



ECDC Board Member Ernest Skinner welcomed conference guests and moderated a workshop on African newcomer contributions to the American civil rights movement.

Annual Conference Explores Future Challenges In Refugee Resettlement

Welcoming the nation’s leaders of refugee affairs to ECDC’s 15th national conference in Arlington, Virginia, on May 5, President Tsehaye Teferra described the theme—*A Time for New Thinking*—as a challenge to “examine anew our work with a clear understanding of the needs of present and future clients and the challenges of meeting them during a time of diminishing public and private resources.”

It was a challenge addressed during three days of plenary and workshop sessions on ways to improve aspects of the resettlement program, enhance social and cultural integration of newcomers into the nation’s mainstream, strengthen protection and assistance efforts and curb refugee-producing conflicts on the African continent.

“Our theme suggests that we recognize that the programs and services designed to accommodate the first wave of African refugees were appropriate for their level of educational achievement and skills,” Teferra said, noting that most early arrivals were displaced professionals needing fewer supportive resources. “Among more recent waves of newcomers are many who have experienced profound marginalization through discrimination, torture and long periods of isolation in camps.”

While most early arrivals were households headed by men, newer arrivals are households headed by women with children who have been denied educational opportunities, he said, urging a thoughtful reexamination of refugee support mechanisms.

Echoing Teferra’s concerns while moderating a session on current African refugee policies, Kathleen Newland, co-founder of the Migration Policy Institute, said the resettlement support mechanism “has been broken for some time.”

“We are receiving people who were homeless for years and are now homeless again,” she said. “The resettlement program needs to be reviewed from the bottom up.”

David Siegel, acting director of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, also

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EDG-NOVA Link Will Support Entrepreneurs

In partnership with Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), ECDC’s Enterprise Development Group (EDG) is establishing a new Career Studies Certificate Program in Entrepreneurship, an accelerated initiative for working adults interested in starting and growing a small business.

With first classes scheduled to start on August 24, the 26-credit program will offer instruction in entrepreneurial culture, strategy, operations, financial management, marketing and leadership.

Courses will be taught by NOVA faculty members and offered on Mondays and Wednesdays from 6:30-9 p.m., according to EDG Managing Director Kevin Kelly.

“Using an accelerated six-to-eight week semester format, a dedicated student can complete the program in less than 13 months, Kelly said. “Most classes will feature a hybrid of both in-class and on-

line instruction methods and will be taught by seasoned entrepreneurs emphasizing experiential learning.

“With the nation’s economy experiencing such stress and employment prospects diminishing, we are delighted to unite the resources of EDG and NOVA to create new opportunities for refugee and immigrant newcomers and others interested in entrepreneurship,” said ECDC President Tsehaye Teferra. “By adding this educational component to EDG’s well-established support programs, we are responding anew to the changing needs of our increasingly diverse clientele.”

Established as an independent non-profit subsidiary of ECDC in 2001, EDG offers a microenterprise loan program; financial training and asset building services for low-income clients; an Individual Development Account savings

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*In My Opinion...***Reexamining Admission Priorities**

While policy and program updates at our recent conference from officials responsible for managing the nation's refugee programs included some encouraging developments, there were also some issues essentially unaddressed and of particular concern to those of us engaged with a special focus on African refugees. Encouraging were reports that processing of family reunion cases will likely be resumed next year; that the flow of new arrivals is becoming more balanced, avoiding the late "bulge" that has become so common in recent years; and that USCIS has been granted more flexibility in addressing the "material support" provisions of anti-terrorism legislation.

Of primary concern is an issue graphically illustrated in a special statistical report on African refugees and immigrants which we prepared for the conference. It included a chart of comparative refugee admissions ceilings and actual arrivals from 1998 through April of this year showing the sharp decline in the Africa allocations in recent years and the even more precipitous shortfall in actual admissions.



Tsehaye Teferra, Ph.D.

In the early years of African participation in the resettlement program—inaugurated upon passage of the Refugee Act of 1980—the regional allocation remained woefully low compared to the numbers and needs. Except for the immediate post-9/11 period, the allocations grew steadily, reaching a high of 30,000 in 2004, with actual arrivals almost equaling the ceiling. The Africa region's allocation was then nearly 43 percent of the overall ceiling of 70,000. By last year, the African ceiling had dropped to 16,000, just 20

percent of the overall ceiling of 80,000. Actual arrivals from Africa totaled only 8,935.

