

AMJAMBO AFRICA!



Understanding, Embracing, and Celebrating Diversity in Maine

WELCOME | BIENVENUE | KARIBU | MURAKAZE | SOO DHOWOOW | BEM VINDO | BOYEYI MALAMU | BIENVENIDOS



The New Year is a time when organizations review the year gone by and look forward toward the future. Here is a look at the remarkable artists who participated last year in the Indigo Arts Alliance Artists in Residence program. *Indigo Arts Alliance Artists-In-Residence from the past year: VIVA, Samuel James, Ryan Adams, Pam Chevez, Dianne Smith, Athena Lynch, Veronic Perez, Carl Joe Williams, Eamon White, Sonya Clark, Aminata Conteh, Antonio Rocha, Maestr Isaura Oliveira, Heather Flor Cron.*



Indigo Arts Alliance was co-founded by Executive Director Marcia Minter and Artist Director Daniel Minter. The Indigo Arts Alliance Residency aims to connect Black and Brown artists from across the globe to local artists of African descent. Indigo Arts Alliance provides an environment for the production of artwork in all media across disciplines. It is intended for professional, mid-career and emerging artists to explore and grow their work in a creative atmosphere. Selected artists offer and participate in public talks, symposiums and workshops increasing their visibility and disseminating intellectual discourse. Stay tuned for the 2022 artists!

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Relatives of Mainers in harm's way in Afghanistan | Kathreen Harrison

Afghans living in the U.S., as well as immigration attorneys and legal volunteers across the country, have been working feverishly since August to secure a legal pathway to safety for tens of thousands of people left in Afghanistan who are at particular risk of persecution at the hands of the Taliban. These Afghans were not lucky enough to make it out of the country on one of the hastily organized U.S. evacuation flights that carried approximately 80,000 Afghans to safety during our disastrous withdrawal from the country. Yet the lives of these Afghans are in danger in Afghanistan.

Since August 31, the U.S. government has continued some evacuation flights, but these are primarily for U.S. citizens, green card holders, and others who possess Special Immigrant Visas (SIVs) approved after years of processing – not for civilians who performed services such as interpretation, transportation, road construction, airport work, mapping, and intelligence work for U.S. contractors. Or for those with pending SIV applications. The U.S. government has not articulated plans for the safe-

Continued on page 5

Asylum seekers face hard winter in motels | Kathreen Harrison

Families fleeing persecution, conflict, violence, and human rights violations in their home countries continue to arrive in Maine. The families are mostly young, with children in tow. The adults all want to work. Most come from Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, and Afghanistan. They traveled for months to get to safety – some for years.

On arrival in Maine, they are housed in motels in Cumberland and York counties, because the pandemic has made crowded shelter life unsafe. The City of Portland then tries to locate affordable apartments in the state's already overtaxed and highly priced rental market. The apartments are paid for with General Assistance vouchers. Once the asylum seekers are granted work permits, they start to pay their own way.

At present, there are approximately 1,000 people living in these motels, according to Fatima Saidi of Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC). They are seeking asylum in the U.S. – a place to begin new lives – though a few hope to continue on to Canada, where word-of-mouth indicates that the immigration system is fairer.

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The power and joy of Black Hair

see story on page 2



African-born radio host to pilot "Amjambo Time"

see story on page 4



The power and joy of Black Hair

By Kholiswa Mendes Pepani | Photos by John Ochira

As snow painted a quintessential Maine portrait outside the window, the air inside the Rafiki Braiding Academy's historic Hair Show in Portland on December 18 resonated with African vibrations. Born out of a partnership between Black Owned Maine and Rafiki Shop, the hair show celebrated the full range of African beauty, design, and pride.

On the catwalk, models displayed intricate cornrows, Afros, Bantu knots, weaves, and box braids dripping with jewels. Adding to the atmosphere was the scent of Yardie Ting's heavenly oxtail soup, and musical beats from around the continent. The ambience transported guests into a world celebrating Black innovation, creativity, and hair.

The relationship between Black people and their hair is both intimate and marred by systemic racism. Black people have been told for centuries that their natural hair is too "difficult," "unmanageable," or "unprofessional," due to white supremacist standards of beauty and acceptability. The Rafiki Academy hair braiding show challenged those notions, and made room for Black empowerment and pride.

"Rafiki Academy was the idea of my business partner, Douglas Rutamu," said Rose Barboza, founder of Black Owned Maine. "He opened Rafiki Shop last year and wanted to have a community space for Black people, of all cultures, and ages, to gather and enjoy each other. Rafiki Academy is a product of this vision."

Often, a lack of knowledge about Black hair impedes stylists from getting the hair education that is necessary to care for and attain natural looks. "There are no other braiding schools within a 100-mile radius of Portland, and natural styles are not taught in cosmetology school. Rafiki Academy provides an opportunity for Black hair and culture to be celebrated in a way that Maine has not experienced before. We have a growing Black and African community here so it is about time that we come together! Not just Black Americans, or Jamaicans, or Congolese, but all Black people living in Maine," said Barboza.

According to Barboza, the Rafiki hair show was a historic gathering of Black excellence and pride, never before seen in Maine. "I am still in awe over the support expressed at the show. I am extremely grateful for this opportunity. Many have asked us when we will hold the next class...our goal is to have a hair show every year during the holiday season. Food, music, hair, and a celebration of many Black cultures all in one place. In a state that is not often seen for its diversity, this show was a truly phenomenal experience," Barboza said.

Black hair, in all of its various forms of coily and curly glory, is beautiful and complex. It requires care, moisture, and a great deal of patience. The textures are often assessed according to a numbered scale ranging from 3a to 4c. Caring for hair is a practice in community, love, and tradition, with tips and advice passed down from grandmothers, mothers, aunts, cousins – and hairstylists, who often become like family.

This feeling of community was evident at the hair show, as hairstylists from a range of African countries discussed their personal inspirations behind the styles they created. "My inspiration was protective hairstyles and 4c hair type representation," stylist Bene explained about her model, who

displayed an Afro weave fashioned with golden clips and jewels, atop a twisted protective style.

Another model demonstrated an intricately woven chain across a crown of protective twists, finished with a long, cascading ponytail. "The chain links symbolize the connection between African women as we do hair. We chat, bond, and discuss life. We become friends – family even, through hair."

The event showcased Black hair, but was also a celebration of the stylists themselves and their ability to give Black people the tools to feel confident in their Blackness. Paired with the hairstyles were striking accessories from Ghanaian artist Ebenezer Akakpo, who explained that he uses symbols from his homeland to imbue his jewelry with distinct meaning. "As individuals, our lives are filled with stories. These stories create patterns that can be carried to convey certain characteristics," he said.

Black hair is a lifelong expression of identity – passed down between generations as a tapestry of history, culture, and resilience. In a world known for its rejection of Black humanity, celebrating Black culture is an act of joy and resistance to racist oppression.

Policies forbidding the wearing of natural hairstyles have been used to justify marginalizing Black children and adults in educational and professional settings for decades. According to the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, with no nationwide legal protection against race-based hair discrimination, Black people face having to conform to Eurocentric standards of beauty, or risk removal from institutions. But Black resistance has always been strong and the movement to embrace natural hairstyles continues.

To help combat race-based hair discrimination, please consider writing to state representatives to ensure that The Crown Act – a bill prohibiting discrimination in employment and education based on hair texture or hairstyle – which was introduced in 2019 and has already passed in 14 states – also passes into law here in Maine.





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A MESSAGE FROM THE MAINE OFFICE OF BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

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African-born radio host to pilot

“Amjambo Time” | By Stephanie Harp



Jean Damascène Hakuzimana

On January 14, *Amjambo Africa* and University of Southern Maine radio station WMPG will launch “Amjambo Time” as part of WMPG’s new Global Mainers initiative. Hosted by radio professional and *Amjambo Africa* News Editor Jean Damascène Hakuzimana, three pilot episodes of “Amjambo Time” will broadcast once a month in January, February, and March, on Fridays at 7 p.m.

“We are looking forward to widening the *Amjambo Africa* audience,” Hakuzimana said. Because some recent immigrants may be more comfortable listening to English than reading it, “Amjambo Time” offers news in a broadcast format. The first programs will be in English, but he hopes to expand it to other languages down the road. “When we talked about languages that can connect with a lot of immigrants in Maine, we thought about Kinyarwanda. In Burundi, Rwanda, Congo, and other tribes in Eastern Congo, they speak a kind of Kinyarwanda. This could be a language we will broadcast in, other than English.”

“Amjambo Time” will include stories from *Amjambo Africa*’s printed content, including news from the continent. “This is an effort to bring our content to a wider audience. And we hope people will gradually make it a part of their week,” said *Amjambo Africa* Editor-in-Chief Kathreen Harrison. “We are trying to reach deeper into the communities we serve, and we believe that our Africa news editor is the perfect person to do that.” Over time, Harrison and Hakuzimana hope “Amjambo Time” reaches listeners from many different communities, including Spanish speakers, French speakers, Arabic speakers, maybe the growing Afghan community. The three-part pilot is supported, in part, by a Democracy, Journalism, and the Informed Community Grant from Maine Humanities Council. Raising additional funding will allow “Amjambo Time” to expand with other hosts, other languages, and other types of shows, such as music, culture, sports, and business.

This is the first of several programs within WMPG’s Global Mainers project, which is part of the station’s larger Community Counts Initiative Project to address diversity, equity, and inclusion, and to increase visibility and service to the underrepresented populations within the station’s listener range. A Global Mainers show highlighting Indigenous voices from Maine also starts in January, and a podcast is planned for USM students to share their own stories. Global Mainers Program Coordinator Sebastiane Sacerdoti-Ravenscroft said, “My goal is to identify historically underrepresented communities and give them a voice on radio or podcast, depending on what platform they would like to be a part of.” A graduate student at USM, Sacerdoti-Ravenscroft is also a diversity, equity, and inclusion specialist at MaineHealth. “My day job is education. Allyship in the workplace,” they said, for race, gender, disability, age, and other protected classes. “If you are an ally for one, you need to be an ally for all. Which is also what drew me to doing the Global Mainers project. ... I like giving platforms to voices that don’t normally get heard.”

WMPG has been working on the Global Mainers idea since early 2021. What began with advertising in *Amjambo Africa* to attract new listeners evolved into the station approaching the newspaper about a partnership. WMPG leaders liked the idea of having someone from the newspaper on the air, and the publisher and editors of *Amjambo Africa* had been looking toward radio, too. And so, “Amjambo Time” was born.

Hakuzimana’s background in radio made him the ideal choice to host the show, along with his ability to speak five languages (Kinyarwanda, English, French, Swahili, and Kirundi). He holds a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the National University of Rwanda, worked as a broadcast reporter, talk show host, editor, and producer for over six years in Rwanda, and has numerous journalism contacts in more than 10 African countries. He also earned a master’s degree in community development from the University of New Hampshire in 2020. Because of his extensive experience, Voice of America calls on him to contribute analysis, such as about the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia and the recent death of the president of Chad. They know he is familiar with the countries and has reported on events like these for *Amjambo Africa*. As far as Hakuzimana knows, he will be the first African-born radio host on the air in Maine. He knows some other broadcast journalists from Africa, but right now they still are working to establish their new lives in Maine. “When you arrive here, you need first of all to fight for survival,” he said.

In addition to widening the audience for the newspaper, Hakuzimana said, “we are

aiming at fostering the diversity, the inclusion, the societal acceptance and reception – which, to my view, is another way of helping the cooperation between New Mainers and Mainers. People deserve to know what’s going on, why people are coming to Maine. They deserve to know that they come with rich culture, rich beliefs, from civilizations that are rich in nature.” He intends to interview some New Mainers in leadership positions. At the top of his wish list is Deqa Dhalac, the newly elected mayor of South Portland and the first U.S. mayor who is a Somali-born, Muslim woman.

Harrison, Sacerdoti-Ravenscroft, and Hakuzimana are enthusiastic about the show. “I’m excited to see how this will evolve,” host Hakuzimana said. “And I would like to wish us good luck! I do believe that more people will be interested to chip in and make it something to go beyond [the pilot]. Immigrants have a lot to share. It’s a matter of opening up the medium, the channel. This is another component to explore.”

“Amjambo Time” will be broadcast live on 90.9 FM in the greater Portland area and online at www.wmpg.org/listen/. Shows will be available as podcasts on www.amjamboafrica.com.

Jean Damascène Hakuzimana’s most recent interview with *Voice of America* was on November 28, 2021. The topic was the conflict in Ethiopia and its potential to destabilize countries in the Horn of Africa. Here is an excerpt from what he said:

An unstable Ethiopia means havoc in the region. Belligerents should negotiate peace to avoid the worst of the conflict, though talks seem unlikely to happen. Should Addis Ababa fall to the Tigrayan army, they would take revenge against Eritrea, and consequences would be dire in the region of the Horn of Africa, which was already a ground zero for conflict. There is a risk that the war in Ethiopia gave momentum to the Islamic Al-Shabaab terrorists in Somalia, where Ethiopian Defense Forces were fighting this group. An influx of refugees has crossed into Sudan, a neighboring country suffering from prolonged and sporadic unrest since the fall of Omar Bashir. Kenya in the south is on the waiting list to host refugees should the war progress towards the south of the country. Djibouti in the northeast has the main road for transiting goods from the sea to Ethiopia – all sides in the conflict would need to control that road. Last is South Sudan, battling with its own internal problems since its birth as the latest and youngest nation of the African continent. In brief, Ethiopia has been holding the center of stability in the region until now.

To listen to the interview, conducted in Kinyarwanda: www.radiyoyacuvoa.com/a/6312213

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Afghanistan from page 1

guarding of these people, who had always been assured the U.S. would protect them should Ashraf Ghani's government fall.



They performed essential services, and worked for organizations funded by the U.S. Others left behind included human rights defenders, journalists, women's rights and education advocates, those considered "westernized," those with family in the U.S. - and therefore considered enemies by the Taliban. Many of these people are now in hiding; some have already died or been disappeared. According to Human Rights Watch, 100 former police and intelligence officers in four provinces were murdered in the span of three months by Taliban forces. These "enemies" of the Taliban are traumatized, and suffer from a lack of adequate food. And options for getting out of the country are severely limited for them at this point.

When Ghani's government first fell, a national call went out among lawyers to do something to rescue those who had helped the U.S. war effort. "Humanitarian parole" (HP) is one of various parole categories specified in U.S. immigration law. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) website states: "You may apply for humanitarian parole if you have a compelling emergency and there is an urgent humanitarian reason or significant public benefit to allowing you to temporarily enter the United States."

Humanitarian parole permitted the emergency rescue of 130,000 Vietnamese people in 1975 after the Vietnam War and 6,600 Iraqi people in 1996 after the Persian Gulf War. If any group of people would seem to qualify for HP, immigration lawyers felt it would be people currently living in Afghanistan with ties to the U.S.

Until November, members of the national network, including Catherine Lindgren, Afghanistan Project Attorney for the Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project (ILAP), were optimistic that USCIS would process humanitarian parole applications in a timely fashion. And lawyers across the nation - including at ILAP and the Refugee and Human Rights Clinic (RHRC) at the University of Maine School of Law -

scrambled to help Afghans in the U.S. fill out the applications on behalf of their family members back home. The application for each individual required a sponsor and a \$575 fee, and Afghans living in the U.S., including in Maine, did everything they could to raise the funds needed and locate sponsors.

Things started off slowly on the USCIS end of things, and applications for HP began to pile up. At first, the excuse USCIS gave for slow processing was that it was understaffed, with only six workers facing piles of tens of thousands of applications. But then 44 new workers were hired and trained, and the backlog continued to grow.

"Many Mainers are trying to save relatives in Afghanistan," said Lindgren, "I can't stress enough the severity of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan. It's truly life or death. People in Maine wake up every day hoping their loved ones are alive ... we have already lost clients [to violence]," she said.

Then, in November, during a webinar attended by hundreds of people across the country, the USCIS announced that instead of easing the way for vulnerable people to get out of harm's way quickly, it was making the standard of proof needed for approval of an HP application for Afghans higher. The news was met with shock and outrage by immigration lawyers, military veterans, and members of other groups. Meanwhile, USCIS has collected millions of dollars in application fees, which it is sitting on.

