



# AFRICAN SERVICES

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## COMMITTEE

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### Greetings from Co-Executive Director, Kim Nichols

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It's a new year, and a new era here at African Services Committee. We are already halfway through 2010, and there have been some exciting developments over the past six months. We would first like to welcome you to our inaugural issue of the monthly newsletter. We are moving into the digital age in an effort to communicate with you -our supporters-more frequently, and in an effort to be kinder to our environment. Not only that, but we are pleased to say that by moving to an online newsletter we are able to save over \$10,000 per year in printing and mailing costs. This desperately needed money can assist our food pantry in providing an additional 2,000 meals every year to community members that use our food pantry.



We hope to bring you news and information that you **WANT** to read. Not only will we keep you informed of developments and news about our work here at African Services, but in this edition and in upcoming editions, we will share with you inspiring client success stories. We will also keep you apprised of major policy and advocacy issues that are of importance to our organization and to

you as a supporter. Additionally, as excited members of the New York City community we would like to introduce our "Out and About" section, which will offer staff recommendations on upcoming events and activities in our area that we hope you will find fun and informative.

We have been busy the last several months with several fund raising initiatives. In May we held our annual "Positive Kids" benefit. The event was a huge success, and helped raise funds for our Pediatric HIV program. In addition, African Services staff members, supporters, and clients participated in the New York City AIDS Walk, walking 6.2 miles and raising funds for African Services' housing program. To find out more about both of these events, and the incredible results of our efforts read the 'News and Updates' section of this months newsletter.

We are excited and hopeful as African Services continues its work and inches closer to 2011, when we will proudly celebrate our 30th Anniversary. It is thanks to your support that we continue to serve the immigrant community, and we look forward to staying in touch and sharing our news and activities with you in the future.

#### Quick Links



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## Client Profile

### Who Says Happiness Has to Be Complicated?

For Bintou, an African Services Committee client from the Ivory Coast, the ingredients are simple: her health, a job, and an education for her children. And these days, as a client of ASC, that's exactly what she has-she is on antiretroviral medications, attends English classes in hopes of earning her GED and continuing on to nursing school; all five of her children are in school.

"[At African services] I learned that there is always help," she said. "Even if you have HIV, it's not like your life is done. My life and my children's lives are progressing now. When I first arrived here all I could do is cry...I can't cry anymore, I am too happy to cry."

But life did not always look so promising for the courageous single mother. Forced into an arranged marriage at the age of 12, she followed her husband to the United States hoping to raise her children in a country with more opportunities than she had back home.

Bintou and her husband settled in New York City, but their life here was tumultuous from the start. He abused her, and when the couple found out that they were HIV positive in 2001, she said that he blamed her for it.

The road to escape from that marriage was a winding one, but when a friend recommended ASC to Bintou in 2008, she began to attend counseling and talk freely for the first time about her abuse and her difficulties adjusting to life in the United States. Even though she had already lived in New York for more than a decade and a half, Bintou still struggled to speak English and could not read or write. With the continuing pains of life with an abusive spouse, she didn't know what she could do or how to change her situation. (cont. on pg. 2)

**Client Profile (cont.)**

With the help of her ASC case manager, Mary Kay Jou, Bintou spoke with our housing department, legal advisers, and medical staff; all of whom assisted her in reclaiming her life.

With a team of ASC lawyers and counselors behind her, Bintou saw for the first time that her marriage did not have to be a prison. She could escape--and take her children with her. A year later, with the help of the Violence Against Women Act, her husband was kicked out of her apartment, and Bintou has lived without him ever since.

Today Bintou attends English classes, hoping to earn first her GED and then her nursing license. And her family, she says, is prospering.

"We help each other. When we speak English and I say something wrong my children say, 'no, mommy, it's not like that.' And I am very happy that they are so smart and do so well. You can't believe how happy I am."

