

# African Voices

Volume 5, Issue 5

May 2005

## Editorial

**N. Diago Dieye**

Welcome to our last issue of *African Voices* Volume 5, 2004-2005! The focus in this issue is the African Diaspora. The editor-in-chief had a hard time defining what she meant by "Diaspora" when she announced the topic under focus, but some students did a fine job writing articles on the topic!

We also would like to thank everyone who contributed and helped support *African Voices* throughout the year. It has been a wonderful experience working with all of you to keep the flame alive!

Finally, we wish to congratulate our newly elected editor-in-chief Nokuthula Sikhethiwe Kitikiti (Nikki) and wish her the best of luck!

Have a great and productive summer break!



## THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IS HARD TO REVERSE

By **Jimmy Longun**

Well, I hope most of you attended the UMOJA Conference talk in which the two renowned speakers (Dr. Samatar and Professor Mbele) dazzled the audience with their ubiquitous display of florid language. Their brainstorming on the "Diaspora" was undoubtedly amazing and I assure you that any one who attended the talk will certainly say that nobody can give a better speech. I truly have the impression that the talk was indeed very enlightening and it was even awe-inspiring to compare the intellectual giftedness of two great minds that once started their journey from the Continent of Africa. Despite the fact the two speakers were sometimes locked into an antagonistic war of words, the overlap between their speeches was the most important of all. Some of us are aspiring to be lawyers, politicians and the like-so we are always challenged to view things from different angles. I appreciate Dr. Samatar's and professor Mbele's insightfulness on the 'African Diaspora'-but I would rather prefer to see it from a different view-point, even though I would have to use their perspectives as my reference point.

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# Whoever said progress is a slow process...

By Magarya Waitara

## Whoever said progress is a slow process...

By Magarya Waitara

Yes, most will agree with me that time runs fast, some say time flies, its amazing. Let me give my hand of congrats to all those seniors who are taking off, leaving us behind this wobbly boat. We are holding fast to make sure that we get to the next station ALIVE!

As election fever heats up my home country, I am saddened by the fact that I would not be able to vote this time. But I remain curious since the country is one of the growing 'democratic' regimes in the continent. However, there has been a lot of underground dissent campaigns and dissatisfaction in some areas of the country. We welcome differences not conflicts. I must say that Afrika! Elections to some extent reflected what is going on in the continent. Nonetheless, I would like to commend the willingness of the some candidates to share responsibilities, something which to my historical knowledge, is not yet to happen in the continent.

I would like to glance at a topic that Kawuma once articulated, mockingly titling it as United States of Africa (USA) - the AU. African Union, an organization that I look at not with contempt but with hopes, hopes that finally Africa will have some firm organization that will hold the countries together. We know that most African countries lack political voice, standing alone is a fatal decision. We need to come together and have a common voice. This is possible because most African countries share very similar troubles, corruption, economic poverty, and excessive external influences, lack of markets for agricultural commodities, lack of

political stability and the like. If we had a common decision, no one would make decisions for us. You do not need to look far to see this, OPEC countries have been doing this for years, and it is fairly working. Are there major doubts that even if we try we can't make it?

I do not deny that there are a lot of differences among Africans countries themselves. Indeed, this is in itself a major challenge to the AU. There is no easy way out. You can do good alone but you can do better with others. Let me quote a powerful and rampant Swahili proverb that says "Umoja ni nguvu, utengano ni udhaifu". Unity brings strength, individualism brings weakness. There are things that need to be done by countries and within countries; nevertheless increasing ties with each other is important. Let's establish home markets before we go beyond oceans. Let's seek assistance from each other before we go outside.

I would have much more to say and discuss this issue, but for now I'll end here. I felt that I owe Kawuma some comments on this since I had read the article. For, Prof Samatar once said, no matter where you are, how successful you are, your pride will originate from your home, home continent for that matter. Let no one hide opinions no matter how controversial they might be, for we need to ponder t this issue. It is not the issue to be put on the wait list. Whoever said progress is a slow process was he talking about Afrika! Or Africa?