As the conflicts in the Middle East and South Asia continue to spawn massive displacements, it is understandable that those regions have drawn more attention lately, particularly with the United States so directly involved. But it is important to remember, too, that the refugee population in the Africa region is nearly 20 percent of the worldwide total, many confined in protracted "warehoused" situations, some lasting for decades. According to UNHCR's 2007 Statistical Yearbook, there are seven situations where refugees have spent more than 30 years in exile. The refugees are from Burundi, Angola, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sudan and Western Sahara.

Last year, the Africa region produced more than 120,000 new refugees, many fleeing to camps already stretched to the limit. Since the beginning of this year, more than 20,000 Somalis have sought refuge in the Dadaab camp in Kenya, established two decades ago to accommodate 90,000 people. Now home to more than 261,000 people, it is one of the world's oldest, biggest and most congested refugee sites. Another 33,000 Somali refugees are lodged in three camps in Ethiopia, with as many as 10,000 more expected soon. Such influxes of new arrivals make life even more difficult for those who have been long confined to near-hopeless camp conditions, further taxing international humanitarian resources.

As current economic conditions and refugee-producing conflicts require a thoughtful reexamination of priorities, the issue of fair and equitable regional admission ceilings is appropriately linked to the warehousing issue. It is my fervent hope that the overall refugee admissions ceiling be increased to at least 125,000; the Africa regional allocation be restored to a minimum of 30,000; and that selection criteria favor those for whom the durable solutions of repatriation or integration into the country of asylum remain doubtful or beyond hope.

Refugees International 'Wins' by Runner-Up

Even though she won far more money—\$710,725 for Refugees International (RI)—than other contestants on the NBC television show *Celebrity Apprentice*, professional poker player Annie Duke was declared runner-up to comedian Joan Rivers during the show's season ending episode on May 10.

After show host Donald Trump announced his choice, Duke's supporters launched a grassroots internet campaign to raise the \$250,000 that RI would have received had she won.

In the final episode, both contestants had to organize and conduct a celebrity auction event. Duke's team raised \$465,725. River's team raised \$150,830. Duke had raised \$245,000 for her charity during an earlier episode.

Duke has long supported refugees in Sudan and the Congo, having launched *Ante Up for Africa* in 2006 with Don Cheadle and Norman Epstein to raise money for the 2.5 million people who have been forced out of their homes in Darfur. The charity poker event has since raised \$2.1 million. Through her involvement with RI, her interest has expanded to refugee crises around the world, including the massive Iraqi displacement crisis, the organization said.

"We're extremely proud of Annie and the work she's done for Refugees International," said RI president Ken Bacon. "Annie's commitment to displaced people around the world is truly inspiring."

EDG-NOCA Link...

[Continued from page 1]

program; a computer learning center; and a business incubator providing economical office space and supportive services for start-up entrepreneurs.

Included in the incubator's support services are access to a free internet connection, utilities and trash collections, daily mail delivery and access to conference and training facilities for eight hours each month.

For more information about the new training program, visit:

www.entdevgroup.org, or: <http://sites.google.com/site/novaentrepreneurship/>

Annual African Refugee Conference Examines New Challenges

Awards Banquet Honors Leaders

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Receiving awards at annual Awards Banquet from ECDC President Tsehaye Teferra are Barbara Favola, Arlington County Board Chairman, above; and Ronald Munia, Division Director, Division of Community Resettlement, ORR, below.



Gus Avenido, above, Minnesota's State Refugee Coordinator, and Bereket Woldu, below, Senior Vice President of Colonial Parking, received service awards.



acknowledged the need to improve support, noting that additional grants are being considered and suggesting that local resettlement agencies explore ways to access the economic stimulus funds being provided to states.

Keynote Speaker Curtis A. Ward, a former Ambassador of Jamaica to the United Nations and now an international consultant in geopolitical and security issues, urged Africans in the diaspora to monitor and help hold accountable public and private leaders on the continent who perpetuate and profit from corrupt practices that fuel "conflicts that are often the result of greed rather than grievances." (See text, pages 4-5.)