The new standard requires documentation naming an individual and corroborating specific risk facing that individual, such as reports from a third-party source, like the media, or "a reputable human rights organization." Lawyers point out that such proof is in essence a death sentence, since the Taliban have repeatedly gone after known allies of the U.S. And the standard is so high, it has basically made humanitarian parole useless as a tool for getting desperate people to safety. The USCIS site instead encourages Afghans to apply for refugee status under the regular route with the UNHCR. However, this process takes years, and people whose lives are in danger don't have years to wait.

"With all traditional immigration options failing to meet the urgency of the situation, we are desperate for other means of saving Afghans at significant imminent risk because of their ties to the United States. Even if humanitarian parole has historically been used on a limited basis, this is a crisis, and the Department of Homeland Security has discretion to parole," said Lindgren.

Anna Welch of RHRC said, "We are incredibly disappointed in how the Department of Homeland Security and USCIS more specifically is treating humanitarian parole applications filed by more than 30,000 Afghans who are in grave danger following the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. After waiting months to process these appli-

cations (and after processing millions of dollars in application fees), USCIS has just begun to adjudicate these cases. And nearly across the board, they are denying them. Moreover, USCIS is implementing further restrictive criteria for eligibility and applying it retroactively. These changes will almost certainly be the death knell for the majority of cases, which represented the last glimmer of hope for many individuals in dire need of rescue given their ties to the U.S."

On December 14, a long list of organizations (including Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition, and Mainers for Accountable Leadership Action), legal services providers (including ILAP), resettlement agencies, law firms, and law school clinics, sent a joint letter to the Biden Administration to "express our extreme concern regarding the exclusionary approach the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has adopted towards over 30,000 Afghans who have applied for Humanitarian Parole to the United States." The signatories spoke of a "moral imperative to protect vulnerable Afghans."

"This is a crisis," said Lindgren. "That is not hyperbole. Every day, attorneys across the country learn that clients have been disappeared, or that they were taken and tortured, or found with a bullet in their head. This preventable crisis was brought about by the failure of our government to plan for and provide for the safety of our Afghan allies."

Meanwhile, Maine's Afghan community - already traumatized by the suffering of their relatives - must now face the collapse of their hopes. For so many months they worked hard to prepare complete humanitarian parole applications on behalf of their relatives. Now they fear those applications will never be granted. "People feel voiceless, as if no one is listening. Afghans wonder, 'Why don't people care?'" said Lindgren.

Meanwhile, winter has arrived in Afghanistan, but the Taliban have not paid salaries in over 100 days, and families are subsisting on one meal a day of tea and bread. Maine's Afghans are trying to help their relatives make it through the winter by sending hard-earned money abroad. They don't know what else to do while they wait to see what happens with the HP applications they worked so hard to file on behalf of family members.

Some members of Congress are pushing for more to be done. For example, Senator Blumenthal of Connecticut has called on the Biden Administration to appoint an "evacuation czar" who would be responsible for bringing targeted Afghans to safety. Allies of Maine's Afghan Community urge their fellow Mainers to contact every member of Maine's congressional delegation. "The only hope is to pressure the government to change its policy. We need a grassroots campaign to shine a light on this devastating humanitarian crisis," said Lindgren.

To contact Maine's Afghan Community to offer help: afghansofmaine@gmail.com

Motels from page 1

The influx of asylum seekers in Maine is part of an alarming upward global trend of desperate people looking for a safe place to live. Maine's numbers are tiny compared to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimate of 30 million refugees and asylum seekers worldwide, most of whom seek and find some sort of refuge in countries neighboring their home countries, many in refugee camps.

Those caring for the newest arrivals in Maine include an informal grassroots coalition of members of immigrant-led associations, service providers, nonprofits, volunteers - and Chelsea Hoskins, the City of Portland Resettlement Coordinator, who is praised by many and said to be "everywhere at once." One cook has been hired, as well as a small group of cultural brokers.

But the help currently in place is severely inadequate, MIRC members explained, and they criticized the state's response to the urgency of the situation, saying it lags well behind the obvious need: people are hungry, ill clothed, and suffering from poor health, including trauma. Children go to school carrying books in plastic bags; families cannot cook hot food for their children; people are short on diapers; women lack menstrual pads; there is nowhere to do laundry; pregnant women lack vitamins; and life in a motel room, for months on end, is hard.

In order to alleviate some of the distress while the state mounts an appropriate response, MIRC has launched an "Adopt an Immigrant Family" initiative. Already, about 150 Mainers have applied to participate. Matches are underway, and Mainers and their new friends have started to connect.



Fatima Saidi

Connecting Across Cultures, a community group based in Camden, has been matched with a family of three in a motel in South Portland. One of the group members said, "I was so moved by the second request we got from the mother of the family (after a request for winter coats and boots). 'I'd like to go to the university here. Will that be possible?' Maine is lucky to have these young families arrive just when we need workers."

Fatima Saidi of MIRC is delighted by the response to the new program. She reported that some people are writing to her with offers of financial donations, and others have been matched with families. "We are very grateful," she said. "People really care in Maine. And it's part of what makes Maine a nice place. It's cold here, but a lot of people have warm hearts."

Some motel residents have telephoned Saidi in excitement when they've been connected with a local family. "They are

The goal of the program is for families to help new arrivals get comfortably clothed for winter, and respond - at whatever level they can - to requests for help navigating life in Maine, and possibly help them practice English.

so happy to have communication, to talk with the host." To participate or find out more, contact: fsaidi@maineimmigrantrights.org.

Advocates for the asylum seekers commend the grassroots coalition helping manage the crisis, as well as the family match program. However, what is needed is a statewide, governmental response to the crisis. They say all of Maine stands to benefit from the successful integration of these young families.

ADOPT A FAMILY

MIRC is spearheading an effort to provide winter clothes, boots, gloves, socks, blankets, and gift cards for asylum seekers in the homeless shelters at motels, as well as for those new Afghan arrivals who need help. MIRC is looking for businesses, churches, nonprofits, companies, and individuals to adopt a family.

To participate, contact:
fsaidi@maineimmigrantrights.org

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Amjambo Africa welcomes letters to the editor, notices of local events, photographs, and suggestions for future stories.

Contributions are published at the discretion of the editor and as space allows.

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Printed in Maine.



Amjambo Africa does not take positions in support of or in opposition to candidates, political parties, or legislation. We rely on factual reporting and our mission is to educate the public.



Editorial

Hope for the New Year

by Kathreen Harrison, Editor-in-Chief

A lot went wrong globally in 2021, but the dawning of every new year brings hope, and this New Year of 2022 is no exception. For me that hope is kindled every day by the many acts of kindness Mainers show others they hardly know - welcoming asylum seekers from Africa and Haiti and Central America to our state; helping Maine's Afghan community wire financial assistance to relatives back home living in danger of starvation or violence at the hands of the Taliban. Such acts of compassion toward others means hope remains alive for a better future, one where the words "Never again" - too often spoken so naively - gain substance and become true.

The launching of 2022 is an opportune moment to think about others, and remember that what happens on the world stage impacts some people in our state in ways that are not always visible to others. The list of disasters around the world is long, and touches many immigrant families directly. They have family members facing famine in Afghanistan, genocidal efforts against their tribes in Congo, famine and civil war in Ethiopia, a military takeover in Sudan, attacks on civilians in Somalia, corruption and violence in Central America ... the list goes on.

Many Mainers roll over in bed in the morning and turn on our phones with the vague notion of checking

The launching of 2022 is an opportune moment to think about others, and remember that what happens on the world stage impacts some people in our state in ways that are not always visible to others.

out the weather of the day, and maybe the news. But some Mainers who have escaped to safety here have had to leave loved ones behind in harm's way somewhere on the other side of continents or oceans - and for these Mainers, each morning starts in fear and dread. They open their phones wondering, "Did my loved ones make it through the night? Will they survive another day? Were they roughed up by security forces/militia/police?" And then, like others, these Mainers get up, go to work, or school, and carry on. But they hold the burden of trauma and fear with them wherever they go.

Let's stand up for our fellow Mainers in 2022 even more than we have in the past. Let's push our congressional delegation to do everything in their power to get legislation passed that protects the vulnerable family members of our neighbors and friends. The doors to the nation should be open to family members of Maine's Afghan community who were aligned with the U.S. effort in Afghanistan - but they are not. Current policies make it almost impossible for people to get out of Afghanistan to safety here. And asylum seekers who cross the southern border to save their lives should be vetted but then allowed to work and live in safety, building productive lives in our state - but too often they are not. Current policies set up roadblock after roadblock to being granted asylum here. These policies are immoral. There is no hierarchy of humanity. We are all one. This New Year, let's be there for all Mainers.



Correction

In our profile of Hermenegildo Paulo (page 14, Vol.4, No.9), we mistakenly said he worked as an Ed Tech at King Middle School in Portland. In fact, he is a full mathematics teacher for children in grades six through eight.



out the weather of the day, and maybe the news. But some Mainers who have escaped to safety here have had to leave loved ones behind in harm's way somewhere on the other side of continents or oceans - and for these Mainers, each morning starts in fear and dread. They open their phones wondering, "Did my loved ones make it through the night? Will they survive another day? Were they roughed up by security forces/militia/police?" And then, like others, these Mainers get up, go to work, or school, and carry on. But they hold the burden of trauma and fear with them wherever they go.

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— FRENCH —

Pendant les sessions de l'Assemblée Législative du Maine, Amjamba Africa publiera des mises à jour mensuelles sur la législation importante pour les communautés de couleur.

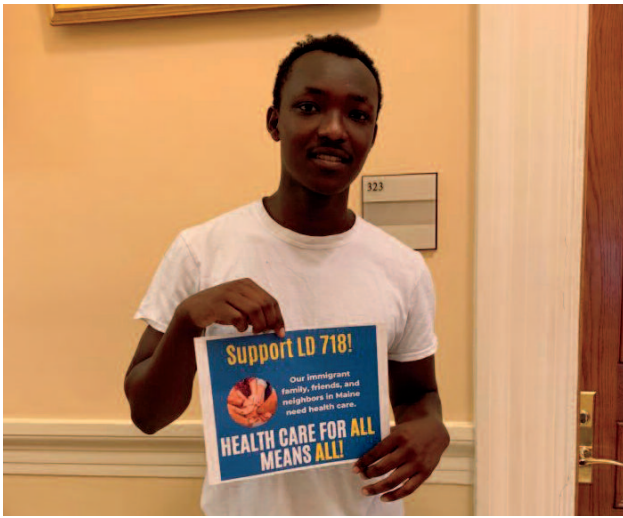
Mise à jour depuis Augusta

Par Ulya Aligulova

Journaliste d'Amjamba à l'Assemblée

La deuxième session ordinaire de la 130e législature du Maine aura lieu du 5 janvier au 20 avril 2022, et de nombreux projets de loi qui sont d'une grande importance pour les communautés de couleur seront examinés par les législateurs pendant cette période. Le processus démocratique permet aux électeurs de soutenir les projets de loi qui leur tiennent à cœur et d'influencer les projets de loi qui se retrouvent sur le bureau du gouverneur. Souvent, les projets de loi bénéficiant du plus grand soutien public sont ceux qui finissent par être adoptés, bien que le gouverneur ait le droit d'opposer son veto à un projet de loi.

Des organisations telles que l'ACLU du Maine, Maine Equal Justice et Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC) mènent régulièrement des campagnes afin de soutenir différents projets de loi et d'aider les gens à partager le pouvoir de leur voix. Il n'est pas nécessaire de parler couramment l'anglais pour s'impliquer, et une aide multilingue est généralement disponible. Amjamba Africa fournira des mises à jour sur les projets de loi en cours de traitement législatif, ainsi que des informations sur la façon de participer.



Sadiki Valens

"La participation est importante, et c'est un moyen de tester les systèmes qui ne font pas avancer les droits des immigrants, et de soutenir les lois qui favorisent l'intégration dans la société. Par exemple, en 2020, le MIRC a témoigné en faveur de la LD843, un projet de loi qui soutenait la stabilité du logement, et parce que ce projet de loi a été adopté, il y aura un financement de l'État en 2022 pour les navigateurs de logement afin de soutenir nos communautés marginalisées", a déclaré Mufalo Chitam, directeur exécutif du MIRC.

Tout au long de la session, les comités législatifs tiendront des audiences publiques au cours desquelles les membres de la communauté pourront exprimer leur opinion sur les projets de loi. Les personnes peuvent également contacter les législateurs de la commission chargée de l'examen d'un projet de loi particulier pour partager une histoire personnelle et/ou participer à des journées de lobbying organisées pour galvaniser le soutien à une législation particulière. De plus, les gens peuvent écrire des lettres à l'éditeur de publications telles qu'Amjamba Africa.

Projets de loi prioritaires pour cette session

Un projet de loi d'une grande importance pour les communautés de couleur est la LD 1610, un projet de loi complémentaire à la LD 2 "An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process", qui a été adoptée lors de la dernière session législative. La représentante Rachel Talbot Ross est l'auteur des deux projets de loi.

La LD 2 exige que les données, analyses et autres informations nécessaires à la préparation d'une déclaration d'impact racial (une évaluation de l'impact potentiel de toute nouvelle législation sur les populations raciales historiquement défavorisées) soient fournies à la demande d'un comité législatif. La LD 1610 soutient la LD 2 ; son adoption améliorera la capacité du Maine à collecter, centraliser et utiliser les données pour améliorer l'équité dans l'élaboration des lois de l'État.

"Même si nous savons, sur la base de données anecdotiques et de données provenant d'organisations communau-

taires et de base, que les personnes de couleur subissent des préjudices disproportionnés du fait de différentes lois ou systèmes, nous ne pouvons pas encore présenter suffisamment de données comme preuve de cela", a déclaré Kathy Kilrain del Rio, Directrice du Plaidoyer et des Programmes de Maine Equal Justice.

"Cela fait partie d'un effort plus large sur lequel la Commission permanente [sur le statut des populations raciales, indigènes et tribales du Maine, créée en 2019] s'est concentrée pour s'assurer que nous avons la capacité de collecter les bonnes données, de les analyser et de déterminer comment nous pouvons élaborer des lois basées sur ces données qui aident à réduire la disparité raciale", a déclaré Kilrain del Rio. La Commission permanente est une entité indépendante qui examine les disparités raciales dans tous les systèmes et travaille à améliorer le statut et les résultats des populations raciales, indigènes et tribales historiquement défavorisées du Maine.

Un autre projet de loi à surveiller est le LD 1679, parrainé par le président du Sénat Troy Jackson, qui vise à lutter contre la faim des élèves en élargissant l'accès aux repas scolaires gratuits.

"Il y a eu un effort l'année dernière pour s'assurer que tout le monde dans les écoles puisse avoir accès aux repas gratuits, ce qui est un moyen important de réduire la faim dans notre État", a déclaré Kilrain del Rio. "Tant d'enfants à travers l'État dépendent des repas scolaires gratuits pour se nourrir. C'est particulièrement vrai pour les enfants immigrants car il existe des restrictions dans le SNAP et d'autres programmes d'aide alimentaire qui excluent les non-citoyens. L'année dernière, cela a été inclus dans le budget supplémentaire. Nous essayons de faire pression pour obtenir plus de fonds pour cela cette année aussi."

Un autre projet de loi que Kilrain del Rio surveille est le LD 718. Parrainé par Talbot Ross, le projet de loi LD 718 vise à combler la lacune du programme MaineCare qui, en raison d'une restriction fédérale, exclut certaines personnes de l'accès au MaineCare en raison de leur statut d'immigrant. Maine Equal Justice a également travaillé sur ce projet de loi l'année dernière. "Nous voulons combler cette lacune afin que tous les Mainers, quel que soit leur statut d'immigration, aient accès au MaineCare s'ils ont un faible revenu. Nous savons que c'est important non seulement pour la santé des individus mais aussi pour notre santé collective. S'il y a quelque chose que cette pandémie nous a appris, c'est que notre santé collective dépend les uns des autres", a déclaré Kilrain del Rio.