--Ryan Brown

**News and Updates****Positive Kids 3: Through Their Eyes Event a Success**

On May 17, 2010 African Services held its 3rd Annual *Positive Kids* benefit at The James Cohan Gallery. With over 150 people in attendance, including both the Ethiopian and Armenian representatives to the United Nations, we were able to raise over \$35,000 dollars for our pediatric HIV programs in Ethiopia. The funds will be used to expand our case management program, which takes a holistic approach to HIV care for poor families by providing access to ARV treatment, preventive care and nutritional support. **Thank you** to everyone who attended or participated in this event. Click [here](#) to view the online exhibition.

Here are some select photos from the event:



Photo Descriptions (Top to Bottom, L to R): #1 - Positive Kids Photographer Haik Kocharian, #2 - Images taken by the children on display, #3 - The crowd looks on as the Armenian Representative says a few words, #4 - Benefit Committee Chair, Demetric Duckett smiles with PK supporter and noted chef, Marcus Samuelsson, #5 - Mr. Garen Nazarian, the Permanent Representative of the Armenian Mission to the UN makes remarks

We are deeply grateful to several organizations and people who made the event possible:

**Our Hosts** The James Cohan Gallery

**Our Generous Supporters** Amsterdam Art Gallery • Becton Dickinson • BGI Ethiopia • Blue Marble Ice Cream • Dot Editions • Ethiopian Airlines • IBM • L'Oreal • Luscious Ink • Mackenzie Crone Designs • Naturally Delicious • New York Community Bank Foundation • Pathfinder International • Visual Xchange • Vitamin Angels • UNFPA

**Benefit Committee** Demetric Duckett • Laurie Harrison • Klancy Miller • Okeh Ugwonalı • Nathalie Weeks

## Every Step Counts! African Services Teams Up for AIDS WALK 2010!



ASC Supporter and Walker, Fatou, proudly displays the ASC Sign

On Sunday, May 16, 2010 employees and supporters of African Services Committee joined 40,000 other New Yorkers to participate in the New York AIDS Walk—a 6-mile walk through Manhattan. Funds were raised to benefit our Housing Placement Assistance Program. The HPA program assists over 350 people per year in obtaining housing, primary care, and supportive services, so they can lead healthy and productive lives.

This year Team ASC raised over \$5000, which will be used to provide basic housing necessities such as pots, pans, bedding and toiletries for our housing clients.

## Policy and Advocacy Update

### As Summer Heats Up, So Does Talk of Immigration Reform



Earlier this summer, ASC policy advocate Bakary Tandia landed the rare opportunity to meet with several of New York City's most powerful immigrants' rights activists, but he admits that the location was a bit unusual—inside a city jail cell. The fortuitous gathering, which included several elected officials, happened back in June, when the group was arrested for their participation in a civil disobedience campaign for immigration reform outside Federal Plaza in lower Manhattan. Protesting the controversial new Arizona immigration law, 56 community members had linked arms across a busy street, blocking traffic—and soon they found themselves in the back of police cars. But for Bakary, that was only the beginning.

"Sharing the cell that afternoon was an opportunity for further advocacy," he said. "It's not easy to get the attention of powerful people, to land an appointment with elected officials, but if you are in a cell everyone has time to talk."

While that June day was dramatic, however, it was only one of several protests for immigration reform that African Services Committee members have taken part in this year. As the immigration debate gathers steam nationwide, ASC advocates have made their voices heard, from demonstrating at Major League Baseball headquarters—to have the 2011 All-Star Game moved out of Arizona—to gatherings throughout the spring at Federal Plaza.

In March, ASC joined with the Council of African Imams to send five buses from the African community to Washington D.C. for a rally of more than a quarter million supporters of immigration reform. As the buses rolled southward that morning, Bakary remembered, the advocates received an incredible phone call: it was Senator Chuck Schumer, calling to let the group know that he was proud of the work they were doing.