Following visits with congressional leaders on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, the annual awards banquet honored three leaders for distinguished service on behalf of refugees and immigrants, along with Arlington County Board Chairman Barbara Favola who was cited for her vigorous support of diversity and human rights. Both Favola and Virginia Governor Tim Kaine issued proclamations designating the week of the conference as African Refugee and Immigrant Awareness Week in the state and county.

Bereket Woldu, senior vice president of Colonial Parking, received a Distinguished Community Service Award for his leadership in developing community and neighborhood partnerships, providing employment opportunities for refugees and immigrants and supporting ECDC's programs and services. Gus Avenido, refugee state coordinator for Minnesota, was honored for his contributions at federal, state and local levels and his support for community-based mutual assistance associations. Ronald Munia, director of the Division of Community Development at ORR, was honored for his 30-year career in helping refugees "take their first steps toward self-sufficiency."



Briefing attendees on refugee resettlement policies and future plans during opening session were, from left, David Siegel, Acting Director, ORR; Terry Rusch, Director of Refugee Admissions, PRM; Kathleen Newland, Director, Migration Policy Institute and session moderator; Barbara Strack, Chief, Refugee Affairs Division, USCIS; and Kenneth Tota, Deputy Director, ORR.

KEYNOTE
ADDRESS*The Future of African Refugees and Immigrants:*

By Ambassador Curtis A. Ward

Thank you for inviting me to give the keynote address at this the opening of your 15th National Conference. And what better theme for your conference than the one you have chosen, *"The Future of African Refugees and Immigrants: A Time for New Thinking"*. I hope that by sharing a synopsis of my own perceptions with you at the start of your conference, I will have contributed to your deliberations.

It is fortuitous that, only recently, I have spent the better of eight months—from August last year to the end of March this year—in West Africa. I learned a lot from that experience. But I know that eight months in the region do not compare to the lifelong experience many of you have. And while I am privileged to have been dealing with African issues intensely since the end of 1999, and have travelled to a number of African countries—to some of them multiple times—it still does not make me an expert on the many problems besetting the African continent. I am humbled by the experience I am fortunate to have accumulated over the years, and hope to continue building on it. As a matter of fact, I will be visiting both Abuja, Nigeria, in a few days and Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the beginning of June, for a few days.

When I was asked to speak at this conference, I began thinking about your theme and how best to do justice to it. I got to thinking about the many issues which impact on the future of African refugees and African immigrants. I got to thinking about why we have refugees in the first place, and why so many Africans want to emigrate. The latter issue is the easier of the two to address, and so I will take it first.

Africans, like most émigrés from the developing world, leave their countries of birth for similar reasons. These include: to escape from poverty, and to seek economic and employment opportunities; to pursue an education; and to make it possible for their children, and the next generation of Africans, to achieve their full potential and experience a future better than the one offered in their homelands.

Emigration has served Africa and the receiving countries well over the years. Many Africans in the Diaspora, some having fled their countries as refugees, have made significant contributions not only to the host countries in which they live but also to their homelands; to family members they have left behind through remittances, and where possible through sponsorship of family members so they too can experience a better life somewhere else.

The billions of dollars in remittances Africans in the Diaspora send home annually contribute significantly to the economies of the receiving countries. For some it constitutes a significant portion of the receiving country's Gross Domestic Product. No doubt the current global economic situation has caused a significant reduction in the amount of remittances from the Diaspora, but that situation is only temporary and the receiving countries will have greater need for these

remittances in the future. In addition, many Africans, after receiving an education, have returned to their respective countries and have contributed to nation building; others, after acquiring entrepreneurial skills and some degree of wealth, have invested in their respective homelands. But far too many Africans are unable to return home to contribute to nation building or to invest in their home countries because of lack of security, lack of good governance, and a pervasiveness of corrupt practices. These are issues which require new thinking and priority treatment, which Africans in the Diaspora have the capacity to undertake. Africans in the Diaspora must hold accountable those leaders in the public and private sectors who perpetuate and profit from these practices at the detriment of the common good and of the people of Africa.

When I speak of corrupt practices, I not only speak of public officials who pursue wealth through graft and corruption, I include those individuals in the private sector, in particular those company executives from the developed economies of the north and elsewhere that pay large sums of money in bribes for special favors in facilitating their companies' exploitation of the continent. For too long, they have profited from a culture of impunity for wrong doing.

Africans in the Diaspora may wish to consider using the technological resources, the freedom of access to information, which are at their disposal, and their expertise to monitor the activities of foreign and domestic companies operating throughout Africa to expose these nefarious practices and to hold the perpetrators accountable.