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# THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IS HARD TO REVERSE

By Jimmy Longun (continued from page 1)

First of all I would like to make clear, from my perspective, what the African Diaspora is: In the context of my writing, the African Diaspora is the mass exodus of Africans from the African Continent to the rest of the world. The African Diaspora is not only limited to Europe, Canada and the United States-but also Asia.

To remind you, the African Diaspora, as far as I am concerned, includes skilled, semi-skilled an even unskilled African human resources seeking fortune in lands outside Africa. But regarding the reversibility of this mass exodus, for courtesy, I will focus mostly on the skilled African human resources living abroad.

As far as the 'African Diaspora' is concerned, Dr. Samatar's and Professor Mbele's perspectives were both angled from a foreigner's point of view. I am quite sure they have lived in the United States for quite long and it was no surprise that they were seeing the 'African Diaspora' from their point of view. However, I am going to tackle the 'African Diaspora' from a totally different angle. We all know that the mass exodus of thousands of Africa's skilled human resources to the west is perpetuated by specific factors: war, search for greener pastures etc. But what about the reversibility of the African Diaspora? What I am trying to imply is that, how could those same forces that trigger the mass exodus be made to work in the reverse direction? War and other related calamities can easily be dealt with and in this case the Diaspora can be reversed. However, the issue of greener pastures is something that will take a number of dolorous decades to solve. From the perspective of many intellectual Africans living in the US, Canada, Europe etc, we might suggest that let the prosperous African immigrants pack their luggage and head home. And for the international students, it's easy to suggest that let them go home after the successful accomplishment of the mission for which they have been obliged to stay abroad. These two suggestions are great when viewed from a foreigner's perspective. But, nonetheless, these are totally contradictory if not irrelevant suggestions when viewed from the perspective of someone living in Africa. Why I say so is because I have had a test of both worlds so I know the difference! This might be paradoxically bewildering but the truth is that most Africans living in Africa do not expect international students studying abroad, or whoever has lived abroad to go back home. I know some of you might have experienced this if not very

soon you will. The point is simple, just tell a friend living in Africa that you will return home as soon as you finish school- and then be ready to watch the bewilderment on their face. When I stepped foot on the Ugandan soil after completing my High School in Singapore, I told a friend that I was going to continue my education in Makerere University, one of the elite Universities in Uganda. To me, his reply was predictable; he was puzzled, dumbfounded and mystified. He wondered why I wanted to demote myself-other than getting on the plane to New York or Canada or Sri Lanka. But why do they have to think this way? The answer is simple; most Africans believe that once one has stepped foot on the European or American soil, the reaction is irreversible. They simply don't expect you back, for whatever reasons, I do not know. This particular view-point is even exacerbated by parents. Some parents usually misadvise their sons and daughters studying abroad to remain there.

All along I have been seeing this matter with respect to the common man. Now let's view it with respect to employers, top civil servants, Presidents etc. As is always the case, most international students with higher political ambitions talk of their plans to become presidents, electoral commissioners, lawyers and the like. But these ambitions are unsurprisingly brought to a staggering halt once they step foot on their native lands. The reason is because the international students are viewed, in their native lands, with a grudging sense of ambivalence. At one moment, they are viewed as accomplished, knowledgeable and distinct; and on the other hand they are viewed as indomitable competitors. Many employers view them simply as too good for the jobs, while other employers fear for your positions should papers be considered. Some employers even call them 3<sup>rd</sup> country citizens, having once left their country to live abroad. This is clearly another form of labeling; one that is based on no ground but sheer ignorance. This notion according to me, is very unreasonable, and can easily plunge one into a prostrate state of quagmire! One's spirit of patriotism in returning to one's country is ruthlessly corrupted by the people with whom one once used to share citizenship. This is even quite different for those who have bigger plans, say running for president. After being absorbed into a top position by the government because of your papers, you start to think that you are finally on the tract to realizing your dreams. But it usually happens that you are sucked as

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## THE AFRICAN DIASPORA IS HARD TO REVERSE

By Jimmy Longun (continued from Page 3)

soon as your threat is realized. And chances are you might end up being underemployed somewhere else. So why keep doing a job that is not commensurate to your qualification? For most people the solution to this quandary is Europe or Canada or the United States. What is left of Africa, now that these great brains are trudging off to far away lands? People who had ambitions to go back home and install democracy, built industries, open drugs stores (I don't mean cocaine) etc are now forced to retreat to wherever they came from. We might even ask the question that who will now be the Adam Smiths and Bill Gates of Africa? I don't want to sound pessimistic but the truth might indeed be that the so called natural forces of evolution are truly acting rapidly against our Continent. In the rest of the world, people are moving in the positive direction of modernization but in Africa those who are currently in charge of the Continent are instead evolving into conspirators.