Plus de 90 personnes ont témoigné en faveur de la LD 718 lors d'une audition publique pendant la dernière session. Gouverneur Janet Mills a inclus une partie de cette loi dans sa proposition de budget supplémentaire, la LD 221, qui a étendu la couverture aux personnes de moins de 21 ans et aux femmes enceintes, quel que soit leur statut d'immigration. "Mais nous n'avons toujours pas comblé cette lacune pour tous les adultes", a-t-elle déclaré. La LD 718 a été renvoyée au comité de la santé et des services sociaux, et le MEJ continuera à la défendre.

"Cette session, nous surveillerons de près les projets de loi sur la souveraineté tribale", a déclaré Meagan Sway, Directrice des à l'ACLU du Maine. Ces projets de loi comprennent les LD 1626, LD 554 et LD 585, parrainés respectivement par le sénateur Louis Luchini, le représentant Benjamin Collings et Talbot Ross. Les tribus du Maine se sont battues pour résoudre les problèmes posés par la Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementation Act de 1980, qui stipule que le Congrès doit approuver et ratifier tout transfert de terres ou d'autres ressources naturelles situées n'importe où sur le territoire des États-Unis, de la part ou au nom de la tribu Passamaquoddy, de la nation Penobscot, de la bande des Malécites de Houlton ou de l'un de leurs membres.

"Les tribus du Maine ont moins de droits que la plupart des autres tribus du pays en raison d'un seul règlement judiciaire datant des années 1980", explique Sway. "Il s'agit d'un problème particulier pour les communautés de couleur, car il concerne les façons dont l'État colonisateur blanc a désavantagé les tribus, et ces projets de loi tentent de résoudre ces problèmes."

Les travailleurs agricoles sont généralement exclus des lois traditionnelles de protection du travail, mais plusieurs projets de loi concernant les travailleurs agricoles, notamment le projet de loi 151, parrainé par le représentant Thom Harnett, permettraient aux travailleurs agricoles de se syndiquer. Dans le Maine, de nombreux travailleurs agricoles sont des immigrants et des personnes de couleur.

"Ce projet de loi s'attaquerait aux préjudices historiques qui ont empêché les Noirs et les personnes de couleur de bénéficier des avantages du mouvement ouvrier", a déclaré Sway. "Lors de la prochaine session, nous attendons soit un veto du gouverneur, soit, à défaut de veto, une tentative de passer outre."

Lors de la dernière session, la LD 764 a abouti à la création d'un comité d'examen des casiers judiciaires qui recommandera au comité judiciaire une législation sur le scellement des casiers judiciaires. "Dans le Maine, une fois que vous êtes condamné pour un crime, il est très difficile de se débarrasser de ce casier judiciaire, ce qui peut avoir des conséquences dévastatrices pour le logement, l'emploi, l'aide aux étudiants - toutes les choses sur lesquelles nous comptons pour avoir une vie stable", a déclaré Sway. "Cela a un impact énorme sur les personnes de couleur parce qu'elles sont ciblées et punies de manière tellement disproportionnée par le système juridique pénal."

— PORTUGUESE —

Durante as sessões da Legislatura do Maine, a Amjamba África irá efectuar atualizações mensais sobre legislação importante para as comunidades de cor.

Atualização a partir de Augusta

Por Ulya Aligulova

Repórter legislativo de Amjamba

A Segunda Sessão Regular da 130.ª Legislatura do Maine decorrerá de 5 de janeiro a 20 de abril de 2022, e muitos projetos de lei de grande importância para as comunidades de cor estarão em consideração pelos legisladores durante este período. O processo democrático permite que os eleitores apoiem os projetos de lei que lhes interessam e influenciam quais as contas que acabam na mesa do Governador. Muitas vezes, esses projetos de lei com maior apoio público expresso são aqueles que acabam por passar, embora o Governador tenha o direito de vetar uma lei.

Organizações como a ACLU do Maine, Maine Equal Justice e Maine Immigrants's Rights Coalition liderarão trabalhos regulares de advocacia para apoiar diferentes projetos de lei e ajudar as pessoas a partilhar o poder das suas vozes. O inglês fluente não é um requisito para se envolver, e a ajuda multilíngue está geralmente disponível. A Amjamba Africa fornecerá atualizações sobre quais as contas que estão a mover-se através do processo legislativo, bem como informações sobre como se envolver.

"A participação é importante e é uma forma de desafiar sistemas que não avançam os direitos dos imigrantes e apoiar políticas que fomentem a integração na sociedade. Por exemplo, em 2020 o MIRC testemunhou em apoio ao LD843, um projeto de lei que apoiava a estabilidade da habitação, e porque este projeto de lei aprovado, haverá financiamento estatal em 2022 para os navegadores de habitação apoiarem as nossas comunidades marginalizadas", disse Mufalo Chitam, Diretor Executivo da MIRC.

Ao longo da sessão, as comissões da legislatura realizarão audições públicas onde os membros da comunidade podem expressar as suas opiniões sobre a legislação proposta. Além disso, os indivíduos podem contactar representantes, senadores locais e legisladores da comissão que analisam um determinado projeto de lei para partilhar uma história pessoal, e/ou juntar-se aos dias de lobby organizados para galvanizar o apoio em torno de uma determinada legislação. Além disso, as pessoas podem escrever cartas ao editor de publicações como Amjamba Africa.

Projetos de lei prioritários nesta sessão

Um projeto de lei de grande importância para as comunidades de cor é o LD 1610, um projeto de lei de acompanhante para o LD 2 da última sessão "Um Ato Para Exigir a Inclusão das Declarações de Impacto Racial no Processo Legislativo" que foi aprovado na última sessão legislativa. Rep. Talbot Ross é o patrocinador de ambas as contas.

O LD 2 exige que os dados, análises e outras informações necessárias à elaboração de uma declaração de impacto racial - ou uma avaliação do impacto potencial que qualquer nova legislação possa ter sobre as populações raciais historicamente desfavorecidas - sejam fornecidos a pedido de uma comissão da Assembleia Legislativa. O LD1610 suporta o LD 2, e a passagem melhorará a capacidade do Maine de recolher, centralizar e usar dados para melhorar a equidade na elaboração de políticas estatais.

"Apesar de sabermos, com base em dados anedóticos e dados de bases e organizações comunitárias, que as pessoas de cor estão a sofrer danos desproporcionados de diferentes políticas ou sistemas, ainda não podemos apresentar dados suficientes como prova para isso", disse Kathy Kilrain del Rio, Diretora de Advocacia & Programas do Maine Equal Justice.

"Isto faz parte de um esforço maior que a Comissão Permanente [sobre o Estatuto das Populações Tribais Raciais, Indígenas e Do Maine, criada em 2019] tem-se focado em garantir que temos a capacidade de recolher os dados certos

Continued on page 9



Gabriela Fuentes, Sara Brajtbord, and Rosy Ontiveros discuss the importance of health care for adult immigrants.

e analisá-los e descobrir como podemos elaborar políticas baseadas nesses dados que ajudem a reduzir a disparidade racial," Disse Kilrain del Rio. A Comissão Permanente é uma entidade independente que analisa as disparidades raciais em todos os sistemas e trabalha para melhorar o estatuto e os resultados das populações racial, indígenas e tribais historicamente desfavorecidas no Maine.

Outro projeto de lei para manter um olho é o LD1679, patrocinado pelo Senador Jackson, que visa combater a fome dos estudantes, expandindo o acesso às refeições escolares gratuitas.

"Houve um esforço no ano passado para garantir que todos nas escolas pudessem ter acesso a refeições gratuitas, o que é uma grande forma de ajudar a reduzir a fome no nosso estado", disse Kilrain del Rio.

"Tantas crianças em todo o estado dependem de refeições escolares gratuitas para comer. Isso é especialmente verdade para as crianças imigrantes, uma vez que existem restrições no SNAP e outros programas de assistência alimentar que excluem os não-cidadãos. No ano passado, este facto foi incluído no orçamento suplementar. Estamos a tentar pressionar para que este ano também tenhamos mais financiamento."

"Uma lei que eu levantaria em particular é LD 718", continuou Kilrain del Rio. Patrocinado pelo Rep. Talbot Ross, o LD 718 fecharia a lacuna no programa MaineCare que, devido à restrição federal, exclui certas pessoas de acederem ao MaineCare devido ao seu estatuto de imigração.

"Este foi um projeto de lei em que trabalhámos no ano passado também. Queremos colmatar essa lacuna para que todos os Mainers, independentemente do seu estatuto de imigração, tenham acesso ao MaineCare se tiverem baixos rendimentos. Sabemos que é importante não só para a saúde dos indivíduos, mas também para a nossa saúde coletiva. Se há alguma coisa que esta pandemia nos ensinou, é que a nossa saúde coletiva depende uma da outra. Tivemos uma forte audiência pública que teve mais de 90 pessoas a testemunhar em apoio a este projeto de lei na última sessão. A governadora incluiu parte do LD718 na sua proposta de orçamento suplementar, LD221, que alargou a cobertura para menores de 21 anos e pessoas grávidas, independentemente do seu estatuto de imigração. Mas ainda não fechámos essa lacuna para todos os adultos. O LD718 foi remetido para a Comissão de Saúde e Serviços Humanos, mas continuaremos a defendê-lo."

"Nesta sessão estaremos particularmente atentos às contas da soberania tribal", disse Meagan Sway, Diretora de Política da ACLU do Maine. Estas notas incluem LD1626, LD554 e LD585, patrocinados pela Sen. Luchini, Rep. Collings e Rep. Talbot Ross, respectivamente. As tribos do Maine têm lutado para resolver os problemas com a Lei de Implementação de Colonatos indianos do Maine de 1980, que declara que o Congresso aprova e ratifica qualquer transferência de terras ou outros recursos naturais localizados em qualquer lugar dos Estados Unidos a partir de, ou em nome da Tribo Passamaquoddy, a Nação Penobscot, a Banda Houlton de Índios Maliseet, ou qualquer um dos seus membros.

"As tribos no Maine têm menos direitos do que a maioria das outras tribos em todo o país por causa deste acordo judicial dos anos 80", explicou Sway. "Esta é uma questão particular para as comunidades de cor porque aborda formas como o Estado colonizador branco tem prejudicado as tribos, e estas contas estão a tentar resolver esses problemas."

Os trabalhadores agrícolas são geralmente excluídos das leis tradicionais de proteção do trabalho, no entanto, vários projetos de lei relativos aos trabalhadores agrícolas, nomeadamente o LD151, patrocinado pelo Rep. Harnett,

permitiriam que os trabalhadores agrícolas se sindicalizassem. No Maine, muitos trabalhadores agrícolas são imigrantes e pessoas de cor.

"Este projeto de lei abordaria os danos históricos que afastaram qualquer povo negro e castanho dos benefícios do movimento operário", disse Sway. "Na próxima sessão estamos à procura de um veto do governador ou se não houver um veto, uma tentativa de anular."

Na última sessão, o LD764 resultou na criação de um Comité de Revisão de Registos Criminais, que recomendará legislação ao comité judicial sobre a selagem de registos criminais. "No Maine, uma vez que se é condenado por um crime, é muito difícil fugir desse registo criminal, que pode ter consequências devastadoras para a habitação, o emprego, a ajuda estudantil — tudo aquilo em que confiamos para ter uma vida estável", explicou Sway. "Isso tem um enorme impacto nas pessoas de cor porque são tão desproporcionalmente visadas e punidas pelo sistema legal criminal."

— SWAHILI —

Wakati wa vikao vya Bunge la Maine, Amjambo Africa itaendesha sasisho za kila mwezi kuhusu sheria muhimu kwa jamii za watu wa rangi.

Sasisho kutoka kwa Augusta

Na Ulya Aligulova
Mwandishi wa sheria wa Amjambo

Kitaanza Kikao cha Pili cha Kawaida cha Bunge la 130 la Maine mnamo Januari 5 hadi Aprili 20, 2022, na miswada mingi yenye umuhimu mkubwa kwa jamii za watu wa rangi mbalimbali itazingatiwa na wabunge wakati huu. Mchakato wa kidemokrasia unaruhusu wapiga kura kuunga mkono miswada wanayojali na kushawishi ni miswada gani huishia kwenye dawati la gavana. Mara nyingi miswada hiyo iliyo na uungwaji mkono mkubwa wa umma ndiyo inayoishia kupitishwa, ingawa gavana ana haki ya kupinga miswada huo.

Yataongoza kazi ya mara kwa mara mashirika kama vile ACLU ya Maine, Maine Equal Justice, na Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC), kazi ya utetezi ili kuunga mkono miswada tofauti na kusaidia watu kushiriki mamlaka ya sauti zao. Kiingereza fasaha si sharti la kujihusisha, na usaidizi wa lugha nyingi kwa kawaida hupatikana. Amjambo Africa itatoa sasisho kuhusu miswada gani inaendelea kupitia mchakato wa kutunga sheria, na pia habari juu ya jinsi ya kuhusika.

"Kushiriki ni muhimu, na ni njia ya kutoa changamoto kwa mifumo ambayo haiendelezi haki za wahamiaji, na kuunga mkono sera zinazokuza ushirikiano katika jamii. Kwa mfano, mwaka wa 2020 MIRC ilitoa ushahidi kuunga mkono LD843, miswada ambao uliunga mkono utulivu wa makazi, na kwa sababu miswada huu uliopitishwa kutakuwa na ufadhili wa serikali mnamo 2022 kwa wanaobadili makazi kusaidia jamii zetu zilizotengwa," Mufalo Chitam, Mkurugenzi Mtendaji wa MIRC alisema.

Muda wote wa kikao, kamati za sheria zitafanya mikutano ya hadhara ambapo wanajamii wanaweza kutoa maoni yao kuhusu sheria inayopendekezwa. Pia, watu binafsi wanaweza kuwasiliana na wabunge kwenye kamati inayopitia miswada fulani ili kushiriki hadithi ya kibinafsi, na/au kujiunga na siku za kushawishi ambazo zimepangwa ili kuhimiza uungwaji mkono kwa sheria fulani. Kwa kuongezea, watu wanaweza kumwandikia barua mhariri wa machapisho kama vile Amjambo Africa.

Miswada ya kipaumbele katika kipindi hiki

LD 1610 ni miswada mmoja wa umuhimu mkubwa kwa jamii za watu wa rangi, miswada shirikishi wa LD 2 ya kikao kilichopita "Sheria ya Kuhitaji Ujumuishaji wa Taarifa za Athari za Rangi katika Mchakato wa Kutunga Sheria," ambayo ilipitishwa katika kikao cha sheria kilichopita. Mwakilishi Rachel Talbot Ross ndiye mfadhili wa miswada yotei zote miwili.

LD 2 inahitaji kwamba data ya kamati ya sheria, uchanganuzi na taarifa nyingine muhimu ili kuandaa taarifa ya athari za rangi (tathmini ya athari inayoweza kuwa ambayo sheria yoyote mpya inaweza kuwa nayo kwa jamii ya watu wa rangi zilizonyimwa haki katika historia) itolewe kwa ombi la kamati ya sheria. LD 1610 inasaidia LD 2; kifungu chake kitaboresha uwezo wa Maine wa kukusanya, kuweka kati, na kutumia data ili kuboresha usawa katika utungaji sera za serikali.

"Kulingana na data ya hadithi na data kutoka kwa jamii na mashirika ya kijamii, ingawa tunajuwa kwamba watu wa rangi

wanapata madhara makubwa kutoka kwa sera au mifumo tofauti, bado hatuwezi kuwasilisha data ya kutosha kama ushahidi wa hili," Kathy Kilrain del Rio alisema, Mkurugenzi wa Utetezi na Mipango wa Maine Equal Justice

"Hii ni sehemu ya juhudi kubwa zaidi ambazo Tume ya Kudumu [juu ya Hadhi ya Makabila ya bwatu wa Rangi, Wenyeji, na Makabila ya Maine, iliyoanzishwa mwaka wa 2019] imeangaziwa ili kuhakikisha kwamba tuna uwezo wa kukusanya data sahihi na kuzichambua na kutambua jinsi tunavyoweza kuunda sera kulingana na data hizo ambazo zinasaidia kupunguza tofauti za rangi," Kilrain del Rio alisema. Tume ya Kudumu ni chombo huru kinachochunguza tofauti za rangi katika mifumo yote na kufanya kazi ili kuboresha hali na matokeo ya watu wa rangi, wenyeji na makabila waliokuwa wamenyimwa haki zao katika historia huko Maine.