The issue of illegal migrant smuggling, which is a plague on Africa and that has cost the lives of countless hapless Africans, is another issue which must be addressed. The perpetrators of this criminal enterprise must be prosecuted in order to put an end to this activity.

The refugee problem in Africa, though linked inextricably to the issues I just described, goes much deeper. Conflicts which are often the result of greed rather than grievances are avoidable; and natural disasters which are not avoidable, but which, in many instances, can be mitigated through good governance, are primarily responsible for the large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons.

While the total number of refugees and IDPs cannot be determined with specificity, and varies depending on who is caring for them, according to available data, there were 67 million refugees and IDPs worldwide at the end of 2007. Those under the care of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) totaled 11.4 million. In addition, there were some 26 million conflict-induced IDPs at the end of 2007. I might add that women, children and the elderly are disproportionately represented in these totals.

While I do not wish to bore you with statistics, I believe it is important to put in perspective the enormity of the problem, because, unless we recognize and define accurately the problem, we cannot



Ambassador Curtis A. Ward

A Time For New Thinking

ECDC-CARI
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hope to find appropriate solutions. The total number of refugees in Africa at the end of 2007 was 2.271 million, not counting North Africa and the tens of thousands of Sahwari refugees from Western Sahara. (The Sahwari people of Western Sahara have been refugees for 35 years, and the continued denial of their right of return and self-determination should not be ignored.)

Renewed armed conflicts and gross human rights violations in Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and Sudan led to massive refugee outflows in the past two years. And, contrary to the myth that refugees are flooding industrialized countries, most refugees flee to neighboring countries. The data suggest that some 80 to 90 percent of all refugees are hosted by neighboring countries, and only about 14% of refugees actually live outside of their region of origin. Thus the refugee situation in Africa poses a tremendous burden on neighboring countries and on the continent as a whole.

I will offer a few additional observations. Africa is often seen as a continent of conflict, poverty and under-development. Many so-called African leaders rule by instilling fear in the population and perpetuate their rule through corrupt practices at the expense of the vast majority of the people.

Those who scoff at the idea that rule of law, good governance, and democracy are not fundamental to nation building and to effecting changes to the status quo, including to prevention of conflict, do not understand the fundamentals of these principles. By providing access to justice and redress for grievances, and the capacity to remove corrupt and incompetent governments through peaceful means, rather than through the barrel of a gun will begin the process of addressing many of the problems of Africa. The absence of rule of law, good governance, and democracy are the breeding ground for conflicts and corrupt practices.

Thus, conflicts, the primary contributor to the refugee problem in Africa, must be addressed if the refugee problems are to be resolved. Conflicts also drain the continent, and the international community, of resources that could otherwise be directed to development, poverty alleviation, and disease eradication. The United Nations 2008-2009 budget for African peacekeeping operations is \$5.163 billion. Several billion dollars more are spent on humanitarian relief by donor governments, UN agencies and NGOs, particularly on providing relief to refugees and IDPs and on their re-settlements.

The money spent on peacekeeping operations, and on refugee and IDP related humanitarian relief, if spent alleviating poverty and eliminating diseases; on educating the youth of Africa and preparing them for a brighter future could lift that continent. Providing economic opportunities and upward social mobility at home will relieve the pressure to emigrate.

Further to this, we must ask ourselves: Why do some African leaders believe that they are ordained leaders for life?

Only a minority of African leaders adhere to the rule of law and the democratic process—a process that is free and fair—and who governs as the result of free and fair elections. One example which

points the way is the process which has been taking place in Ghana over the past 16 years, and which was put to its ultimate test at the end of 2008. The Ghanaians, who have been experimenting with the democratic process, will tell you that it is not yet perfect in their country, and many may still not be satisfied with the outcome. Truth be told, no democratic system is perfect. What is important is that the people of Ghana accept the results, not because it is forced on them but because they believe that the process gives them a fair chance to participate and to determine who their political leaders are. That their leaders are elected by them, not selected and pre-determined by power brokers. That leadership is earned, not taken by force.

There is an obligation to work to prevent conflicts—differentiate between conflict generated by grievance as opposed to greed; to implement mechanisms and build capacities to address grievances and bring justice to the aggrieved. There is an obligation to put an end to impunity by holding people, including political and military leaders, responsible for wrong doing. These are among the mandatory underpinnings and requirements for ameliorating and ending the refugee problem in Africa.

