New York Times Features ASC

African Services Committee Legal Advocate Niat Amare at her ASC office in Harlem. Photo by Damon Winter/The New York Times

Influx of African Immigrants Shifting National and New York Demographics


By SAM ROBERTS/ New York Times

Threatened with arrest in 2009, Lamin F. Bojang fled Gambia after publicly contradicting its president’s claims that he could cure AIDS. Now 31, Mr. Bojang lives in Concourse Village in the Bronx with his wife and 2-year-old son and works as a receptionist at Kingsbrook Jewish Medical Center in Brooklyn, while working toward a bachelor’s degree in political science at City College.
Niat Amare, 28, graduated from law school in Ethiopia where she grew up, she recalled, "watching the media portray the U.S. as the land of opportunities." She arrived here in 2010, lives in Harlem and said she felt welcome in New York. "Anyone would find one's countryman here, which eases the strange feeling we all have the first time we leave home," said Ms. Amare, a legal advocate for the African Services Committee, a nonprofit organization that assists new immigrants.

While the migration of black Africans is not new, the number of sub-Saharan immigrants has grown swiftly, an influx that is shifting the demographic landscape across the country, including in New York City.

Between 2000 and 2010, the number of legal black African immigrants in the United States about doubled, to around one million. During that single decade, according to the most reliable estimates, more black Africans arrived in this country on their own than were imported directly to North America during the more than three centuries of the slave trade.

Click here to read the full story.
ASC Ethiopia to Hold Special Seattle Event

African Services Committee Ethiopia Special Seattle Event
Wednesday, October 22, 2014 | Yesler Community Center | 7:00 - 10:00 PM | 917 E Yesler Way | Seattle, WA 98122

Join us as we raise support for African Services Committee Ethiopia's Pediatric And Family HIV Program!

Spectacular artwork and photographs will be auctioned.

Delectable Ethiopian honey from ASC Ethiopia's Honey Project will be on sale.

Click here to Purchase Tickets

For more information, contact events@africanservices.org or call 206 222 3882, ext 130

ASC is traveling to the Pacific Northwest in October to drum up support for ASC Ethiopia's Pediatric and Family HIV Program. Perhaps the event should be called "From Seattle to Addis" as it will be taking place on Wednesday, Oct. 22 at Seattle's Yesler Community Center, 917 E. Yesler Way, on Oct. 22, 2014 from 7 pm to 10 pm. Spectacular artwork and photography will be auctioned. Delicious Ethiopian white honey from ASC Ethiopia's honey project will also be on sale. It will be a fun-filled event for a good cause so please help spread the word to anyone in the Seattle area. We'd love to see as many folks as possible!

ASC has worked on the frontlines of the global AIDS epidemic since 2003: operating five clinics in Ethiopia, and through advocacy and policy work in the U.S. and abroad.

ASC Ethiopia's five clinics are providing more than 20,000 children, women, and men with HIV and TB testing and treatment each year, nutrition for over 7,000, reproductive health for over 6,000, new shoes for over 18,000, and income-generating support for nearly 100 families. The clinics are a one-stop shop for families living with HIV/ TB to get back on their feet, through our attention to needs for diagnosis, free treatment access, nutrition and reproductive health support, family planning and school and income-generating subsidies.

Our Ethiopia clinics are located in Hawassa, Ziway, Addis Ababa, Kombolcha. Mekele and are providing comprehensive HIV/ TB prevention, testing, care and support services for vulnerable children and families, many of whom have been orphaned by AIDS or come from families living on less than $1 a day. 4.6% of children and 4.2% of women tested at ASC are HIV+. These children have no access to health care and most are not enrolled in school, because they are too poor or too sick. Donations directly help these children, allowing African Services to continue treatment, provide crucial nutritional supplements (such as vitamins and milk), purchase new testing kits, or extend support to even more children in need.
Speaking the Language

Spotlight on ASC’s Amazing ESL Instructors

Comment dites-on "incroyable" en Anglais? ASC’s ESL instructors, that’s how.

Every Tuesday and Thursday evening when most of African Services staff are heading home for the day, ASC’s dedicated English as a Second language, ESL/ESOL, teachers begin their labor of love: Helping immigrants develop the language and literacy skills they need to interact, engage and build opportunity for themselves and their families.