The question now is- why do we think we can win the battle of reversing the 'African Diaspora' when our own people are in fact frustrating our efforts? To be honest, I do not know the answer. But at the end of the day, we are all Africans and therefore should do something for our continent. As Dr. Samatar had mentioned in his speech, whether you are in the United States, Canada or Greece and however successful you might be, you will never get to taste the fruit of honor as long as the African continent still remains undeveloped. As I have already elaborated, the answer to reversing the 'African Diaspora' is certainly not a one day's retreat to Africa-there is a big devil in our backyard that will always set us on our toes as soon we step foot on the African soil. So what should we do? Well, as professor Mbele had mentioned in his speech, I too don't have the answers to some these questions, BUT for sure we have to do something. The struggle continues...

*P.S. I have enclosed poems which I hope will help reverse the 'African Diaspora'*

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## AIDS: HOW FAR AHEAD IS A CURE OR VACCINE?

By Udochukwu Chinyere Obodo

The first cases of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) were identified in 1981, in the United States of America. Since then, this disease has spread very quickly around the world. By the end of 2003, the number of people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide was estimated to be 37.8 million and by the end of 2004, that number has increased to 39.4 million. About two-thirds of these people live in Sub-Saharan Africa -alone.

In the last few years, Botswana has had the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS but, Swaziland has now taken over this unwanted "title." It is nice to know, however, that Botswana has decided to tackle this issue. The government of Botswana is now providing anti-retroviral drugs, free of charge, to HIV-positive patients in Botswana.

In addition to dealing with the HIV and AIDS, people living with the disease or infection in Africa have to deal with the stigma attached to it. To help erase this stigma, Botswana has held an HIV-positive beauty pageant, titled "Miss HIV Stigma Free" annually for the past three years.

The point of this whole introduction is that some countries in Africa, like Botswana, are working within their constraints, the most obvious one being the financial constraint, to battle AIDS. Wealthy countries, especially the United States of America, contribute to the global fight against AIDS either directly or indirectly. They either provide funds to the poorer countries to treat infected people or they fund HIV/AIDS research.

Thankfully, in addition to anti-retroviral drugs, HIV/AIDS research is also being funded to produce AIDS vaccines. Several drugs are now being used to treat HIV- infected people and these drugs fall into three categories: reverse transcriptase (RT) inhibitors, protease inhibitors (PI) and fusion inhibitors. Reverse transcriptase inhibitors are designed to inhibit reverse transcriptase, the enzyme that allows HIV to copy its RNA genome into DNA which it can then insert into its host's genome. Protease inhibitors are designed to inhibit the protease enzymes that HIV uses to make new viral particles while fusion inhibitors are designed to viral particles while fusion inhibitors are designed to hamper HIV's ability to fuse with the plasma membrane of its host cell. For people already living with HIV/AIDS, vaccines are of no use; their only hope for a

cure is antiretroviral drugs. Unfortunately, antiretroviral drugs can not cure HIV/AIDS. Once, two of my friends and I discussed our beloved continent's HIV/AIDS predicament over dinner and all came to the conclusion that the whole issue of producing anti-retroviral drugs needs to be looked at from a different perspective. We could not help but observe, based on the three classes of drugs described above, that the present drugs used to treat HIV/AIDS are designed towards targeting something about the virus that makes it strong and formidable. Every living creature has its Achilles' heel, its source of downfall. HIV is no exception; somewhere in that tiny little virus, a weakness is waiting to be discovered- one that will help mankind get rid of HIV once and for all. It may take a lot of time, a lot of effort and a lot of money, but eventually, anything that will help us, humans, be rid of this scourge called HIV is worth the wait.