The millions of Africans displaced by conflict, whether they are refugees or IDPs, must be able to return to their homes and live in peace. The billions of dollars spent each year on peacekeeping operations, even in circumstances where peace is tenuous, could be spent instead on development; on alleviating poverty; on eliminating diseases; on ending malnutrition; on providing education opportunities for the vast majority of Africans; on creating food security; and on making the lives of the poor more tolerable.

While we recognize the right to return and resettlement of refugees and IDPs, we have to take account of the fact that refugees and IDPs generally lose everything and have very little to return home to. They will have lost their crops, their livestock, and in many cases their villages are burnt and their homes are destroyed. The costs of resettlement are enormous, and, already there was donor fatigue in the donor community prior to the current global economic disruptions, reducing the amount of resources needed to address these needs.

I am not suggesting that the issues I have raised this morning are new. But perhaps they need to be looked at with new ideas and new solutions need to be developed and implemented. They require solutions that are applied nationally, sub-regionally, as well as across the African continent as a whole.

These are daunting issues for which there are no easy solutions. But I am often reminded of the effect that a small pebble has on a pond. As you know, a small pebble dropped in the middle of a pond will send ripples to the edge of the water. Your organization can be that pebble in the middle of Africa. The difference you make could be tremendous.

I wish you great success in your deliberations.

(Ambassador Ward is a former ambassador of Jamaica to the United Nations and now an international consultant specializing in geopolitical security issues, the rule of law and good governance.)

The absence of the rule of law, good governance and democracy are the breeding ground for conflicts and corrupt practices.

NEWS BRIEFS

Obama, First Lady Plan Visit to Africa in July

Following visits to Russia and Italy, President Obama, accompanied by First Lady Michelle Obama, will make his first official trip to sub-Saharan Africa July 10-11 to Ghana, the White House announced in late May.

“The President and Mrs. Obama look forward to strengthening the U.S. relationship with one of our most trusted partners in Sub-Saharan Africa, and to highlighting the critical role that sound governance and civil society play in promoting lasting development,” said press secretary Robert Gibbs.

As a senator in 2006, Obama visited his ancestral village in Kenya, where he was greeted with exuberant crowds celebrating his achievements as a popular and successful African American politician.

U.S. Immigrant Population Contributes to Aging Trend

After declining steadily between 1960 and 1990, the number of older immigrants (those age 65 and over) in the United States nearly doubled between 1990 and 2007, from 2.7 million to 4.5 million, according to an analysis by Aaron Terrazas of the Migration Policy Institute.

Using data from the Census Bureau's 2007 American Community Survey and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics for 2008, Terrazas says that immigrants now account for one of every nine older persons in the United States.

Two basic reasons account for the shift: an increasing number of working-age adults who arrived during the 1980s and the 1990s are beginning to age into the group, and immigrants who have

become citizens can apply for their parents to immigrate legally and more are doing so. For more information, visit: www.migrationinformation.org.

New ACF Grants Target Human Trafficking

Grants totaling more than \$2 million were awarded by The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in early May to 12 state and local organizations to identify and help victims of human trafficking.

Under ORR administration, the grantees are responsible for maintaining an anti-human trafficking coalition in their region, conducting public awareness activities and providing training and technical assistance on human trafficking issues to local organizations.

Each grantee must sub-award at least 60 percent of its funds to local organizations that identify and work with victims of human trafficking, thus building the capacity of such groups to carry out their mission and expanding the network of care for trafficking survivors, said a release from ORR.

“Human trafficking is an outrage that society cannot tolerate,” said ACF Acting Assistant Secretary Curtis L. Coy.

Further information is available at:

www.acf.hhs.gov/trafficking/index.html.

MPI Prizes Honor Groups For Innovative Integration

Winners of the Migration Policy Institute's inaugural *E Pluribus Unum* awards—created to honor exceptional immigrant integration initiatives—were recognized at a ceremony at the Library of Congress on May 20.

Chosen from more than 500 nominated organizations, with each receiving a \$50,000 prize, were ADVANCE-El Paso, an early childhood and parenting education initiative in El Paso, Texas; Internationals Network for Public Schools, operating in New York and California; Littleton Immigrant Integration Initiative, a citizenship mentoring program in Littleton, Colorado; and “Welcoming Tennessee Initiative, a public education and communications campaign in Nashville.