Mswada mwingine wa kuzingatiwa ni LD 1679, unaofadhiliwa na Rais wa Seneti Troy Jackson, ambao unalenga kushughulikia njaa ya wanafunzi kwa kupanua ufikiaji wa milo ya bure shuleni.

"Mwaka jana kulikuwa na juhudi kuhakikisha kila mtu shuleni anaweza kupata chakula cha bure, ambayo ni njia kubwa ya kusaidia kupunguza njaa katika jimbo letu," Kilrain del Rio alisema. "Watoto wengi katika jimbo zima wanategemea chakula cha bure shuleni. Hiyo ni kweli hasa kwa watoto wahamiaji kwa kuwa kuna vikwazo katika SNAP na programu nyingine za usaidizi wa chakula ambazo hazijumuishi watu wasio raia. Mwaka jana hii ilijumuishwa katika bajeti ya ziada. Tunajaribu kusukuma ufadhili zaidi kwa mwaka huu pia.

Mswada mwingine unaotazamwa na Kilrain del Rio ni LD 718. Umefadhiliwa na Talbot Ross, LD 718 ungefunga pengo katika mpango wa MaineCare ambao, kwa sababu ya kizuizi cha shirikisho, haujumuiishi watu fulani kufikia MaineCare kulingana na hali yao ya uhamiaji. Maine Equal Justice ilifanyia kazi muswada huu mwaka jana, pia. "Tunataka kuziba pengo hilo ili Wakazi wa Maine wote, bila kujali hali yao ya uhamiaji, wapate MaineCare ikiwa wana mapato ya chini. Tunajua kwamba ni muhimu sio tu kwa afya ya watu binafsi bali kwa afya yetu ya pamoja pia. Ikiwa kuna jambo lolote ambalo janga hili limetufundisha, ni kwamba afya yetu ya pamoja inategemeana na afya ya kila mmoja binafsi kati yetu," Kilrain del Rio alisema.

Zaidi ya watu 90 walitoa ushahidi kuunga mkono LD 718 hadharani katika kikao kilichopita. Gavana Janet Mills alijumuisha sehemu yake katika pendekezo lake la ziada la bajeti, LD 221, ambalo liliongeza huduma kwa watu walio chini ya miaka 21 na wajawazito, bila kujali hali zao za uhamiaji. "Lakini bado hatujaziba pengo hilo kwa watu wazima wote," alisema. LD 718 ilirejeshwa kwa Kamati ya Afya na Huduma za Kibinadamu, na MEJ itaendelea kuitetea.

"Kwenye kikao hiki tutakuwa tukifuatilia kwa karibu miswada ya uhuru wa kikabila," alisema Meagan Sway, Mkurugenzi wa Sera katika ACLU ya Maine. Miswada hii ni pamoja na LD 1626, LD 554, na LD 585, iliyoafadhiliwa na Seneta Louis Luchini, Mwakilishi Benjamin Collings, na Talbot Ross, kwa mtiririko huo. Makabila ya Maine yamekuwa yakipigania kushughulikia matatizo ya Sheria ya Utekelezaji wa Madai ya Wahindi wa Maine ya 1980, ambayo inatangaza kwamba Bunge la Congress limeidhinisha na kuridhia uhamishaji wowote wa ardhi au maliasili nyingine inayopatikana popote ndani ya Marekani kutoka kwa, au kwa niaba. wa Kabila la Passamaquoddy, Taifa la Penobscot, Bendi ya Houlton na Wahindi wa Maliseet, au washiriki wao wowote.

"Makabila ya Maine yana haki chache kuliko makabila mengine mengi nchini kote kwa sababu ya suluhu hili la mahakama moja kutoka miaka ya 1980," Sway alielezea. "Hili ni suala mahususi kwa jumuiya za rangi kwa sababu inashughulikia njia ambazo walowezi wa kizungu wameyakosesha makabila, na miswada hii inajaribu kutatua matatizo hayo."

Kwa ujumla, wafanyakazi wa kilimo hawajumuishwi katika sheria za jadi za ulinzi wa kazi, hata hivyo miswada kadhaa inayohusu wafanyakazi wa kilimo, hasa LD 151, iliyoafadhiliwa na Mwakilishi Thom Harnett, inaweza kuruhusu wafanyakazi wa mashambani kuungana. Huko Maine, wafanyakazi wengi wa shamba ni wahamiaji na watu wa rangi.

"Mswada huu ungeshughulikia madhara ya kihistoria ambayo yamewazuia watu weusi na kahawia kutokana na manufaa ya chama cha wafanyakazi," alisema Sway. "Katika kikao kijacho, tunatafuta kura ya turufu kutoka kwa gavana au, ikiwa hakuna kura ya turufu, jaribio la kuibatilisha."

Kwenye kikao kilichopita, LD 764 ilisababisha kuundwa kwa Kamati ya Kupitia Rekodi za Jinai ambayo itakuwa ikipendekeza sheria kwa kamati ya mahakama kuhusu kutia muhuri rekodi za uhalifu. "Huko Maine, mara tu unapopatikana na hatia kwa uhalifu, ni vigumu sana kuepuka rekodi hiyo ya uhalifu, ambayo inaweza kuwa na matokeo mabaya kwa makazi, ajira, misaada ya wanafunzi - mambo yote tunayotegemea ili kuwa na maisha dhabiti," Sway alisema. "Hiyo ina athari kubwa kwa watu wa rangi kwa sababu wanalengwa kwa njia isiyo sawa na kuadhibiwa na mfumo wa sheria wa uhalifu."

Maxaa dhacaya Augusta kalfadhigan sharci-dejinta?

— Waxaa qoray Ulya Aligulova
Wariye sharci-dejineed Amjambo

Kalfadhiga Labaad ee Caadiga ah ee 130-aad ee Sharci-dejinta Maine waxa uu socon doonaa Janaayo 5 ilaa Abriil 20, 2022, iyo sharciyo badan oo muhiimad weyn u leh bulshooyinka midabka leh ayaa inta lagu guda jiro waqtigan ay tixgelinayaan sharci-dejiyayaal. Habka dimoqraadigu wuxuu u ogoalaanayaa xubnaha ka tirsan inay taageeraan biilasha ay daneeyaan oo ay saameeyaan biilasha ku dhamaanaya, miiska Guddoomiyaha. Inta badan, biilashan leh taageerada dadweynaha ee ugu weyn waa kuwa ku dambeeyay meel-marin, inkastoo Guddoomiyuhu xaq u leeyahay inuu diido sharci.

Ururada sida ACLU ee Maine, Maine Equal Justice, iyo Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition waxay hogaamin doonaan shaqo u doodid joogto ah si ay u taageerada biilasha kala duwan oo ay dadka ka caawiyaan inay wadaagaan awooda codkooda. Ingiriis faseeha shardi ma aha in laga qayb galo, caawimo luuqada badanna waa la heli karaa. Amjambo Africa waxay bixin doontaa warar cusub oo ku saabsan biilasha ay u socdaan habka sharci dejinta, iyo sidoo kale macluumaadka ku saabsan sida looga qayb qaado karo.

Inta uu socdo kalfadhiga, guddiyada sharci-dejinta ayaa qaban doona dhageysi dadweyne oo xubnaha bulshadu ay ka dhiiban karaan ra'yigooda sharciga la soo jeediyay. Sidoo kale, shakhsiyadku waxay la xidhiidhi karaan wakiilada, sene-tarada maxalliga ah, iyo sharci-dejiyayaasha guddiga dib u eegista sharci gaar ah si ay ula wadaagaan sheeko shakhsiyeed, iyo/ama ku biiraan maalmaha ololaynta ee loo habeeyey si ay u xoojiyaan taageerada sharci gaar ah. Intaa waxaa dheer, dadku waxay u qori karaan waraqa tifaftiraha daabacadaha sida Amjambo Africa.

Mudnaanta biilasha kalfadhigan.

Hal sharci oo muhiimad weyn u leh bulshooyinka midabka leh waa LD 1610, sharciga wehelka ee kalfadhigii u dambeeyay LD 2 "Xeerka u baahan in lagu daro Bayanada Saamaynta Jinsiga ee Geedi Socodka Sharci-dejinta" kaas oo la ansixiyay sharci-dejinta u dambaysay, fadhi Xildhibaan Talbot Ross waa kafaala-qaadaha labada biilasha.

LD 2 waxay u baahan tahay in xogta guddiga sharci-dejinta, falanqaynta, iyo macluumaadka kale ee lagama maarmaanka u ah si ay u diyaariyaan bayaanka saamaynta jinsiyadeed - ama qiimaynta saamaynta suurtagalka ah ee sharci kasta oo cusub uu ku yeelan karo dadka jinsiyadaha ah ee tabaalaysan taariikh ahaan - in la bixiyo marka ay codsadaan guddiga Sharci-dejinta. LD1610 waxa ay taageertaa LD 2, marinkuna waxa uu wanaajin doonaa awooda Maine ee ururinta, dhexe, iyo isticmaalka xogta si loo horumariyo sinnaanta samaynta siyaasada gobolka.

"Inkasta oo aan ognahay iyada oo ku saleysan xogta dhabta ah iyo xogta laga helay aasaaska iyo ururada bulshada in dadka midabka leh ay la kulmaan waxyeelo aan toos ahayn oo ka imanaysa siyaasado ama nidaamyo kala duwan, weli ma soo bandhigi karno xog ku filan oo caddayn ah tan," ayay tiri



Flavia, Susan, and Trudy with Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross process

Kathy Kilrain del Rio, Agaasimaha Barnaamijyada Qareenada ee Maine Equal Justice.

"Tani waa qayb ka mid ah dadaal ballaaran oo Guddiga Joogtada ah [ee Xaaladda Isir, Asal ahaan iyo Maine Qabiilada, oo la aasaasay 2019] ay diiradda saareen si loo hubiyo inaan awood u yeelanno inaan aruurino xogta saxda ah iyo falanqaynteeda. qiyaasi sida aan u farsamayn karno siyaasada ku salaysan xogtaas ka caawinaysa yaraynta farqiga jinsiyadeed,"

Kilrain del Rio ayaa yidhi. Guddiga Joogtada ah waa hay'ad madax-bannaan oo baarta farqiga jinsiyadeed ee dhammaan nidaamyada oo ka shaqeeya horumarinta heerka iyo natiijoyinka qowmiyadaha, asalka iyo qabiilka ee Maine taariikhiyan liidata.

"Sharci kale oo isha lagu hayo waa LD1679, oo uu kafaalo qaaday Sen."

"Waxaa jiray dadaal sannadkii hore si loo hubiyo in qof walba oo dugsiyada ku jira ay heli karaan cunto bilaash ah, taas oo ah hab weyn oo lagu caawinayo dhimista gaajada ka jirta gobolkeena," Kilrain del Rio ayaa yidhi.

"Sidaa darteed caruur badan oo gobolka oo dhan ah waxay ku tiirsan yihiin cunto dugsiyadeedka bilaashka ah. Taasi waxay si gaar ah runto ugu tahay carruurta soo-galootiga ah maadaama ay jiraan xannibaado ku jira SNAP iyo barnaamijyada kale ee gargaarka cuntada ee ka saaraya dadka aan muwaadiniinta ahayn. Sanadkii hore waxa lagu daray miisaaniyada kabka. Waxaan isku dayeynaa inaan ku riixno maalgelin dheeraad ah sanadkan sidoo"

"Hal biil oo aan si gaar ah kor ugu qaadi lahaa waa LD 718," Kilrain del Rio ayaa sii waday. Waxaa kafaala qaaday xildhibaan Talbot Ross, LD 718 waxay xiri doontaa farqiga u dhexeeya barnaamijka MaineCare taas oo ay ugu wacan tahay xannibaadda federaalku waxay dadka qaar ka saaraysaa inay galaan MaineCare xaaladdooda socdaalka awgeed..."

"Kani wuxuu ahaa sharci aan ka shaqeynay sannadkii hore sidoo kale. Waxaan rabnaa inaan xirno farqigaas si dhammaan Mainers, iyadoon loo eegin xaaladdooda socdaalka, ay u helaan MaineCare haddii ay dakhligoodu yar yahay. Waxaan ognahay inay muhiim u tahay caafimaadka shakhsiyadeed oo keliya laakiin sidoo kale caafimaadka wadajirka ah. Haddii ay jiraan wax masiibadani ina bartay, waa in caafimaadkayaga guud uu midba midka kale ku tiirsan yahay.

Waxa aanu yeelanay dhegaysi dadweyne oo xooggan oo ay ka markaati fureen in ka badan 90 qof oo taageersan sharcigan kalfadhigii hore. Guddoomiyaha ayaa ku daray qayb ka mid ah LD718 soo jeedinteeda miisaaniyada dheeriga ah, LD221, taas oo fidsay caymiska dadka ka yar 21 jir iyo dadka uurka leh iyada oo aan loo eegin xaaladdooda socdaalka. Laakiin wali maanu xidhin farqigaas dhammaan dadka waaweyn. LD718 waxaa dib loogu celiyay Guddiga Caafimaadka iyo Adeegyada Aadanaha, laakiin waan sii wadi doonaa inaan u doodno."

"Kulankan waxaan si gaar ah u daawan doonaa biilasha madax-bannaanida qabiilka," ayuu yiri Meagan Sway, Agaasimaha Siyaasadda ee ACLU ee Maine. Biilashan waxaa ka mid ah LD1626, LD554, iyo LD585, oo uu kafaalo qaaday Sen. Luchini, Rep. Collings, iyo Rep. Talbot Ross, siday u kala horreeyaan. Qabiilada Maine waxay u dagaalamayeen sidii ay wax uga qaban lahaayeen dhibaatooyinka Xeerka Dhaqangelinta Degista Sheegashooyinka Maine Hindida ee 1980, kaas oo ku dhawaaqaya in Koongarasku ansixiyo oo ansixiyo wareejinta dhulka ama kheyraadka kale ee dabiiciga ah ee ku yaal meel kasta oo gudaha Mareykanka ah kana timid, ama wakiil ka ah. Qabiilka Passamaquoddy, Qaranka Penobscot, Kooxda Houlton ee Hindida Maliseet, ama mid ka mid ah xubnaha.

"Qabiilka Maine waxay leeyihiin xuquuq ka yar inta badan qabaa'ilka kale ee dalka oo dhan sababtoo ah hal heshiis oo maxkamadeed oo laga soo bilaabo 80-meeyadii," Sway ayaa sharaxay. "Tani waa arrin gaar ah oo loogu talagalay bulshooyinka midabka leh sababtoo ah waxay wax ka qabanaysaa siyaabaha ay dawladda caddaanka ah u dejisay qabiilooyinka, iyo biilashani waxay isku dayayaan inay hagaajiyaan dhibaatooyinkaas."

Shaqaalaha beeralayda guud ahaan waa laga saaray sharciyada ilaalinta shaqada ee soo jireenka ah, si kastaba ha ahaatee dhawr biilal oo khuseeya shaqaalaha beeraha, gaar ahaan LD151, oo uu kafaalo qaaday Rep. Harnett, ayaa u ogoalaanaya shaqaalaha beeralayda inay midoobaan. Maine, shaqaale badan oo beeraley ah ayaa ah muhaajiriin iyo dad midab leh.

Kalfadhigii u dambeeyay, LD764 waxa ay natiijadeedu noqotay in la abuurto guddi dib-u-eegis ku sameeya diiwaannada dembiyada kaas oo u soo jeedin doona sharciga guddiga garsoorka ee ku saabsan xidhitaanka diiwaannada dembiyada. "Mayne, mar haddii lagugu xukumo dembi, aad bay u adag tahay in laga fogaado diiwaankaas dembiyada, kaas oo keeni kara cawaaqib xun oo xagga guriiyeynta, shaqada, kaalmada ardayda - dhammaan waxyaabaha aan ku tiirsanahay si aan u helno nolol xasiloon," Sway sharaxay. "Taasi waxay saameyn weyn ku leedahay dadka midabka leh

sababtoo ah aad ayay u badan yihiin si aan loo qiyaasi karin loo beegsaday laguna ciqaabay nidaamka sharciga dembi-ilaha."