**For references for this article, please contact Udo, she can be reached at [uobodo@macalester.edu](mailto:uobodo@macalester.edu)**

## **NO PLACE LIKE HOME**

*The gigantic sun rises majestically in the agile morning,  
His profusely sparkling sunrays cut the blanket of dawn.  
With untold vigor He announces the awakening of the world.  
Spear upon spear of sun light come flashing far away,  
Into the boundless wilderness-firing veils of mist and dust.  
White clouds fill the baby blue skies, in all shapes and sizes.  
And the sons of men rise to bow down to their masters,  
With hoes, rakes and axes they scamper into the farmland,  
Their feet kiss the dew filled leaves with ceaseless passion.  
And beneath the valley the mooing of cattle livens the kraal.*

*As mid-day zooms, hot air dances over the surface of the earth.  
And the scorching sun daringly announces His might,  
Casting thick shadows that swirl and dance to glorify their creator.  
Languid and phlegmatic the sons of men retreat from duty.  
On the Dinggbulungbulu Mountains, the snow gradually melts away.  
And underneath the mountains bright-winged birds coo and sing away,  
Like paradise the lions and lionesses flash roam the escarpment.  
With home boys at my side we search after the sea waves,  
We ride the ever shifting tide as the babes gaze with awe.*

*In the evening the great fiery ball of the sun sinks into the desert,  
Darkness rests upon the land as golden sunrays crush far away.  
In the twilight the moon stands out to enforce Her power over natives.  
Life burst upon the land again, its beauty glistened in the moonlight.  
Grandpa rises from his armchair to tell stories of old,  
And the grand son muffled as the stars listen with mocking jeers.  
On the mid-night table cold breeze of air bid us good night cheers.  
Together with my sisters our hearts beat the same in the night.  
We belong here.*

*But: yesterday I woke up at home; today I wake up in a foreign land,  
The land of mystery! The land of majesty! The land of crimes! The land  
of odds.*

*In the winters, the boldly chilly breeze fans life away from the living.  
Thick like Eskimos, in bars, clubs, they worship glasses of Champagne  
At night, waves of nostalgia and tides of reminiscence wash with ease,*

**Poem written by Jimmy Longun  
(Uganda/Sudan)**

# Two neighbors meet for the first time ever!

By Innocent Sibusiso Dlamini

South African President Thabo Mbeki has invited His Majesty King Mswati III to his country for talks. Mbeki's initiation for a "one on one" meeting with the king was issued in writing about a week ago reports The Times of Swaziland. The letter was handed over by the South African embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to deliver to the monarch. But the South African embassy says the king has not yet responded to their President's invitation.

When I read about this invitation many questions came to my mind. Is this the moment all the Swazi people have been waiting for? Is the king going to be made to answer for the millions of dollars misused by his extravagant government? Why Thabo Mbeki is "suddenly" interested in diplomatic issues concerning Swaziland? Such questions are hard to answer at face value before analyzing the history of diplomatic ties between the two countries.

As a quick introduction to the relationship between the two countries, Swaziland is almost entirely surrounded by the mighty South Africa with only a quarter of the country bordering the Portuguese speaking Mozambique. During the White apartheid rule, many South African black leaders and liberation activists found hiding spaces in the tiny Kingdom of Swaziland for protection against the White regime. In this way the relationship between these sister countries grew very strong. In those days Swaziland boasted of a very strong economy under the late king Sobhuza II.

Since this is not a history paper I will go straight to the burning issues which have led to the King's ultimate invitation to South Africa. Since independence from colonial rule in 1994, no South African president has ever had a diplomatic visit to Swaziland. This includes the widely acclaimed and Nobel prize winner former president Nelson Mandela. This is a very serious observation considering that Pretoria is only a few hours from Mbabane and the King himself does not need a private jet to cross the border. So, what went wrong?

