by Dr. Robert Ameh. Dr. Ameh compared and contrasted four TRCs (Truth and Reconciliation Commissions) based in Uganda, Ghana, South Africa and Sierra Leone, the related forms of justice, considered the purpose of TRCs, alternatives to TRCs and judged the efficacy of the different models. The paper sparked much discussion, especially concerning the TRCs in South Africa and the “hybrid” nature of the TRCs in Sierra Leone.

Plenary #4, “Developing Criteria/Instruments for Assessment & Evaluation of ADR and Conflict Resolution Projects in Africa,” met Saturday, 8:30 a.m. Facilitated by Daniel Yamshon and Patricia Holmes, it was a brainstorming session convened to begin the compelling process of evolving assessment criteria for Alternative Dispute Resolution projects in Africa. Discussants included an impressive range of professionals: CAPCR Director Ernest Uwazie, as lead presenter; Anne Amadi of FIDA-Kenya, Nairobi; Shyaka Anastase of National University of Rwanda, Butare; Kelechi Kalu of University of Northern Colorado, Greeley; Chima Nwogu of Chevron, Nigeria Ltd. Lagos, Nigeria; Gatechew Metaferia of Morgan State University, Baltimore; Nene Amagatcher of Ghana Association of Chartered Mediators and Arbitrators, Accra, Ghana; Olajide Olagunju of Brandeis University; and Albaqir A. Mukhtar of the Khatim Adlan Center for Enlightenment and Human Rights Development, Khartoum, Sudan.

First off, Prof. Uwazie laid out some preliminary questions. Is ADR more available than in previous years? How does one quantify mediation’s success in facilitating communication or cooperation between antagonists, or at micro/macro levels?

Kelechi Kalu preferred to introduce issues of justice over peace. “Who enforces the agreement?” he asked. By extension, in what he called “vertical conflicts” (between government and individuals) he questioned the ability of ADR to provide a safe place for disputants to work out differences.

Anne Amadi suggested that assessment criteria should consider how often mediated conflicts escalate anew. What is the level of compliance? How many mediated cases end up in court? Olajide Olagunju concurred, recalling a time in Ghana when over 300 cases were mediated in seven days, although many of those mediated conflicts are re-eruption.

Shyaka Anastase suggested that identity might be at the root of conflicts that re-erupt. She asks if disputants agree on history. Do they agree even on the history of the process of conflict resolution?

After many more suggestions and critiques, Prof. Uwazie called for five “core people” to go work on the final text and, with continuing discussions in Africa, to develop an introduction and a set of definitions for monitoring, assessment criteria, and evaluation at the micro and macro levels.

Immediately thereafter, Concurrent Panels IX “Culture & Conflict Resolution” and X “Conflict Resolution Institutionalization and Capacity Building in Africa” met together in the same room, chaired by Sylvester Bowie of CSUS and Godfrey N. Uzoigwe respectively. Ikweba Bunting of CSU Long Beach read his paper *Ubuntu, Ujamaa and Conflict Resolution*, a study of the concepts of collectivity indigenous to the Babutu of Barundi, particularly the concepts of Ubuntu (“I am because we are”) and Ujamma (collective responsibility).

Then, in *Electoral Politics: Violence and Collective Management in Nigeria*, Kelechi A. Kalu argued that none of the various states in Nigeria is “sourcing” its own economy. All are dependent upon the federal government that, for the most part, is unaccountable to the people, rendering state and local institutions expensive irrelevancies. Government institutions so unresponsive to the people and so incapable of enforcing Constitutional guarantees are fertile ground for electoral violence.

In her paper, *African Peace through Local Capacity--Grass Roots Leadership Peacebuilding Training and Networking*, Olajide Olagunju argued that community owned, based, and sponsored workshops “grow peace” most effectively. “Never underestimate the ability of a small group to change the world,” she quotes from Margaret Mead. She supports Western conflict mediation techniques in Africa as long as they are “repackaged as African.”

Newton S. Ekpo of Providence Family & Educational Development Center in Sacramento then read his paper, “The Revitalization of Fractured Nigeria Socioeconomic and Political Systems: A Pragmatic Approach.” He described his organization as less academic than emotional and practical, emphasizing vocational education as a means to a better economy, communication as the basis for understanding relationships, family as a means to political and economic stability, and training toward a better understanding of entrepreneurship.

That evening, about two hundred people attired in a splendor of dashiki, ketenga, kaba, and katakati attended the Peace Awards Dinner and Dance. Comedian Edwin

Okongo served as master of ceremonies. The Kucheza Ngoma 11 Dance Company of Sacramento performed brilliantly. The climax of the evening was a special modern dance performance by Ursula Payne of Slippery Rock University, Pennsylvania and, finally, the formal presentation of the annual CAPCR Peace Award to Vickie Butcher of Water for Children, Africa, and to Save Darfur, based in Washington D.C., and to FIDA-Kenya (Federation of Women Lawyers).