— KINYARWANDA —

Mugihe cy'inteko rusange y'abagize inteko ishingamaategeko ya Maine, Amjambo Africa izajya ibagezaho buri kwezi iby'ingenzi mu mategeko bireba abirabura

Amakuru mashya aturuka Augusta

Yanditswe na Ulya Aligulova
Umunyamakuru wa Amjambo ku birebana n'inteko

Ikicro cya kabiri cy'inteko rusange y'130 bagize inteko ishingamaategeko ya Maine kizatangira kuva tariki 5 Mutarama kugeze tariki 20 Mata, 2022, ndetse imishinga y'amageko myinshi ifitiye akamaro gakomeye imiryango y'abirabura izaba iri kuganirwaho n'abagize inteko muri icyo gihe. Urugendo rwa demokarasi rwemerera abaturage gushyigikira imishinga y'amategeko bafite ku mutima, bikabasha gutuma imwe mu mishinga igera ku meza ya Guverineri. Akenshi, iyo mishinga y'amategeko iba yarashyigikiwe cyane n'abaturage usanga ariyo itambuka, n'ubwo bwose Guverineri aba afite uburenganzira bwa guhitamo umushinga ashaka.

Imiryango nka ACLU ya Maine, Umuryango uharanira ubutabera kuri bose muri Maine, ndetse n'ihuriro mu by'amategeko ry'Abimukira bazayobora ubuvugizi bugamije gushyigikira imwe mu mishinga, bityo bafashe abantu guhuriza hamwe bityo amajwi yabo arushohe kugira imbaraga. Kuvuga icyongereza neza ntabwo ari ngombwa ngo ubashe kugira uruhare, ndetse n'ubufasha ku bavuga indimi nyinshi nabwo akenshi burabonaka. Amjambo Africa izajya ibagezaho amakuru mashya ku birebana n'imishinga y'amategeko igiye kugezwa mu nteko, ndetse n'amakuru ku buryo wabigiramo uruhare.

Mufalo Chitam, Umuyobozi mukuru wa MIRC yagize ati "Uruhare rwawe ni ingenzi cyane. Ni uburyo bwo guca intege imikorere itsikamira uburenganzira bw'abimukira, ari nako duha ingufu politiki ziteza imbere ukwisanga mu murungo. Urugero, mu 2020 umuryango MIRC watanze ubuhumya ushyigikira umushinga LD843, washyigikiraga ibijyanye no kubona amacumbi mu buryo burambye, none kuko uyu mushinga watambutse, hazabaho inkunga ya leta mu 2022 igenerwe abakora iby'amacumbi, inkunga igamije gutera inkunga imiryango yasigaye inyuma"

Mu nteko rusange, za komite z'abagize inteko bazajya batege amatwi abaturage maze batange ibitekerezo byabo ku mishinga y'amategeko iba yateganyijwe. Ikindi, abantu ki giti cyabo bashobora kugera ku babahagarariye, aba senateri n'abadepite bakabagezaho uko babona ibijyanye na za komite z'abadepite ziri gukurikirana umushinga w'itegeko bagatanga igitekerezo cyabo, cyangwa se bakitabira ubukangurambaga buba bwatetegeye n'abafashe iyambere mu gushyigikira itegeko runaka. Ikindi kandi, abantu bashobora kwandika amabaruwa, bakayohereza ibinyamakuru nka Amjambo Africa.

Imishinga y'amategeko izibandwara muri iyi nteko rusange

Umushinga w'itegeko ufitiye akamaro kanini umuryango w'abirabura ni LD1610, umushinga ushyigikira uwaganiriwe mu ntego iheruka LD2 "Iteka ryo gusaba ko ubwoko bwagira ijamba mu gikorwa cyo gutora amategeko" ryatowe mu nteko iheruka. Depite Talbot Ross niwe wari ufite iyi mishinga yombi.

LD2 urasaba ko komite y'abadepite babona imibare, bagakora ubusesenguzi ndetse n'andi makuru y'ingenzi yafasha mu gutegura inyandiko ishyigikira uyu mushinga, cyangwa se igisa n'ubushakashatsi bw'ibyo uyu mushinga ushobora kuza-kemura wabura ukaba watuma ingaruka zigera ku baturage b'amaboko magufi b'abirabura, ibi bikaba byatangwa bisabwe na komite y'abadepite. LD1610 ishyigira LD 2, gutambuka kwayo kukaba kwakongerera Maine ubushobozi bwo gukusanya, no kwegeranya amakuru n'imibare byafasha uburyo politiki zishyirwa mu bikorwa muri Maine.

Kathy Kilrain del Rio, umuvugi akaba n'umuyobozi muri Maine Equal Justice agira ati "n'ubwo bwose tuzi dushingiye ku mibare itanononsowe cyane ndetse n'imibare ituruka mu baturage bo hasi mu miryango y'abirabura, amakuru aravuga ko abirabura bahutazwa cyane kurugero ntagereranywa na za potiki zitandukanye ndetse na sisiteme, gusa kuri ubu ntabwo dufitte imibare ihagije ndetse n'ibimenyetso."

Kilrain del Rio akomeza agira ati "iki ni igice kimwe jcy'imbaraga nyinshi zakoreshejwe na komisiyo ihoraho ku mibereho y'abirabura, abasigajwe inyuma ndetse n'abandi bo mu yandi moko y'abagize umubare muke muri Maine, yashyizweho mu 2019] ukaba waribanze ku gutuma tubasha kubona amakuru ya nyayo ndetse no kuyasesengura bigatuma tubona uburyo twategura politiki hagendewe kuri ayo makuru afasha

mu kugabanya ubusumbane mu moko atandukanye". Iyi Komisiyo Ihoraho ni urwego rwigenga rugenzura ubusumbane mu moko muri sisiteme zitandukanye no mu kazi kugirango hatezwe imbere imibereho y'abantu amateka agaragaza ko basigaye inyuma, barimo amoko, imiryango y'abasangwabutaka n'abandi nk'abo batuye muri Maine.

Undi mushinga w'itegeko dukwiye guhanga ijisho ni LD1679, watewe inkunga na Senateri Jackson, ugamiye kwiga ku kibazo cy'inzara mu banyeshuri hagurwa gahunda yo gutanga amafunguro y'ubuntu ku mashuri.

Kilrain del Rio agira ati "hari imbaraga umwaka ushize zakoreshejwe kugirango buri wese ku ishuri abashe guhabwa ifunguro ku buntu, ubu bukaba ari uburyo bwiza bwo gufasha mu kugabanya inzara muri iyi leta".

"Abana benshi muri leta baba bategereje ifunguro ku biryo by'ubuntu bitangwa ku ishuri. Ibi bikarushaho kugaragaza cyane ku bana b'abimukira bitewe n'uko hari inzitizi muri SNAP ndetse no mu bundi bufasha mu kubona ibyo kurya bikumira abatari abenegihugu. Umwaka ushize, ibi byongewe mu ngengo y'imari y'inyongera. Turi kugerageza ngo haboneke inkunga yindi izafasha nka gutya muri uyu mwaka".

Kilrain del Rio akomeza agira ati "Undi mushinga navuga ku bw'umwihariko ni LD718", ni umushinga watewe inkunga na depite Talbot Ross. LD 718 uzaba nk'ikiraro cy'umuhora uri muri porogaramu ya MaineCare, utuma bitewe n'inzitizi zirimo ikumira abantu bamwe na bamwe ntibabone MaineCare



bitewe na sitati zabo z'ubwimukira.

"uyu ni umushinga wakozweho umwaka ushize nawo. Turashaka gufanga icyo cyuhokurirango abaturya Maine bose, hatitawe ku buryo batuye muri Maine babasha kubona ubwishingizi bwa MaineCare, igihe cyose bahembwa make. Tuzi neza koi bi Atari ingenzi ku buzima bw'abantu ku giti cyabo ahubwo ko ari ngombwa ku buzima rusange. Niba hari ikintu iki cyorezo cyatwigishije, ni uko ubuzima buzira umuze bwacu twese bugerwaho twese dufite ubuzima buzira umuze. Twagize igikorwa kinini cyo gutega amatwi aho twabonye abarenga 90 batanga ubuhamya bushyigikira uyu mushinga mu nteko rusange iheruka. Guverinoma yashyize igice cya LD718 mu mushinga w'ingengo y'imari y'inyongera, LD221, wongereye igihe cyo kwishingirwa abantu bari muni y'imyaka 21 ndetse n'abantu batwite hatitawe kuri sitati zabo z'ubwimukira. Gusa ntabwo turaziba icyo cyuhokurirango ku bantu bose bakuru. LD718 yashyirahwe muri komite ishinzwe ubuzima n'imibereho y'abaturage, gusa izakomeza kuyikorera ubuvugizi".

Meagan Sway, diregiteri ushinze politiki muri ACLU ya Maine yagize ati "Muri iyi nteko tuzaba dukurikiranira hafi by'umwihariko umushinga w'ubusugire bw'amoko". Iyi mishinga irimo LD1626, LD554, NA LD585, iterwa inkunga na senateri Luchini, Depite Collings na depite Talbot Ross. Amoko atandukanye muri Maine yakomeje guhatana kugirango akemure ibibazo biri mu iteka ryo ry'Indian Claims Settlement Implementation ryo mu 1980, ryatangajwe ko Kongere yemeje kandi itora ihererekanya ryose ry'ubutaka cyangwa ikindi gikorwa cy'umwimerere gihereye ahantu hose muri leta Zunze Ubumwe za Amerika gikozwe mu izina ry'ubwoko bw'abapasamakodi, Penobscot, Houlton band cyangwa umwe mu bantu babo.

Sway asobanura agira ati "Amoko muri Maine afite uburenzira buke ugereranyije n'andi moko mu gihugu cyose bitewe n'iri teka ryo kuva muri za 80". Akomeza agira ati "Iki ni ikibazo cyihariye ku baturage babirabura bitewe n'uko ikora ku buryo abaturage babazungu batsikamiye ayo moko yandi, iyi mishinga y'amategeko ikaba iri kugerageza gukemura ibyo bibazo".

Abakora mu buhinzi akenshi usanga bahezwa mu itegeko rigenga umurimo ririhokuriraho, cyakora imishinga y'amategeko myinshi ikora ku murimo w'ubuhinzi, cyane cyane umushinga LD151, uterwa inkunga na depite Harnett, uzemerera abakora mu buhinzi kwibumbira hamwe. Muri Maine, benshi mu bakora mu buhinzi ni abimukira ndetse n'abirabura.

Sway agira ati "Uyu mushinga uzakemura ikibazo cyo gutsikamirwa namateka, ibintu byatumye abirabura benshi batagerwaho n'ubufasha bugenerwa abakozzi". Akomeza agira ati "mu nteko itaha dutegereje ko wenda hazabaho ko Guverineri yakoresha ububasha bwe, bitaba ibyo abantu bakager-

ageza kurirenga".

Mu nteko iheruka, LD764 yatumye hashingwa komite ishinzwe kugenzura ibimenyetso by'ibyaha, ukazatuma abadepite basaba komite yiga ku mategeko gushyigikira ibijyanye n'ibimenyetso by'ibyaha. Sway agira ati "Muri Maine, igihe wahamwe n'icyaha, biragora cyane ngo icyo cyasha kikuveho, bikagara ingaruka mu kubona inzu, akazi, inkunga mu kwiga n'ibindi byose dukenera ngo tugire ubuzima butekanye". Akomeza agira ati "Ibyo bigira ingaruka nini ku birabura bitewe n'uko bibasirwa cyane ku rugero rwo hejuru mu gutabwa muri yombi no guhanwa na sisiteme ihana ibyaha muri iyi leta".

— SPANISH —

Actualización desde Augusta

Por Ulya Aligulova
Reportera legislativa de Amjambo

La Segunda Sesión Regular de la 130ª Legislatura de Maine se llevará a cabo desde el 5 de enero hasta el 20 de abril de 2022, y muchos proyectos de ley de gran importancia para las comunidades de color serán considerados por los legisladores durante ese tiempo. El proceso democrático permite que los electores apoyen los proyectos de ley que les interesan e influyan en los proyectos de ley que terminan en el escritorio del gobernador. A menudo, los proyectos de ley con mayor apoyo público expresado son los que terminan siendo aprobados, aunque el gobernador tiene derecho a vetar un proyecto de ley.

Organizaciones como la ACLU de Maine, Maine Equal Justice y la Coalición por los Derechos de los Inmigrantes de Maine liderarán el trabajo de promoción regular para apoyar diferentes proyectos de ley y ayudar a las personas a compartir el poder de sus voces. El inglés fluido no es un requisito para participar y, por lo general, se dispone de ayuda multilingüe. Amjambo África proporcionará actualizaciones sobre los proyectos de ley que se están moviendo a través del proceso legislativo, así como información sobre cómo participar.

"La participación es importante y es una forma de desafiar los sistemas que no promueven los derechos de los inmigrantes y de apoyar a las políticas que fomentan la integración en la sociedad. Por ejemplo, en 2020 MIRC testificó en apoyo de LD 843, un proyecto de ley que apoyaba la estabilidad de la vivienda, y porque este proyecto de ley fue aprobado, habrá financiamiento estatal en 2022 para que los navegantes de vivienda apoyen a nuestras comunidades marginadas", dijo Mufalo Chitam, director ejecutivo de MIRC.

A lo largo de la sesión, los comités de la legislatura celebrarán audiencias públicas donde los miembros de la comunidad pueden expresar sus opiniones sobre la legislación propuesta. Además, las personas pueden comunicarse con representantes, senadores locales y legisladores del comité que revisa un proyecto de ley en particular para compartir una historia personal y/o unirse a los días de cabildeo organizados para impulsar el apoyo en torno a una legislación particular. Además, las personas pueden escribir cartas al editor de publicaciones como Amjambo África.

Proyectos de ley prioritarios en esta sesión

Un proyecto de ley de gran importancia para las comunidades de color es el LD 1610, un proyecto de ley que acompaña al LD 2 de la última sesión "Una ley para exigir la inclusión de declaraciones de impacto racial en el proceso legislativo" que se aprobó en la última sesión legislativa. El representante Talbot Ross es el patrocinador de ambos proyectos de ley.

El LD 2 requiere que los datos del comité legislativo, el análisis y otra información necesaria para preparar una declaración de impacto racial, o una evaluación del impacto potencial que cualquier nueva legislación podría tener en las poblaciones raciales históricamente desfavorecidas, se proporcione a pedido de un comité de la Legislatura. LD 1610 es compatible con LD 2, y la aprobación mejorará la capacidad de Maine para recopilar, centralizar y utilizar datos para mejorar la equidad en la formulación de políticas estatales.

"A pesar de que sabemos, en base a datos anecdóticos y datos de organizaciones de base y comunitarias, que las personas de color están experimentando un daño desproporcionado debido a diferentes políticas o sistemas, todavía no podemos presentar suficientes datos como evidencia de esto", dijo Kathy Kilrain del Rio. Directora de Programas y Promoción de Equal Justice de Maine.

"Esto es parte de un esfuerzo mayor en el que se ha centrado la Comisión Permanente [sobre el estado de las poblaciones raciales, indígenas y tribales de Maine, establecida en 2019] para asegurarse de que tenemos la capacidad de recopilar los datos correctos y analizarlos y averiguar cómo

podemos elaborar políticas basadas en esos datos que ayuden a reducir la disparidad racial", dijo Kilrain del Rio. La Comisión Permanente es una entidad independiente que examina las disparidades raciales en todos los sistemas y trabaja para mejorar el estado y los resultados de las poblaciones raciales, indígenas y tribales históricamente desfavorecidas en Maine.

Otro proyecto de ley a tener en cuenta es el LD 1679, patrocinado por el Senador Jackson, que tiene como objetivo abordar el hambre de los estudiantes mediante la ampliación del acceso a las comidas escolares gratuitas.

"El año pasado se hizo un esfuerzo para asegurarnos de que todos en las escuelas pudieran tener acceso a comidas gratuitas, que es una gran manera de ayudar a reducir el hambre en nuestro estado", dijo Kilrain del Rio.