Lauded as a model for community-based ESOL programs, ASC is proud to provide an exemplary program flexible to the needs of students of all nationalities, languages and academic backgrounds. Staff includes TESOL Coordinator Amy Kaiman, and volunteers Jonathan Parker, Ryah Parker, Sanae Nakayama, Ayesha Rehman, Kethan Takkellapati Rao, and Devon Golaszewski.

"To say that our students show incredible enthusiasm, motivation and aspiration would be an understatement. They are such a joy to work with and as they progress, their joy in what they are achieving is palpable," said Parker, who began volunteering in 2012 after retiring from a corporate consulting firm.

"The sense of community and camaraderie among our students is wonderful and when class ends, the energy one feels is often electric."

Roughly 25 students are taught each week with each finding a program appropriate to their level. Multiple proficiency levels are offered, beginning with basic phonics in pre-literate to emerging readers, all the way to a more traditional and more advanced English and Second Language level.

"The lower the level the more intense the need for one-on-one instruction is," Kaiman said, referring to an increasingly-packed conference room led by ASC ESL volunteer teacher Nakayama.

"I started volunteering at ASC teaching ESL in April this year," Nakayama said. "I enjoy working with the wonderful people and students at ASC. Working particularly with students with the least ability to read and write has been, to my surprise, gratifying. My experience has been nothing but compelling and fulfilling."
Kaiman started in 2010, just when ASC's ESOL program was nearing the end of a major Department of Youth and Community Development, or DYCD, grant. "We lost that grant and had to cut way back: We went from teaching twelve hours, four nights a week to just four hours, two nights a week. My job went from 24 hours to four hours a week."

"The silver lining is that we were able to set up a more flexible and targeted program. We've since been really able to switch gears and cater to and design a program based on what the actual needs of the population are."

And the results of this restructuring have been brilliant: ASC has since been named a "model for excellent community-based ESOL programs" by the Lexington Institute and received an "Excellent" rating from a recent DYCD site visit.

The challenges of teaching on a tight budget are overshadowed by the rewards. Two students from West Africa, who have been in ASC's program for many years and had their green cards, weren't able to take their citizenship test because they couldn't do the reading and writing piece of it. They recently received their citizenship after attending ASC's ESL classes, along with tutoring from Ryah, which enabled them to complete the written exam section of the U.S citizenship exam.

"We are working off discretionary funds from the City Council -- we don't even have a real grant anymore," Kaiman said. If this passionate staff somehow manages to do all this without a grant, imagine what they could accomplish with more funding.

Currently, classes meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm. To register, come to African Services during those times and speak with an ESL coordinator to be evaluated and placed in the correct level learning group.

**Volunteers are needed for TESOL/Literacy program.** For more information call 212.222.3882 or email Amy Kaiman, TESOL Coordinator here.

Click here to donate.
ASC Turns New Page with Popular Book Club

It started early June with an idea in the form of a photocopied map of Africa taped to ASC legal intern Tsiion Gurmu’s office wall. Gradually the map filled up with scribbled book titles, such as “Achebe’s Things Fall Apart,” and “Mathabane: Kaffir Boy,” and on and on, country to country. Word spread throughout the office and in no time ASC’s book club was born.

Book clubs abound, but there is something special about ASC’s new club, which held its first meeting in July and has since surged in popularity - filling up our fourth-floor conference room with not just ASC staff, but also friends, family and colleagues. Each month ASC celebrates a book about Africa, written by African authors. A date toward the end of each month is chosen. Club members then show up with a healthy appetite for informal discussion and cuisine coinciding with the celebrated country. It is as simple as that.

"The idea for an ASC book club grew out of a collective desire, shared by staff and clients alike, to engage in activity outside of work that could educate, inform and entertain us," Tsiion said. "We found that African literature serves that function. And perhaps more importantly, the book club has provided us with an opportunity to engage with one another on a personal level and challenge our own subjective portrayals of Africa."