New York City is home to more than half a million undocumented immigrants—and there are approximately 11 million nationwide. "Anything regarding immigration is a priority issue for African Services," Bakary said. "It's at the crossroads of all the issues we work on." ASC clients who are undocumented face a wide range of barriers to integration into the New York community, he explained, and they must struggle from the shadows to obtain even the basic building blocks of a new life here, from education to employment to health care. Often the most adversely impacted group are the youth, who may have been in the United States for nearly their entire lives but nonetheless find themselves blocked from full participation in American society. (cont. pg 4)

(As Summer Heats... Cont.)

Issues of immigrants' rights have long been at the core of the African Services Committee's work, but they have become especially important in light of the recent firestorm of resistance to immigration nationwide. Some 222 new immigration laws have been passed in 48 states since 2007. The most controversial among them, Arizona's SB1070, which was approved in April, makes failure to carry immigration documents a state crime and gives police the power to detain anyone they suspect to be illegally residing in the country.

The Arizona law has drawn nationwide rage from immigrants' rights groups, including the ACLU and the National Immigration Law Center, who say the bill is fundamentally opposed to American democratic principles and will result in discriminatory racial profiling. In early July, the Justice Department announced that they would mount a federal challenge to the law, which is set to take effect at the end of the month. For Bakary, that move is an encouraging one, and he hopes it will help build further momentum from the government to protect the rights of immigrants.

"Immigration is a matter of fundamental human rights," he said. "So if you care about human rights, no matter who is affected by immigration issues, you have to be part of the struggle as a matter of principle."

--Ryan Brown

## AIDS Wait Lists Grow. Could the Crisis Reach New York?



It has been years since ADAP (Aids Drug Assistance Program) waiting lists existed, but AIDS advocates are cringing as they make a resurgence. Less than three years ago waiting lists were eliminated, and all who were eligible for ARV medications through ADAP were provided for through state drug assistance programs. Recently however, states are being forced to scale down as the recession finally hits home. With waiting lists, comes the fear that without medication, some patients are at risk of developing full-blown AIDS, which could then be easily transmitted or require an expensive hospital stay for treatment.

According to NASTAD (National Alliance of State & Territorial AIDS Directors) there are currently 1,781 people on waiting lists to receive medication, and that number is growing every day as states put caps on enrollment and enact stricter qualification criteria. NASTAD recently published an [article](#) outlining their proposal on how to assist in solving the ADAP crisis. The three-pronged strategy targets additional funding and support at the state and federal level, and demands that drug companies provide additional rebates and discounts until the health reform laws can pick up the slack.

According to a [recent article](#) in the New York Times, 10 states across the country are being forced to close enrollment or narrow eligibility. On August 1st our neighboring state, New Jersey, will be changing eligibility requirements, disqualifying over 600 people of the 7,700 people that it currently has enrolled.

Every state, in partnership with the federal government and drug companies, manages their own ADAP program. This program provides HIV medication for low-income and uninsured people who are unable to get medication through other means. Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director of African Services, sits on the New York State ADAP steering committee and was able to enlighten us regarding the situation. "New York knew this was going to be an issue," Nichols says, "but we could have never imagined it would affect so many states this quickly. At the moment enrollment is open, but we fear that we may eventually be going down the same road as Florida and 10 other states that have had to cap enrollment." Nichols says that ARV price reductions will be critical to keeping the ADAP eligibility criteria stable and the enrollment open. Drug price rebates and discounts have contributed to affordability of the ADAP programs in the past. The time is now to look at further discounts for a growing ADAP roll in a resource-constrained environment.

Amanda Lugg, Director of Advocacy at African Services says that this issue must be at the forefront of the President's domestic AIDS agenda; an agenda that on the campaign trail, Obama promised to champion. And says Lugg, "We are certainly encouraged by today's announcement from the Administration for an additional \$25 million for the national ADAP program but without further additional dollars, the wait lists that we see today will all too soon turn into death lists."

To find out more about this crisis and view current waiting list numbers, visit [nastad.org](http://nastad.org).