"Muchos niños en todo el estado dependen de las comidas escolares gratuitas como alimento. Eso es especialmente cierto para los niños inmigrantes, ya que existen restricciones en SNAP y otros programas de asistencia alimentaria que excluyen a los que no son ciudadanos. El año pasado esto se incluyó en el presupuesto suplementario. También estamos tratando de presionar para obtener más fondos para eso este año".

"Un proyecto de ley que me gustaría levantar en particular es el LD 718", continuó Kilrain del Rio. Patrocinado por el Representante Talbot Ross, LD 718 cerraría la brecha en el programa MaineCare que debido a restricciones federales excluye a ciertas personas del acceso a MaineCare debido a su estatus migratorio.

"Este fue un proyecto de ley en el que también trabajamos el año pasado. Queremos cerrar esa brecha para que todos los habitantes de Maine, independientemente de su estado migratorio, tengan acceso a MaineCare si tienen bajos ingresos.

Sabemos que es importante no solo para la propia salud de las personas, sino también para nuestra salud colectiva. Si algo nos ha enseñado esta pandemia es que nuestra salud colectiva depende unos de otros. Tuvimos una audiencia pública sólida en la que más de 90 personas testificaron en apoyo de este proyecto de ley en la última sesión. La gobernadora incluyó parte de LD 718 en su propuesta de presupuesto suplementario, LD 221, que extendió la cobertura para personas menores de 21 años y personas embarazadas independientemente de su estado migratorio. Pero todavía no hemos cerrado esa brecha para todos los adultos. LD 718 fue remitido nuevamente al Comité de Salud y Servicios Humanos, pero seguiremos defendiéndolo".

"En esta sesión estaremos observando de cerca particularmente los proyectos de ley de soberanía tribal", dijo Meagan Sway, directora de políticas de la ACLU de Maine. Estos proyectos de ley incluyen LD 1626, LD 554 y LD 585, patrocinados por el Senador Luchini, el Representante Collings y el Representante Talbot Ross, respectivamente. Las tribus en Maine han estado luchando para abordar los problemas con la Ley de Implementación del Acuerdo de Reclamaciones Indígenas de Maine de 1980, que declara que el Congreso aprueba y ratifica cualquier transferencia de tierra u otro recurso natural ubicado en cualquier lugar dentro de los Estados Unidos desde, por o en nombre de la Tribu Passamaquoddy, la Nación Penobscot, la Banda Houlton de Indios Maliseet, o cualquiera de sus miembros.

"Las tribus de Maine tienen menos derechos que la mayoría de las otras tribus del país debido a este acuerdo judicial de los años 80", explicó Sway. "Este es un problema particular para las comunidades de color porque aborda las formas en que el estado de colonos blancos ha perjudicado a las tribus, y estos proyectos de ley están tratando de solucionar esos problemas".

Los trabajadores agrícolas generalmente están excluidos de las leyes tradicionales de protección laboral; sin embargo, varios proyectos de ley relacionados con los trabajadores agrícolas, en particular el LD 151, patrocinado por el representante Harnett, permitirían que los trabajadores agrícolas se sindicalizaran. En Maine, muchos trabajadores agrícolas son inmigrantes y personas de color.

"Este proyecto de ley abordaría los daños históricos que han mantenido a cualquier pueblo negro y moreno alejado de los beneficios del movimiento laboral", dijo Sway. "En la próxima sesión, buscaremos un veto del gobernador o, si no hay un veto, un intento de anularlo".

La última sesión, LD 764 resultó en la creación de un Comité de Revisión de Antecedentes Penales que recomendará legislación al comité judicial sobre el sellado de antecedentes penales. "En Maine, una vez que te declaran culpable de un delito, es muy difícil escapar de esos antecedentes penales, que pueden tener consecuencias devastadoras para la vivienda, el empleo, la ayuda estudiantil, todas las cosas en las que confiamos para tener una vida estable", explicó Sway. "Eso tiene un gran impacto en las personas de color porque el sistema legal penal las ataca y castiga de manera desproporcionada".

Liberation Farms plans 2022 growing season

By Bonnie Rukin

Liberation Farms in Wales is entering 2022 with new opportunities for the Somali Bantu Community of Maine, thanks to the support of many local Maine individuals and organizations, and Agrarian Trust, a national project of the Schumacher Center for New Economics that supports land access for next generation farmers.

An expanded goat herd is enjoying hay produced on the farm and harvested by neighbor Andy Smith of The Milkhouse Farm and Dairy in Monmouth. The herd increased by 10 goats that were donated by a farmer on Vinalhaven in summer 2021. Building projects are in varied stages of progress, including four completed high tunnels for growing seedlings, drying corn, and sheltering goats; an on-farm halal butchering station for chicken and goats; and a wash/pack shed for vegetables. A pavilion will likely be constructed by spring 2022, with donated carpentry services, that will be used for community celebrations, meetings, youth programming, and everyday gatherings.

While these projects are in process, the farmers and staff are already planning for the 2022 growing season. Mapping out garden plots for 250 Somali Bantu families and larger acreage for commercial use will be a focus during the winter. Farm friends and consultants Ben Rooney and Mark Fulford will assist the farm in exploring options for growing rice. In fact, tiskaashito he cooperative plots, already designated as home to next season's garlic, are safely planted and mulched!



New Year, New Job...GEAR Can Help!

Growing Employment Access for Refugees (GEAR) is a program designed for refugee community members who receive TANF benefits and need extra support in finding the right path to employment.

If you are interested in learning more or would like to make a referral, please email GEAR Program Manager Marina at mchakmakchi@ccmaine.org.



Superintendent Xavier Botana: On achieving equity in education

By Ally Cooper

Xavier Botana, Superintendent of the Portland Public Schools, joined educators and superintendents from around the country for Roundtable for Reform: A Conversation Among Superintendents, a virtual roundtable hosted by Mid-Atlantic Equity Consortium Inc. (MAEC). The December 9 roundtable discussed how to transform school practices to revolve around equity. Botana's participation followed racial controversy in Portland Public Schools, when 60 current and former students made social media allegations about racist, misogynist, disrespectful, and/or unprofessional interactions with 39 current and 19 former staff members. The allegations came to light in June 2020, as conversations about racial justice spread throughout the nation after George Floyd's death.



Throughout the controversy, Botana said he encouraged students to speak out and launched an independent investigation by the district's legal counsel that resulted in the resignation of three staff members and verbal warnings to two others. Portland's Board of Education released the following statement: "We as a Board stand in unity with our students in stating that these and similar transgressions must end, and we reaffirm our commitment to building and sustaining a climate of respect, inclusion, and equity for all in our schools." In response to the allegations, Botana and PPS developed an equity policy, reviewed the curriculum for diversity, committed to conducting an annual survey of student perceptions, and implemented equity training and equity audit work.

During the roundtable, Botana continued his advocacy

for equity in education, joining panelists in discussing how to diversify the educator workforce, center student voices, and equitably collaborate with school boards.

The panelists discussed how to promote diversity in the workforce while struggling to recruit and retain teachers. "I'm in Portland, Maine – a very diverse community in the whitest state in the country," Botana said. "One of the things that was striking to me coming into the community as a superintendent candidate was the universal concern that our schools did not reflect our student population. Our [staff and faculty] look like Maine – they don't look like Portland. This is something that we've begun to work on. We've gone from an approximately 97% white employee population to about 93% white, so a significant shift, but obviously a long way from where we want to be."

Dr. Sonja Santelises, chief of Baltimore, Maryland, public schools, discussed research that teachers of color were leaving the profession at higher rates, both in Baltimore and at the national level. She shared examples of Latino teachers being asked to translate documents and interpret at community events, and Black male teachers more frequently being asked to address student disciplinary issues, on top of their already busy workloads and without additional compensation.

In response, Botana shared how Portland schools have addressed similar issues of unpaid work by consulting with Doris Santoro, associate professor and chair of the Bowdoin College Education Department. After talking with Santoro and some of Portland's teachers of color, the PPS Board of Education decided

to build identity-based work into the budget so that educators are equitably compensated for their time; this is similar to educators being compensated for leading after school activities. One outcome of this policy was hiring a Black counselor to facilitate the Black Student Union. Portland schools also created a Pathways Coordinator position. This person, Botana said, consults with "our educators of color in the school system and help[s] us develop policy direction as a result. ... We have really tried to build a relationship with our communities of color and multilingual communities. ... If we do not compensate [our educators fairly] and do not recognize them, everything that we say to them through those actions is that they don't matter."

The Board of Education recently unanimously voted to extend Botana's contract through the 2023-24 school year. Before the vote, he announced that he intends to decline any future renewals past 2024, citing age and family reasons.

To view the recording of the event see MAEC's Facebook page. Visit www.maec.org for more resources, including the free downloadable book, *Time to Act: How School Superintendents Keep Equity at the Center of Their Leadership*."

A cross-racial conversation

By Ally Cooper

On December 10, Shay Stewart-Bouley, Executive Director of Community Change Inc. (CCI), and Debby Irving, the author of *Waking up White*, held a public, unscripted, online conversation entitled "Tell Me the Truth: Exploring the Heart of Cross-Racial Conversations." This was the most recent in a series of occasional dialogues between the two women, designed to help model the possibility of engaging in deep, authentic discussions across racial lines. Stewart-Bouley reminisced that in their first conversation together, she told Irving that she "wrote like a white lady." Irving remembered that she had felt both panicked and grateful for the comment, and that before they talked, it had never occurred to her that a writer could "write within their culture."

The focus of the December 10 event was fundraising. In Irving's experience, she said, white people are more likely to give generously to an individual – such as someone who needs to pay for a surgery – than to an organization. When she was a child, talking about money among the adults in her community was considered rude and taboo, she said. She still feels that money is considered a "third rail" in anti-racist spaces, and is nervous to invite people to events that may involve asking them for money.

Stewart-Bouley pointed out that white people are even less likely to listen to a Black person or another person of color who asks for money, so white people can and should use their influence to be allies to people of color. She recognized that not all white people are rich, but nonetheless, from her perspective white people seem to hang onto their money. The funds often have come from inheritances or as profit from the labor of other people, and therefore, in Stewart-Bouley's opinion, should not really be considered all theirs. She asked white people to think carefully about what they decide to do – and not do – with their money, a timely reminder, in this season so often called "the season of giving."



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Medieval African History



What if my 27 intro-level college students wrote articles for Amjambo Africa?

When I first pitched the idea of my students writing for *Amjambo Africa*, I didn't know what reaction to expect from the University of Southern Maine History Department, the Service Learning Coordinator, the *Amjambo Africa* editor, and the students themselves. I just knew that there were big stories about African history that deserved to be broadcast beyond the (Zoom) walls of my classroom, and I knew that I wanted to partner with local institutions to share those stories with the community. I wanted my medieval African history course to demonstrate that medieval African history isn't just about the far away and long ago, but also applies to life in the here and now. So when the editor of *Amjambo Africa* told me that they were interested in articles about African history, it felt like a match, and the university and my students gave me the go-ahead.

I've had the privilege of working with this extraordinary group of students all semester, and I can't wait for you to read what they've written. Since Day One, they proved themselves to be passionate, creative, hardworking, adaptable, and good humored. My 27 students worked in four teams, over Google Docs, Zoom, email, text, and Discord, all semester on these articles. I gave them autonomy and choice. In their groups, they came up with their own article topics and sources and divided up responsibilities amongst themselves, signing contracts agreeing on who would be responsible for the tasks of researching, writing, editing, fact-checking, and selecting images. In their groups, they submitted outlines, rough drafts, and eventually polished finished projects.

These articles speak to lesser-known chapters of African history, when powerful queens and kings of empires dominated international trade. My students are excited and proud to share with you the stories they've learned about medieval African history, in all its depth and richness.

As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie encourages in her TED Talk, *The Danger of A Single Story*, it's vital to see people, their stories, and their histories in all their complexity; that's what it means to be fully human and fully seen as such.



Dr. Lacey Sparks is an Assistant Professor of Modern European History at USM. She specializes in the history of Britain and the Empire, with a focus on Africa.

Legacy of a female pharaoh

Cleopatra is usually the first name that comes to mind when people think of the female pharaohs of ancient Egypt. Yet 70 years before Cleopatra's ascension to power, other women ruled as pharaohs in Egypt, challenging gender norms, including those preventing women from assuming leadership positions.

One of the first women pharaohs was Hatshepsut, who led Egypt from 1478 to 1458 BCE during the Eighteenth Dynasty and had the longest reign of any female pharaoh. As the daughter of Thutmose I, she was fourth in line to become pharaoh. Two of her brothers died before her father's death, so when her father died, she married her half-brother Thutmose II. Prior to Hatshepsut, few women held power, so she did not expect to rule. But because the royal bloodline went through the woman's side instead of the man's, the marriage served to solidify Thutmose II's right to rule. Eight years after he married Hatshepsut, Thutmose II died, leaving Thutmose III, his son by a second wife. Hatshepsut ruled until Thutmose III came of age, and then she co-ruled alongside him, eventually ruling Egypt on her own again. She died in 1458 BCE and was buried in the Valley of the Kings, a burial center for rulers, on the Nile River near Thebes. The cause of her death is unknown. After her death, Thutmose III defaced her monuments and erased almost every record of her rule.

In ancient Egypt, women could own property, buy and sell goods, go to court, and divorce and remarry. But one thing they could not do was serve as pharaoh, a political and militaristic position. And although Hatshepsut was great at negotiations, she was not a warrior and couldn't lead battles, unlike the previous two rulers of Egypt, who were warrior kings.

Both her father and husband had expanded Egypt's power and wealth in the New Kingdom era by conquering nearby Nubia and gaining access to resources such as gold and lumber. This gave Hatshepsut control of one of the most powerful civilizations in the ancient world. Suzanne Ratié, a scholar of ancient Egypt, believes that

Hatshepsut dressed up as a man to fit her role as pharaoh. She was already a known member of the royal family, so her male attire was more of an act and not an attempt to fool the public.

Since Hatshepsut was not a warrior, she used less aggressive means to grow the state's power, and brought stability to Egypt through trade and agriculture. She created trade networks from the Red Sea in the east to the southern Land of Punt near modern-day Somalia. Punt was well known for its abundance of valuable incense and perfume, which Egyptians used for personal adornment and for worshipping the gods. Hatshepsut also constructed temples and chapels to the Egyptian gods, including an addition to one of ancient Egypt's most famous mortuary temple complexes, Deir el-Bahri. The columns of Hatshepsut's Deir el-Bahri temple were dedicated to Hathor, the goddess of love, fertility, beauty, and dance.

Despite her work in the construction of temples and the expansion of trade, she was not popular with all her subjects. This may have been because she created statutes that gave women many of the rights men had. She also did not lead her army. Scholars suggest she cared about the common

people and what they had to say about her rule. She used the hieroglyph "rekhyt" more than previous pharaohs when speaking to the question of

legitimacy. Rekhyt is a bird common to the Nile area and is used mostly to reference the common people. Due to her political actions, some outer provinces in Egypt began to split off from the center.

After Hatshepsut's death, Thutmose III nearly erased memory of her rule. Many scholars now believe he did this to prove to rival family members that his claim to the throne was legitimate, and not in retaliation of some sort against Hatshepsut. In any case, despite the attempt to erase the record of her rule, Hatshepsut's legacy as a powerful female ruler has lived on to this day. Inners keep a connection with their roots.



Authors

Abbi Allen | Asher Close | Brandon Dineen
Hannah Lovejoy | Madelyn McLeish
Muna Mohamed | Cara Worthing

The roles of women in medieval Africa

The life experiences of women in medieval Africa (500 to 1500 CE) varied depending on what region and religion they were born into. Ibn Battuta, a famous 14th-century Moroccan traveler known for his extensive experience in West and East Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, wrote that women in Iwalatan, Mali, between 1325-1354 CE were treated differently than he had seen in other countries, for example. Women were free to have friends of another gender and did not clothe themselves in a veil or hijab, he wrote in *Travels in Asia and Africa*. This shocked Ibn Battuta, who was Muslim. Elsewhere, in his native Morocco for example, women were veiled, and their exposure to men was limited.