"We want our land back", the Swazis say. During the White rule much of the Swazi Nation Land was snatched into South Africa. This constitutes more than half of the present Swaziland. Not even Nelson Mandela managed to resolve this issue. Despite, numerous negotiations, more than half of the Swazi people remain "locked" out of their own country. The Swazi authorities have since decided not to have much to do with SA. Is this a good move? But seriously, do we really need this land? From the economic point of view giving back the land would be a ridiculous choice for both countries. The land is well utilized as it is. Not unless the king wants a bigger pool of teenage girls to choose from. Otherwise, I find no other reason why should

we demand "our land". On the other side of the border the South Africans are telling a different story.

In South Africa, the real reason for the hostile relationship between the two countries is the reluctance by Swaziland to adopt a purely democratic government system. The world is looking up to South Africa to make sure that problems in Sub-Saharan Africa are sorted out. Former president Nelson Mandela hinted on the need for Swaziland to revisit her government system but the ageing man never really played an active role. Thabo Mbeki, the founder of the African Union is here for some serious business. His active involvement in issues on Zimbabwe gave enough indication that Swaziland is next on the list. Finally, the president has broken the silence. The king's one on one meeting with the president might be the turning point for the Swazi monarch.

There has been a lot of speculation in Swaziland as well as in South Africa about the agenda of the big day. But the agenda has been kept highly secret so far. Many, people think that Thabo Mbeki has been sent by the world to invoke change in the highly "corrupted" government of Swaziland. The recent lavish spending by the king on luxurious cars and frequent international trips has worsened the situation. The human rights activists are also monitoring the king's "abduction" of teenage girls with great interest. If the talks fail to be fruitful, South Africa is going to impose stringent sanctions on SD, analysts say. Swaziland has a significant portion of her citizens in SA either working or studying. This would be very bad news to the Swazi economy. Some pessimists have dubbed the King's invitation to SA as nothing but another of the many typical diplomatic meetings between head of states. Nevertheless, this first meeting between the two neighbors promises to be a very historic one. We hope that the king's office responds promptly to Mbeki's invitation because their failure would send a wrong message to the world. Will this mark the end of one of Africa's only remaining absolute monarchies?

By Innocent Sibusiso Dlamini

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## UMOJA

*In the nippy cold he walks on and on.  
His deafening voice echoes in  
the sky:  
The voice of lament  
The voice of chagrin  
With gargantuan strides he  
thunders on and forth.  
To wake those in their sleep!  
To save the lost child of his  
generation from the monster.  
Day and night the monster  
preys on his child.  
In the silent winds his child  
vanishes to seek hope.  
Like Jesus! He is the savior.  
From across the seas he comes  
to restore hope.*

*In grotesque costumes his tots  
awaits his arrival  
The melody of drums tells his  
arrival  
His virtuosos and poets tell  
stories of his land  
The tradition and culture of  
his ancestors  
Then the day was over  
And the lost child stared on  
Face buried in the blanket of  
hope  
Hands bathed in waters of dream  
Ears washed in words of wisdom.  
With thunder and lightening  
He vanished into the clouds  
But: tomorrow he will come  
back  
To rescue his lost child:  
Mafukuzana*

Poem written by Jimmy Longun  
(Uganda/Sudan)

# AFRICA HAS TO LEARN THE ETHICS OF SOCCER?

*By Jimmy Longun*

The topic for this article is purposely phrased, and no doubt, questions will definitely be asked. I won't be surprised if I am named Mr. 'critical' having been involved in controversial criticism in my last article. But make no mistake, as a matter of fact, criticism is and will always be part of us as long as we are always ready to challenge the predicaments of this generation. One thing that was and is inherently rooted in African cultural institutions is: the dire need to revert to barbarism, lack of perspicacity to learn from others, and the desire to acquire what one can not achieve.