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[www.africanservices.org](http://www.africanservices.org)

Established in 1981, African Services Committee is a Harlem-based organization dedicated to improving the health and self-sufficiency of the African communities in New York City and beyond through health, housing, legal, and social services, as well as AIDS advocacy, policy work and technical assistance. We serve over 10,000 people each year through:

- On-site testing for HIV, TB, STDs, hepatitis & pregnancy
- Food pantry
- English classes
- Hospital escort & medical interpretation
- HIV prevention workshops
- HIV Housing
- Immigration & HIV legal services
- HIV/AIDS case management & support groups
- Self-sufficiency programs

### African Services Committee

#### Co-Executive Directors

Asfaha Hadera & Kim Nichols

#### Reception

Ndeye Diop

#### Administration & Accounting

Muna Hamouie & Sarah Park

#### Development & Communications

Sharon Makoriwa & Stephanie Kaplan

#### Health Programs

Mulusew Bekele & Sean Brennan

#### Testing Center & Early Intervention

Alice Clomegah, Ado Lemou, Lillian Agyei,

#### Community Outreach

Daouda Ndiaye & Adama Traore

#### Health Education & Interpretation

Sonia Ndiaye, Amadou Diao

#### Food & Nutrition

Ndeye Gueye

#### Immigration & Legal Services

Getachew Fikremariam, Andrea Panjwani, Chitra Aiyar, Sumaliy Ahmed

#### HIV & Family Case Management

Claudette Francois, Bakary Tandia, Mark Kay Jou, Willa Cochran,

#### HIV Housing

Aida Diallo-Diagne, Irma Jimenez, Coumba Gueye

#### Advocacy & Peer Support

Amanda Lugg & Tembeni Fazo

#### English as a Second Language

Yuliya Kalshteyn & John Patterson

## Fun in the City

### Staff Recommendations

Stephanie Kaplan, Director of Communications



Bassekou Kouyate & Ngoni Ba, Burkina Electric, and more  
Central Park SummerStage

Rumsey Playfield

[www.summerstage.org](http://www.summerstage.org)

**Directions:** 6 train to 68th or 77th Streets; N, R or W trains to 5th Avenue; F train to 63rd Street and Lexington; West side: 1, 2, 3, 9, B or C trains to 72nd Street

**Cost:** FREE

Get an inside look into the past, present and future of West African music!

Sharon Makoriwa, Director of Development



The City Parks Foundation is offering a **FREE** golf program at Kaiser Park (Neptune Avenue & West 29th Street in Brooklyn) and other parks throughout the city and is looking for more young people (6-16) to register for their Youth Golf Program. Free use of equipment for every enrollee! Your child could be the next "Tiger Woods"--in a good way.

Session I runs from Tuesday July 6th to July 29th and Session II August 2 to August 26th.

For more information, please contact 718-760-6999 or go to <http://www.cityparksfoundation.org/sports/golf.html>.

### Our Services Info: (212) 222-3882

**Testing Center:** Free and confidential HIV, TB, STD, Hepatitis B/C and pregnancy tests.

Walk-in's welcome, daily 9:00 - 4:30 pm.

Counseling in English, French and many African languages. No appointment necessary.

#### Hospital Escort & Medical Interpretation:

To assist immigrants in accessing low-fee healthcare at city hospitals. Weds. and Fri., 8:30 am at African Services. Call in advance to reserve a spot.

**Legal Advocacy:** Free or low-fee legal representation and advice for immigrants, including political asylum and HIV waiver assistance.

#### English as a Second Language Classes:

Mon., Tues. & Thurs starting at 5:30 pm.

#### HIV/AIDS Care & Support:

Case management, housing assistance, support groups, workshops and activities for people living with HIV/AIDS.

#### Program SOLEIL & Weekly HIV Support Groups:

Daily workshops and weekly multilingual support groups for people living with HIV/AIDS.

African Services Committee  
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African Services Committee, Inc. is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization under section 501(C)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

We rely on individual donations to broaden the impact of our programs and services. Building community support is essential to fulfilling our mission.

Donate by mail or online at:  
[www.africanservices.org](http://www.africanservices.org)