Modern western and Islamic surnames are rooted in the male or father's legacy, known as patriliney, and in medieval Africa, many tribes were patrilineal – but not all. Matrilineal societies gave power to women in a number of cultures in medieval Africa, including the Iwalatan people, the Mbundu people, and the Fulani/Jelgobe people. It was the women who provided their children with opportunities and raised them to be powerful political leaders, carried power and influence through their bloodlines – and also did most of the farm work. Women were the backbones of their villages, and nothing prospered without them.



The *lunga* held authoritative roles over other members of the tribe. The *lunga* was particularly connected to the women of the Mbundu because they “perceive(d) their descent groups as feminine in contradistinction to most extra-lineage institutions which they see as ‘masculine.’” The tie of women to the ancestors showed the importance of their names and the matrilineal lineage to the group.

The Fulani people, who are still around today, are an example of matriarchy influencing gender roles, and how matriliney acts to calibrate power between men and women. The Jelgobe are a Fulani people who reside between Mali and Upper Volta. Similar to the Mbundu, the Jelgobe view women as the creators who typically focus on making textiles and raising

children. Women build the huts, own the *wuros* (places where women work and care for children), and process the food. Jelgobe men spend their time working in trade and gathering raw materials for women to turn into textiles.

In equatorial Africa, around the 10th century CE, societies were organized according to district, village, and house structures, with each village having around 100 inhabitants, and houses containing anywhere from 10 to 40 inhabitants. These societies were matrilineal, although the men of the villages did hold political power. The tribes of ancestral equatorial Africa considered marriage to be of great importance not only for producing children, but to attract youthful, strong men who would add value to the clans. Although women were not always treated equally, their contribution to the success of the villages and homes cannot be overstated, and women were acknowledged to be crucial to the survival of the tribes, given their central roles in raising children as well as in farm-

ing.

Respect for women decreased as these African societies were exposed to European influence, eventually leading to a switch in lineage power in many regions and the imposition of patrilineal beliefs. However, the medieval African period remains an ex-

ample of when women in certain societies commanded great respect for the roles they played in their communities.

Authors

Muna Abdi | Makayla Burke | Susannah Curtis
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The Mbundu people lived in Angola as early as the mid-1500s, and the tribe was matrilineal, primarily focused on motherhood and maintaining the female legacy. For the Mbundu people, matrilineal lineage was both practical and respectful, with women seen as the creators of the home. There is evidence that this group assigned certain members, or “sons,” to a particular woman, or “mother,” for political advantage. Women did not need to have birthed these men in order for them to become a descendant of that “mother.”

Mbundu villages typically centered around a core group of male elders from one *ngundu*, or matrilineal descent. Although men had the political power, women determined the name of the descendants, which carried a power of its own. In Mbundu culture, a lineage symbol known as *lunga* was an object commonly made of wood in the shape of a human. This object was a representation of lineage and was said to bring about good weather and harvests. Those who were in posses-



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GOOD WRITING IS GOOD BUSINESS



In June 2021, *Amjambo Africa* ran a story about the Little Jubba Agrarian Commons in Wales, Maine. On this farm, local members of Maine’s Somali Bantu community have applied agricultural experiences from Somalia to the land of their new home. The story of Little Jubba is just a small representation of the way crops and farming techniques have survived relatively unchanged for centuries, making it all the way from ancient Africa to the U.S. in an unlikely and fascinating journey.



Africa is a big continent. The distance from Cairo to Cape Town is just over 10,000 km (about 6,200 miles), more than double the width of the United States. This vastness allows for Africa to play host to a number of different growing regions, each with different strengths and weaknesses. When we compare the parched land of the Sahara to the West African rainforest, where farmers’ concern is too much precipitation, rather than not enough, it proves that there is no “typical” African environment. These conditions also allow for the abundance of crops that had their origins in Africa. This cornucopia of food products follows an incredibly rich agricultural history: Africa’s environments have gone through massive changes over the millennia. Unsurprisingly then, Africa is home to all kinds of crops, from coffee to yams.



Africa’s patchwork of environments boasts a wide range of soil types, from very fertile to rocky

and arid. In the west and central regions, the soil has presented more challenge than opportunity. The geological inactivity of the continent means the soil has been weathered and stripped of nutrients. The hot sun to which Africa is exposed all year round breaks down organic plant material quickly, meaning that African farmers have had to develop ways of maximizing productivity despite these challenges. These regions, with their rocky and dry soil, have similar issues to those

found in the soil across southern Maine. In both regions, the presence of bedrock (particularly ledge) makes growing crops year after year difficult without a certain amount of environmental manipulation and care. The traditional, labor-intensive method was to clear the brush and trees, and then burn them. The soil

left behind in this process is more fertile, with the ash functioning as a nitrogen producer as well as killing any weeds that were still in the area.

Thanks to the similar soil composition on our side of the Atlantic, the skills honed by working rocky African soils are in many cases applicable to farms in Maine. African farmers figured out how best to tame the land they were dealt, using innovations that became more advanced as new resources were discovered and put to use. Centuries ago, the rocky soil was traditionally worked with a hoe as opposed to a plow. Comparable to the hoe in design, the kayendo is a shovel-like tool that was used in West African rice paddies. Historically, this tool was used by men, while women planted, fertilized, and harvested the rice. The style of farming supported by these types of tools involved a great many people working on the farm. The all-inclusive labor dynamic of traditional African farms is a contrast to contemporary American farming. Rather than leaving fieldwork to men until the harvest, where everyone was expected to work (the traditional model in the United States), women in West Africa were just as active as their male counterparts when it came to tending the farms. Usable land was scarce, and communities needed as many hands as possible to get the maximum yield. A glance at the farms cropping up around Maine (for which African women act as board members and farmers) shows that

this tradition, born out of necessity, still survives.

Many grains thrive in Africa. Rice, millet, and sorghum are a few that have been staples in people’s diets on the continent for centuries. These three have their origins in the West African Sahel, the region between the Sahara desert and the savannas of Southern Africa, and are the result of the domestication of wild grasses into grains. Some types of African rice thrive in parts of the U.S., notably the West African rice called Carolina Gold (*oryza glaberrima*), which has a lower labor cost than the more common Asian rice (*oryza sativa*). Rice was one of the primary crops grown by enslaved Africans in the United States, long before the Somali Bantu community’s immigration to Maine, and many historians believe that techniques brought from Africa shaped the U.S. southern rice trade.

The crops grown on farms like Little Jubba give community members the ability to make recipes they brought from Africa more authentically than was possible before, including family recipes with traditional ingredients. The Somali Bantu Community Association suggests using the cornmeal grown at farms like Little Jubba to make traditional African muufu, or flatbread, for example. Longtime Mainers and New Mainers can form friendships through the sharing of recipes and crops.

The emergence of African farms in Maine is a defining event for the state, in that it melds the conditions here with the crops and techniques learned over thousands of years of farming in Africa. Agricultural techniques are just one more way that Maine’s burgeoning African community has helped to enrich the greater community, while helping New Mainers keep a connection with their roots.



Authors

Alice Bonnevie-Rothrock | Austin Hollifield
Eric Manley | Matt Murphy
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Lasting impact of ancient trade routes

One thousand years ago, an interconnected system of trade routes crossed the largest desert in the world, the Sahara. These routes connected trading ports in northern Africa and the Persian Gulf with West Africa. Most of these routes were used to transport gold, iron, and enslaved peoples. The item most desired along the trade route was salt because no large salt deposits existed in western Africa. Some of the earliest records of these routes can be found dating back to Arabic sources from the ninth century CE.

Several large states in the region, including Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, used the trade routes to expand their wealth and political influence in the region. According to Erik T. Gilbert and Jonathan T. Reynolds in *Africa in World History*, Mansa Musa, ruler of the Mali Empire, set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324. His massive wealth, built from the Mali Empire's taxation of the flow of goods from the trans-Saharan trade, allowed him to bring 100 camel loads of gold with him. When he stopped in Alexandria, he spent so much gold that he caused inflation. Ghana was also able to prosper because of the trade routes, serving as a sort of "middleman" between other city-states.

The area covered by the trade routes was often broken up into two sections, the dynamic trade ports of the Mediterranean area, and the barren Saharan region. The routes that crossed the desert were bordered by Mediterranean coastal towns to the north, the fertile Nile River Valley and Red Sea coast to the east, and the vast savannahs of Sudan to the south. Each of these areas was highly populated and produced goods that they traded with the others. Food grown by local communities in the Niger River delta could easily be traded for goods such as salt and copper, for example, and sent north across the desert.

The caravans that crossed through the desert to move and sell their wares traveled mainly by horse and camel, since wheeled vehicles were not suitable for the varied terrain. Over time, oxen and donkeys became domesticated, and were used for the transportation of goods along the routes as well.

According to the *Encyclopedia of World Trade: From Ancient Times to the Present*, "Both the volume and value of long distance trade within the African continent stayed above that of Euro-American exchanges until the colonial period" in the late 1800s. These routes were extremely lucrative, not only for those residing in the north and south, but also for the middlemen who prospered along the route. The Tuwat Oasis, located in the Algerian Sahara, was situated along the routes, and to this day is still one of the largest complexes

in the central Sahara.

Gold was one of the most important commodities traded along the trans-Saharan routes. The Akan gold mines in West Africa became highly active during the mid-to-late 15th century, which led to the establishment of routes that went across

West Africa and connected the region of the trans-Saharan routes.

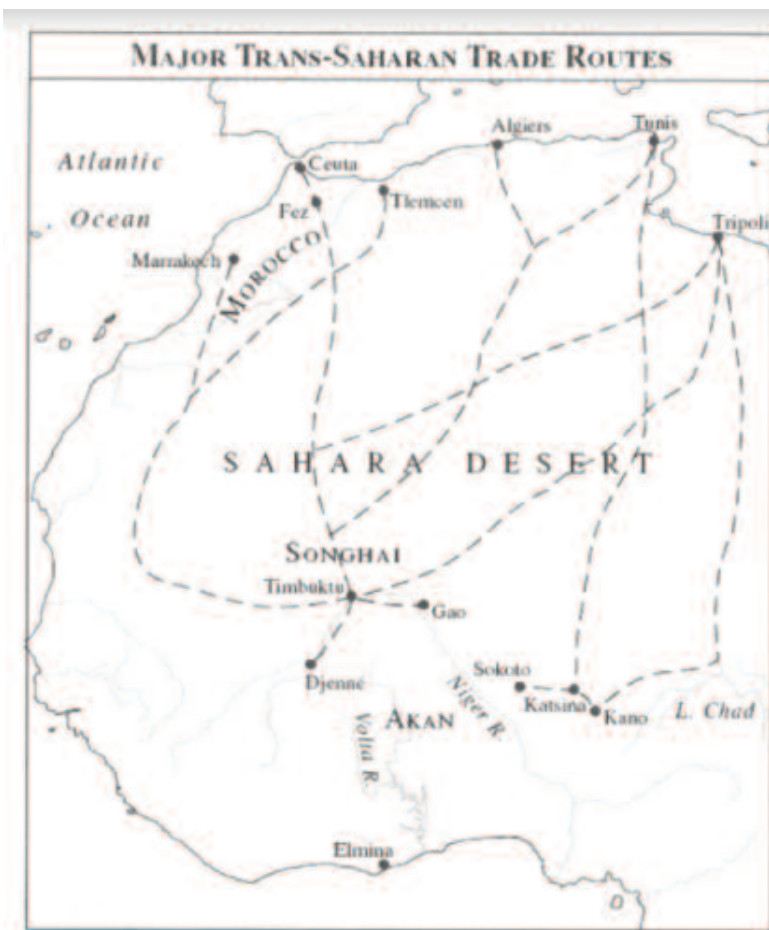
The trans-Saharan slave trade was different both in nature and scale from the trans-Atlantic trade. While the trans-Atlantic trade enslaved roughly 12 million people over the course of four centuries, the trans-Saharan slave trade captured 10 million people over 11 centuries. The en-

slaved people brought across the Sahara were sold to wealthy Mediterranean and Arabian merchants in the north, to act as servants or concubines for elite families. The trans-Atlantic route forcibly took people to the Americas, where they were sold and used for grueling labor.

Several unintended byproducts of the trans-Saharan trade route were the spread of literacy and the spread of Islam. According to Ghislaine Lydon's *On Trans-Saharan Trails: Islamic Law, Trade Networks and Cross-Cultural Exchange in Nineteenth-Century Western Africa*, "the majority of trans-Saharan merchants were literate, paper was widely available, and contracts, transactions, and correspondence were commonly written down." Gilbert and Jonathan wrote that books became "one of the most valuable products to trade." Many buildings in East Africa from the time include built-in

shelves for displaying books. Many of the merchants who traveled the routes were Muslim, and as the Islamic state grew, the demand for goods grew, too, causing a steady rise in production and distribution. Political systems in states like Ghana and Mali flourished after converting to Islam by establishing links between other city-states that also followed Islam.

Overall, the trans-Saharan trade routes lead to the spread of knowledge, ideas, people, and goods, and many of the regions that flourished along its routes continue to do so today.



Authors

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Financial Literacy

Advice for the New Year

Negotiating a pay increase



The New Year is a natural time for taking stock of one's situation, including at work. Some people decide to look for another job.

Others choose to negotiate with an employer for a raise. Employees who have not received a pay raise while at a job for over a year, or who have taken on new responsibilities, may want to plan a conversation with their current employer and ask for a higher wage.

In preparation for negotiating a pay increase, many people make a list of accomplishments they've achieved, and the value they bring to their job. They practice what they are going to say. This is sometimes done with a friend or family member acting as the employer. When it's time for the meeting, the employee has already given a lot of thought to what they are going to say.

When asked what raise they are looking for, people should give a dollar amount at the top of their desired range. This is very important because all discussions that follow during the negotiation will be based on this dollar amount. Because of research the employee does before the meeting, the dollar amount is a number that is fair to both the employer and the employee.

Strong negotiators are knowledgeable about their industry, are clear on what a highly skilled worker is, and know what type of worker is the most valuable for their current employer. They've researched to find out how much others are earning in the area for the same job. Talent and experience also factor in the amount of negotiable pay. Good negotiators have a clear price range they are willing to accept before talking to a supervisor.

Pay increases are not always granted. Sometimes an employer may feel there need to be job performance improvements. Or the employer may be looking for specific job experience that an employee lacks. By knowing what is required in order to get a raise, a person can work toward those goals. Based on feedback, the employer might be willing to provide an employee with the training they need to jump to that higher income level.

If an employee has followed the steps above and asked for an increase, but either did not get one or feels that the level of compensation is not adequate, it might be time to look for another job. There are other considerations to keep in mind, however, including how much one enjoys the work and the colleagues. Enjoying where one works holds value, too, and is important. action.



Protecting finances with insurance in the new year

If 2020 and 2021 have taught people anything, it's to expect the unexpected. For many, the pandemic negatively impacted their personal finances. While the need for being prepared to face a worldwide pandemic was something few could have truly anticipated, people can do things to protect their finances against other kinds of disasters in the future. Examples include increasing savings, building up an emergency fund, and taking advantage of insurance.



What is insurance?

Insurance is a protection policy that helps manage risk. Buying insurance for something is buying protection against unexpected financial losses. For example, if someone bought a new car and then purchased auto insurance, then the car was damaged in an accident, the insurance company would pay for the repair costs. Without auto insurance, the car owner would have to pay for the repairs. This could be difficult to afford, especially in addition to monthly car payments.

Purchasing insurance helps safeguard losses against a home, apartment, vehicle, and more. Insurance companies charge a fee, called a premium, which usually must be paid monthly, though some premiums are paid only once or twice a year. In addition to premiums, some insurance policies include a deductible. This is the amount a policyholder would have to pay before the insurance company would cover the rest. For example, if a homeowner's insurance policy has a \$500 deductible, and a storm caused \$2,000 in damage to the home, the homeowner would pay \$500 and the insurance company would pay the remaining \$1,500. Usually, the higher the deductible amount, the lower the purchase cost of the insurance.

What are common types of insurance?

Health insurance. This is a contract that requires a health insurer to pay for some or all of a person's healthcare costs in exchange for a premium. According to a recent study, healthcare has become this country's largest source of debt in collections. If someone without health insurance needs medical care, the bills can be very expensive.