You may excuse me for being somewhat oblique in the portrayal of my grievances- as per decadence in African social structure. I decided to link this to soccer because soccer is one of the most celebrated sports on the African Continent. But shamefully, the sport through which most African countries derive their reputation has recently been marred with frequent riots and violence. To me, it is better we forget soccer, if we can't cope with the rules that govern it. I say this because, two months ago world cup qualifying games were hampered with an insurmountable degree of violence in western Africa. In Mali, during a Mali -Togo game, a riotous crowd stormed the stadium before the end of the game, forcing the referee, linesmen and all the players to flee for their lives. Reports suggest that the Mali soccer fans stormed the stadium because Togo unexpectedly scored a goal that was to earn them a win as the game neared its dying minutes. Angry and apparently frustrated the Mali fans continued their rampage in the streets: Ransacking restaurants, vandalizing property and screaming for Mali's top football (soccer) players- among them was Tottenham Hotspur's Frederic Kanoute whom the mob wanted to murder for his uncharacteristic failure to hit the back of the net. While in Cameroon, during a Cameroon-Sudan match angry Sudanese spectators thundered onto the pitch, demanding the referee to answer questions that he could not answer. He (referee) too was on the verge of extermination by the cruel spectators who accused him of crude refereeing. But where does it end? I really don't know but I think it's a good idea if the federation of international football association (FIFA) ban African countries from playing soccer, so that they retreat to their traditional hunting habits- I tell you this might even boost their chances in the Olympics, instead of playing soccer which has robbed Africans of: their passion, forced them to kill even the innocent-what I mean is that a striker's failure to score a goal in a crucial game, like the Mali-Togo, should not be punished with death. There is no such rule in the soccer doctrine. Some extremist fans have even proceeded to the extent of thinking that at the end of each soccer game both sides must be winners. This is a paradox of logic, one that works only for people who are narrow-minded. The point I am stressing is that- those who introduced soccer to African countries deserve credit but the Africans are making a fool out of it. A similar incidence, though not pronounced occurred in South Africa when the South African Bafana- Bafana played Against the Ugandan Cranes. The Ugandan cranes were also contemplating for a riot following a referee's controversial decision in the match.

Looking at the occurrence of these unceasing riots, does it come down to referees or only angry soccer fanatics are to blame? According to me it certainly has something to do with referees or both. What we should know is that the Europeans, or whoever introduced soccer, meant that soccer should be fun. But contradicting it's different in the African setting for whom soccer is actually a burden. Forgetting that soccer is meant to be a peaceful game, we are even not ashamed by the fact that we are turning soccer fields into battle grounds. And the Europeans or whoever invented soccer will be to blame?

When it comes to soccer, many questions usually remain unanswered. But one question that will always haunt us is that, are African countries starting all these riots because the European countries that call themselves the soccer gods are also doing the same thing? According to me, I think it's a failure to learn from examples or may be a complete misinterpretation of the soccer doctrine. Instead of playing the 'real soccer' we are instead playing the 'second edition or 'second version' for that matter.

Because we think that we are cleverer, we decide to revise the soccer rules and play using a revised version of the rules. It's not probably very surprising, but a few years ago soccer fields in Europe were somehow turned into battle grounds. An incident happened in Italy when the English European soccer club, Liverpool, played Juventus, the giant Italian soccer club. Again recently, about two weeks ago, there was a devastating riot in Italy. Due to frustration of defeat, Italian fans launched a malicious action on the pitch; they threw fireworks and all sorts of missiles against their opponents

Like, the Mali-Togo game, all the players, including the referee and the linesmen were also forced to flee. With respect to European soccer, is violence something to do with Italians only? Whether or not it is an Italian ritual to bring soccer into disrepute, at least, I am glad that African countries are not alone on their way to decadence.

**To contact Jimmy, please refer to the two poems and the other article he has written in this edition!**

# Afrika!'s Newly Elected Executive Board

CO-CHAIRS: **Tammie Khumalo, Aminata Sougou, and Kim Wortmann**

\*Kim and Ami both received 14 votes in the election for female co-chair, thus the group decided (by a vote of 20 to 9) to allow a special case of 3 co-chairs for next year, rather than hold an additional election next semester.

SECRETARY: **Dorothy Gondwe**

TREASURER: **Edinam Agbenyeke**

EVENT COORDINATOR: **Grace Awantang**

CULTURAL ORG LIAISON: **Jimmy Longun**

NEWSLETTER EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: **Nikki Kitikiti**

AFRICAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVE: **Ihotu Ali**

....."thanks Kawuma for the Greateth Job"...  
(William Shakespeare)

**CONGRATULATIONS**  
*to all and best of*  
*luck with next year's*  
**AFRIKA!!!**