Two additional finalists were recognized for the positive impacts they have had on immigrant integration in the United States. They are Queens Library, Jamaica, New York, and the Latino Community Credit Union in Durham, North Carolina.

The prize program will run for at least two more years. For information, visit: www.integrationawards.org/.



FY 2009 African Refugee Admissions			
As of May 31, 2009 • Ceiling for FY 2009 is 12,000			
Country of Origin	Refugees	Country of Origin	Refugees
Angola	1	Kenya	1
Burundi	439	Liberia	149
Cameroon	4	Mauritania	16
Central African Republic	6	Nigeria	2
Congo	68	Rwanda	72
Dem. Rep. Congo	486	Sierra Leone	36
Djibouti	3	Somalia	2,589
Eritrea	402	Sudan	407
Ethiopia	179	Togo	10
Gabon	1	Uganda	7
Gambia	9	Zambia	1
Ghana	1	Zimbabwe	10
Guinea	3	TOTAL	4,912
Ivory Coast	7		

Source: U.S. Department of State, PRM

Sudanese Model Wows Fall Fashion Week Shows in New York

“She is nearly 6 feet tall and impossibly thin. Her skin is flawless—the color of espresso—and her short-cropped hair shows off the high cheekbones and full lips that are model prerequisites.”

That’s how Jenny LaCoste-Caputo of the San Antonio Express-News describes Atai Deng in a recent feature story headlined “Teen refugee from Africa leads a model life.” Chronicling the 17-year Sudanese model’s participation in Fall Fashion Week in New York, an annual display of attractive clothing and beautiful people, LaCoste-Caputo wrote: “In a sea of pale brunettes and rosy-cheeked blondes, it’s Atai, from a Section 8 housing complex in San Antonio who turns heads.”

Escaping the conflict in her homeland with her mother Miriam Sham, first to Egypt and then to San Antonio where her father had resettled four years earlier, Atai arrived speaking little English beyond ‘hello’ and ‘thank you.’ But she had a better educational foundation than most of the young Sudanese refugees who have come to America in recent years, having attended elementary schools in Khartoum and Cairo.

Born to parents from different tribes with a history of ethnic strife—her father a Dinka, her mother a Shilluk—Atai arrived with an already-formed ambition to become a model and a determination shared by most African refugee newcomers who have experienced so many hardships. (Her parents divorced soon after her arrival.)

Both her ambition and engaging personality were evident even on her flight to America, according to LaCoste-Caputo’s report. “She found herself seated next to an American and immediately immersed herself in the language. Said Atai: “I talked to him the whole way. By the time we landed, I had learned a lot of new words.”

Describing how she developed her interest in modeling, Atai says: “I got on a computer and looked it up online,” soon persuading her mother to let her explore taking modeling classes in San Antonio.

Soon, too, did she come to the realization that “you don’t need to go to school to become a model.”

“You either are or are not,” she says, confirming both her insight and mastery of America-speak. “It’s just about the looks and the height, blah, blah, blah.”

Signed by the Trump Model Management agency following a competition in Dallas last year, her Fashion Week appearances in New York produced rave reviews and work at 15 presentations, including a show by Christian Siriano, winner of Bravo TV’s “Project Runway” Season 4 competition.

“Atai is really fabulous,” said Siriano. “I think she’s going to be huge and amazing.”

Says Trump Management President Corinne Nichols: “Personality counts. There’s not one person who meets her that she’s not going to immediately charm. She’s open to everybody. She’s very memorable.”

Essence Magazine exclaimed: “A Sudanese stunner. Taking the runway by storm. Brace yourself fashion world. There’s a hot new face in town.”