Algeria was the first country to be honored with the remarkable book "Children of the New World: A Novel of the Algerian War" by Assia Djebar, followed in August by the Nigerian classic, Chinua Achebe’s "Things Fall Apart." (With, it is important to note, ASC Staff Attorney, Olubunmi Segun, generously providing a delicious feast of Nigerian jollof rice and fish!) Tonight book club members will be meeting to discuss Mark Mathabane’s "Kaffir Boy: An Autobiography," which is a powerful account of the horrors of South African apartheid.

All are welcome to join ASC’s book club, which is held at ASC’s fourth-floor conference room at our Harlem office on 429 West 127th Street. To join the club or to suggest a book contact Tsiion at tsiog@africanservices.org.
ASC Holds Hepatitis B Screening at Harlem Yellow Taxi Garage

African Services Committee’s Hepatitis Program staff spent the afternoon at the Harlem Yellow Taxi garage recently to conduct a massive hepatitis screening of drivers, taxi garage staff and walk-ins. The screening event is an excellent example of how ASC’s Hepatitis Program frequently reaches out and partners with community organizations to combat hepatitis B & C, which is a “silent” killer of 1.5 million people worldwide each year -- that’s as many people as HIV/AIDS. Viral hepatitis is the leading cause of liver cancer, which is the second biggest cancer killer.

In addition to screening events, ASC operates an on-site testing center at our office in Harlem as a resource for all New Yorkers seeking free and confidential testing for HIV, hepatitis B & C, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, diabetes and blood pressure.

ASC’s testing center is vital gateway to health care for immigrants and an essential part of our HIV prevention and hepatitis programs, which emphasize the importance of knowing status and early intervention. Our screening center at 429 West 127th Street welcomes walk-ins Monday to Friday from 9 am to 4 pm.

African Services offers free and confidential hepatitis B & C screening and navigation to affordable care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
Green Cards ...

Hamet, who came to the United States from Mali five years ago, is over the moon as African Services Committee’s supervising attorney, Kate Webster, surprises him with his green card.

African Services’ passionate and dedicated attorneys provide low-cost or free legal services, for those who qualify, to families and individuals in need of immigration assistance. All are welcome regardless of race, country of origin, gender, sexual orientation or religious affiliation. All services are confidential.

For a consultation with an African Services immigration attorney, call 212.222.3882 or email immigration@africanservices.org.

... & Fresh Greens!

African Services’ food pantry was filled this season with an amazing bounty of fresh vegetables.

ASC’s food pantry serves more than 6,500 individuals and families each year in need of supplemental nutrition. In addition to supplemental nutrition, pantry staff and volunteers lead weekly nutrition and cooking classes to assist clients in making the right nutrition choices for themselves and their families.

The food pantry welcomes walk-ins Monday to Friday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. All first-time visitors must have a referral from a social services agency, community center or church.

Click here to learn more and check out the following photos captured at ASC this summer!
8th Annual African Day and Festival

The Eighth Annual African Day Parade and Festival will be held on Sunday Oct. 19, 2014. The event celebrates "Our Communities. Our progress. Our Unity." honoring the accomplishment of Africans across the globe, while forging new partnerships in the African Diaspora. Click here to learn more.

When: Oct. 19, 2014
Where: Harlem

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NDEBELE FUNERAL

Winner of the Overall Excellence Award for Best Play and a Time Out Critic’s Pick at Fringe NYC 2013, Ndebele Funeral pulls audiences into the music, art, and dreams of South Africa’s past and its present by examining the world of three characters whose lives intersect in a Soweto shantytown. Poignant, darkly funny, and heart breaking, Smoke & Mirrors Collaborative’s powerfully physical production explores the struggles and hopes of the first generation of South Africans to come of age after Apartheid.

Weaving traditional American theatrical storytelling with South African township theater style, Ndebele Funeral features original music from Spirits Indigenous, and gumboot dancing from the mines of Johannesburg.

ASC’s Communications Director, Eirik Omlie, will be a taking part in a panel discussion following the Oct. 1st performance. The talkback will focus on the intersection of arts and advocacy—in particular as it applies to HIV/AIDS and Africa.

When and where: Running at 59E59 Theaters, 59 East 59th Street, until Oct. 5th.

Click here to learn more about the show and buy tickets. Check out the trailer:

"The performances are personal, intimate, and focused."
-maxamoo.com