Atai Deng wears design by Juan Carlos Orbando at Spring Ready-to-Wear show in New York. Photo by Marcio Madera

African Refugee NETWORK

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The African Refugee NETWORK is a bimonthly publication of the ECDC Center for African Refugees and Immigrants (CARI). ECDC is a community-based organization established in 1983 to promote cultural, educational and socio-economic development programs to assist refugees and immigrants in becoming productive members of their new homeland. The Center includes three program areas: refugee resettlement, public education, and community development initiatives. Funding for the newsletter is provided by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, DHHS. Opinions presented in the newsletter do not necessarily reflect the official viewpoints of the funder or ECDC, and you should not assume endorsement by them. Material appearing in the newsletter may be reproduced with credit. For additional information, contact:

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HRF Report Urges Changes in Refugee, Asylee Practices

Since 2003, U.S. immigration authorities have spent more than \$300 million to detain over 48,000 asylum seekers in U.S. prisons and prison-like facilities in a system that lacks basic due process safeguards and is inconsistent with America's longstanding commitment to protect those who flee from persecution, according to a report re-

leased in late April by Human Rights First (HRF).

"Refugees who seek protection in this country are greeted with handcuffs and prison uniforms, and they are treated like prisoners in correctional facilities," said Eleanor Acer, the director of HRF's refugee protection program. "New leadership at the Departments of

Homeland Security and Justice should seize the opportunity to end this practice and implement some long overdue reforms, like ensuring that an asylum seeker can't be detained for months or years without having an immigration court consider the need for continued detention."

In its report, *U.S. Detention of Asylum Seekers: Seeking Protection, Finding Prison*, HRF also said that ICE has increased its use of penitentiary-like facilities by 62% in recent years; some of the largest facilities are located far from legal representation and the immigration courts; detention costs about \$95 a day while alternatives are available between \$10 and \$14 a day; release policies for asylum seekers have become more restrictive in recent years; and parole rates have dropped sharply, leaving some asylum seekers detained for months or years even though they met the release criteria and presented no risk to the public.

Based on its findings, HRF offered several key recommendations to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and the U.S. Congress. The full report is available at: www.humanrightfirst.org.

U.S. Gains Seat on Human Rights Council

The United Nations General Assembly approved the Obama administration's bid for a seat on the world body's Human Rights Council in mid-April, joining Belgium, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan and Norway as first-time members.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and U.S. Permanent Representative Susan Rice applauded the action, pledging "to work closely with the international community to ensure that together we address the pressing human rights concerns of our time."

"When the United Nations was formed, it sent a powerful and historic message by placing human rights at the very core of its charter," said a State Department statement. "To fulfill that mission, we strongly believe that all member states must work to ensure that the United Nations offers a credible, balanced and effective forum for advancing human rights."

Previous administrations had not sought membership on the council, arguing that some of its members had less than pristine human rights records.

Addressing that issue in an opinion article in the *International Herald Tribune*, High Commissioner Navenethem Pillay noted that no country has a blemish-free record.

"Council membership is not a reward for good behavior. It is a responsibility, one that exposes members to increased accountability before their peers," she wrote. "Having the U.S. at the table can bring important benefits, both to the cause of human rights and to the standing of the U.S. in the international community. But such benefits will depend most on the degree to which the U.S. embraces the international human rights agenda."

Pillay commended Obama's decision

to close the detention facility at Guantánamo Bay and to implement the prohibition on torture in compliance with international standards.

"The U.S. should also shed light into the still opaque areas that surround capture, interrogation methods, rendition and detention conditions of those alleged to have been involved in terrorism," she said, "and ensure that perpetrators of torture and abuse are held to account. Signals coming from America reverberate around the world. Sending the right ones is the responsibility of power."

The Council replaced the former Human Rights Commission in 2006, an action reflecting what was then a widely held view that the Commission's work was ineffective and lacking any policies

CALENDAR

June 20 — World Refugee Day will be observed in more than 100 countries around the world under the theme "Real People, Real Needs." In Washington, D.C., UNHCR will partner with the National Geographic Museum and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for a series of events from June 18-20. A special free performance of Congolese and East African Music will be presented at the Kennedy Center on Saturday, June 20 by Samba Mapangala & Virunga.

June 24 — The 6th annual Immigration Law and Policy Conference will be held at Georgetown University Law Center in Washington, D.C. Sessions will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. For information and registration, visit: www.migrationpolicy.org.

RESOURCES

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, legislation representing a concerted effort to speed economic recovery while addressing a variety of critical issues, has spawned a host of websites and information sources that can be challenging and time consuming, according to the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL). To ease access, CAL has added a page to its website providing links to dedicated pages of federal agencies and other key stakeholders

It is available at: www.cal.org/recovery/index/html.

Recovery.gov is the official federal site created to inform the public about how the Act is working and to provide continually updated reports on the expenditure of funds.