Auto insurance. This protects policyholders from having to pay the full cost of vehicle repairs, replacements, or medical expenses following an accident. In Maine, operating a vehicle without paying for auto insurance is against the law.

Life insurance. This is a contract with the insurance company to pay a set amount of money to a person of the policyholder's choice if the policyholder dies. For example, a parent may choose to have their child be the recipient of their life insurance if the parent passes away. This can help the family pay bills and cover living expenses, or pay for funeral costs. Ultimately, the recipient can use the insurance money however they wish.

Homeowners insurance. This protects what is often a homeowner's biggest investment – their home. The insurance company helps the homeowner cover the cost of repairs or a replacement, in the event of a disaster at their home.

Renters insurance. This type of insurance would cover personal belongings of someone who is renting a home or apartment, in the event of a fire, theft, windstorm, or other disasters. Renters can choose between actual cash value coverage, which will reimburse them for the value of the items at the time of the damage or loss, or replacement cost coverage, which covers the cost of replacing the items lost or damaged.

There are many other times of insurance, such as pet insurance and travel insurance. Whatever the type, insurance helps people manage their risks and protect their assets.

Where can people get insurance?

Some types of insurance, such as health and life, are available through employers. Other options are searching comparison websites for lists of insurance coverage options, or contacting a local insurance agent. To find a local insurance agent, visit usinsuranceagents.com



Networking leads to employment

Internationally trained and educated professionals often have a hard time finding a job to match their skill set when they relocate to Maine, and unfortunately many people end up in low-level jobs for which they are way overqualified. So in 2019, the City of Portland's Office of Economic Opportunity and the Portland Regional Chamber of Commerce launched Portland Professional Connections, with the primary goal of matching immigrant professionals with Portland-based professionals. The networking program has served approximately 100 people since its launch.



More about the program: It matches internationally trained professionals with someone in Portland in their desired field (known as "connectors") to provide information about the local job market and industry trends, and to help build professional networks. Connectors have at least five years of experience in the field in Portland. Connectors are volunteers.

How it works: The connector and internationally trained professional meet – it's as easy as scheduling a cup of coffee together!

Why a network matters: Networking gives people access to more job opportunities. A strong professional network can have a huge impact on achieving career success in Maine.

Other program goals: The program fosters a sense of belonging, with 99% of both connectees and connectors reporting that they feel a greater sense of belonging to the community as a result of the program.

Making a difference in gaining employment: Eighty-five percent of all jobs are the result of professional networking. When a connector sets up a warm introduction to someone in a recruiting position in a matching field, this elevates the foreign-born candidate from a faceless (and possibly unfamiliar-sounding) name on a resume to a person who is "vouched for" by a trusted professional in the community.

How to sign up: Signing up is simple. Visit www.portlandofportunity.com/ppc. Foreign-trained professionals should click "Connectee." Volunteers should click "Connector."



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Hope and Light in South Portland

On December 3, the South Portland community celebrated the season of light and hope at its annual Millcreek Tree Lighting Celebration, an event co-hosted by South Portland Parks and Recreation, South Portland/Cape Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce, and South Portland Human Rights Commission. Each year, over five miles of lights deck the trees that grace Millcreek Park, and families and community members enjoy an outdoor evening of music, food, and selfies with Santa. This year, the South Portland Human Rights Commission presented Sputnik Animation, a 20-foot tall fabric structure, created collaboratively with local artists Pedro Vazquez, James LaPlante, Cindy Thompson, and Joe Goodwin. Throughout the evening, images of light and hope from cultures around the world were projected onto the screen. The evening culminated with poems on the theme of light and hope written by South Portland students. DJ Genius Black provided music.



Hope and Light

By Landinha Josefina, a student at South Portland High School

What is hope? It is said that hope gives us the strength that we all need to overcome our sadnesses and troubles. Hope is a belief that we all must have, believing that something good will happen, something that will brighten our present and future, something that will make us happy and something that will lighten up our day. Hope comes any time and any day to lighten up our life. Throughout the pandemic last year we didn't get the chance to gather here like we are today, and that is what I call hope.

Imagine...

By Victoria Mambu, a student at Memorial Middle School Portuguese and English

A destruição
a extinção
o que isso significa para nós
fome
sede
imagina você estar no seu lar
e de repente não voltar
deixar o lugar
de onde podia procriar
e renascer
só por causa de um ser
que não sabe e compreender
o que sobreviver
saber que o mesmo ar
que você respira
o animal também transpira

Imagine...

The destruction
the extinction
What it means to us
the hunger
the thirst
Imagine being in your home
and suddenly not returning
To leave the place
where you could recreate
and be reborn
only because of a being
who does not know how to live
nor understand what survives.
Knowing that the same air
the animal emanates
You also breathe

Light and Hope

By Eme Brown, a student at Mahoney Middle School

I am walking through the Park
I see lights everywhere
Those lights give me a spark in my eye
A spark that tells me to find faith and hope
It took me a while to find it,
But eventually I did.

I have faith we will get through the pandemic together
I have hope we will have the best holiday season ever
Although we have to battle the pandemic
We will defeat it together.

Bright holidays to all
And to all of us
A hopeful night.

Be the Light

By Sarah Beth Lupien, a student at Mahoney Middle School

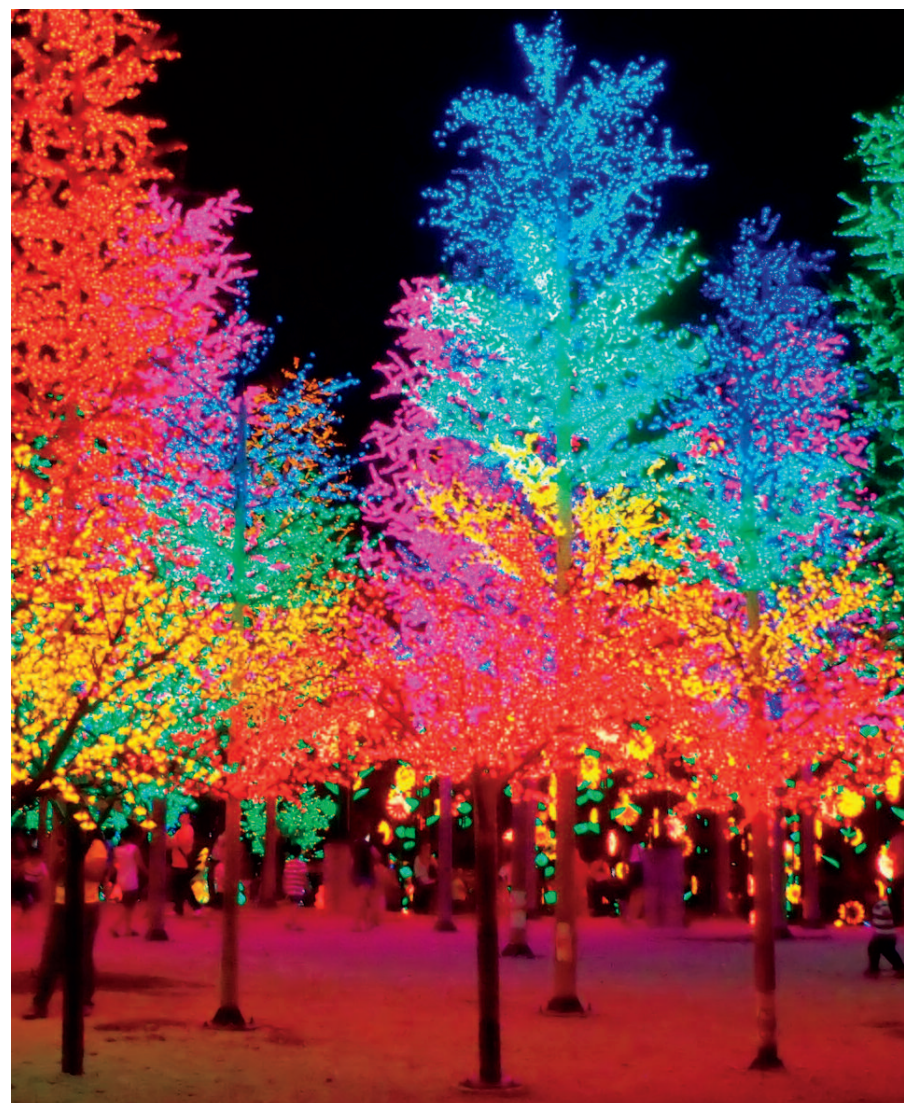
Hope is a smile
Hope is a conversation between strangers
Hope is a laugh
Hope is a positive message: Be kind, love always
Hope is a light in the dark

Light is "I'm here for you"
Light is "It will be okay"
Light is "I'll help you"
Light is "We'll get through this together"
Light is saying "I love you" and meaning it

So be the sun
Rise every day
And when darkness surrounds you
Find a way to shine again

So be the moon
Light up the sky
And when you can't find your light
May others help you shine again

When you find yourself in a sea of storms
Find your power, find your hope
Find the courage to find your light
Because the light will not come
Because the light does not come
The light is already there
You are the light
So be the light
Find the hope
Be the light



WELCOME HOME. WORK SAFELY.

MEMIC



Legislative Update

During this session of the Maine Legislature, Amjambo Africa will run monthly updates about legislation important to communities of color.

Permanent Commission wants to hear from Mainers!

By Rebecca Scarborough

On December 9, the Permanent Commission on the Status of Racial, Indigenous, and Tribal Populations hosted their first community forum via Zoom. The forum was led by co-chairs Maulian Dana (Penobscot Nation Ambassador) and State Representative Rachel Talbot Ross. Other commissioners who attended were Dr. Marcelle Medford, Rev. Kenneth Lewis, James Myall, Amanda Comeau, Joby Thoyalil, Keith Bisson, Bruce King, and Richard Silliboy, Vice Chief of the Aroostook Band of Micmacs. The commission plans to hold more forums statewide, including at homeless shelters. Comments and feedback from attendees at forums will be part of the commission's report to the legislature.

The Permanent Commission was established by the Maine State Legislature in 2019. Its mission is "to examine racial disparities across all systems and to specifically work at improving the status and outcomes for the historically disadvantaged racial, Indigenous, and tribal populations in the State." The commission advises all three branches of Maine government and has the authority to submit legislation, research and develop public policy, and educate and engage the public.

Since the commission was created, the commissioners and co-chairs have collaborated with 55 Maine state legislators and examined 455 bills to look at impacts on racial disparities in the state. So far they have found 46 bills that they felt would have a meaningful positive impact on racial disparities.

In the upcoming year, the commission plans to work with Wabanaki tribes to create a "Truth Commission" and to increase community engagement. The commission is prioritizing LD 1626, a bill that would restore sovereignty to Maine's tribes that are federally recognized but do not receive equitable benefits. A 1980s Maine law states that federal laws regarding tribal rights do not apply to tribes unless they are specifically named.

At the December 9 meeting, attendees asked how the commission would follow up on their recommendations and would be sure those recommendations are implemented. Joby Thoyalil said the commission's ability to follow up varied, depending on the language of individual bills. Kenneth Lewis added that working with both the legislative and executive branches – rather than just the legislative – increases the commission's power to ensure their recommendations are implemented.

A few attendees mentioned the current national backlash against critical race theory (CRT), with one noting that organizing efforts against CRT underway in rural areas of Maine. Rachel Talbot Ross said the commission is looking to work with the Maine Department of Education, and noted that legislation has passed to support the study of African history and the history of genocide.

Another attendee said that despite a requirement that Maine schools teach Wabanaki studies, many do not. Maulian Dana explained that the legislation requiring students to learn about Wabanaki tribes was not a mandate, and therefore was unfunded, but many tribal communities have resources available to teachers.

Attendees also were concerned with the lack of affordable housing. One asked if housing might be better addressed regionally than by local communities, since many communities had a "not in my backyard" attitude toward low-income and affordable housing.

Update from Augusta

By Ulya Aligulova Amjambo's legislative reporter

The Second Regular Session of the 130th Maine Legislature will run from January 5 until April 20, 2022, and many bills of great importance to communities of color will be up for consideration by legislators during this time. The democratic process allows for constituents to support the bills they care about and influence which bills end up on the governor's desk.

Often those bills with the greatest expressed public support are the ones that end up passing, although the governor does have a right to veto a bill.

Organizations such as the ACLU of Maine, Maine Equal Justice, and Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC) will lead regular advocacy work to support different bills and help people share the power of their voices. Fluent English is not a requirement for getting involved, and multilingual help is usually available. Amjambo Africa will provide updates on what bills are moving through the legislative process, as well as information on how to get involved.

"Participation is important, and is a way to challenge systems that do not advance immigrant rights, and to support policies that foster integration into society. For example, in 2020 MIRC testified in support of LD843, a bill which supported housing stability, and because this bill passed there will be state funding in 2022 for housing navigators to support our marginalized communities," said Mufalo Chitam, Executive Director of MIRC.

Throughout the session, legislative committees will hold public hearings at which community members can voice their opinions on proposed legislation. Also, individuals can reach out to legislators on the committee reviewing a particular bill to share a personal story, and/or join lobby days that are organized to galvanize support for particular legislation. In addition, people can write letters to the editor of publications such as Amjambo Africa.

Priority bills this session

One bill of great importance to communities of color is LD 1610, a companion bill to last session's LD 2 "An Act To Require the Inclusion of Racial Impact Statements in the Legislative Process," which was passed in the last legislative session. Rep. Rachel Talbot Ross is the sponsor of both bills.

LD 2 requires that legislative committee data, analysis, and other information necessary to prepare a racial impact statement (an assessment of the potential impact that any new legislation could have on historically disadvantaged racial populations) be provided upon the request of a legislative committee. LD 1610 supports LD 2; its passage will improve Maine's ability to collect, centralize, and use data to improve equity in state policymaking.

"Even though we know, based on anecdotal data and data from grassroots and community organizations, that people of color are experiencing disproportionate harm from different policies or systems, we can't yet present enough data as evidence for this," said Kathy Kilrain del Rio, Advocacy and Programs Director of Maine Equal Justice.

"This is part of a larger effort that the Permanent Commission [on the Status of Racial, Indigenous and Maine Tribal populations, established in 2019] has been focused on to make sure that we have the ability to collect the right data and analyze it and figure out how we can craft policies based on that data that help reduce racial disparity," Kilrain del Rio said. The Permanent Commission is an independent entity that examines racial disparities across all systems and works to improve the status and outcomes of the historically disadvantaged racial, indigenous, and tribal populations in Maine.

Another bill to keep an eye on is LD 1679, sponsored by Senate President Troy Jackson, which aims to address student hunger by expanding access to free school meals.

"There was an effort last year to make sure everybody in

schools could have access to free meals, which is a big way to help reduce hunger in our state," Kilrain del Rio said. "So many kids across the state rely on free school meals for food. That's especially true for immigrant children since there are restrictions in SNAP and other food assistance programs that exclude non-citizens. Last year this was included in the supplemental budget. We're trying to push for more funding for that this year as well."

Another bill Kilrain del Rio is watching is LD 718. Sponsored by Talbot Ross, LD 718 would close the gap in the MaineCare program that, due to a federal restriction, excludes certain people from accessing MaineCare based on their immigration status. Maine Equal Justice worked on this bill last year, too. "We want to close that gap so that all Mainers, regardless of their immigration status, have access to MaineCare if they're low income. We know that it's important not only for individuals' own health but for our collective health as well. If there's anything this pandemic has taught us, it's that our collective health is dependent on one another," Kilrain del Rio said.

Over 90 people testified in support of LD 718 at a public hearing in the last session. Gov. Janet Mills included part of it in her supplemental budget proposal, LD 221, which extended coverage for people under 21 and pregnant people, regardless of their immigration status. "But we still haven't closed that gap for all adults," she said. LD 718 was referred back to the Health and Human Services Committee, and MEJ will continue to advocate for it.

"This session we will be particularly closely watching the tribal sovereignty bills," said Meagan Sway, Policy Director at the ACLU of Maine. These bills include LD 1626, LD 554, and LD 585, sponsored by Sen. Louis Luchini, Rep. Benjamin Collings, and Talbot Ross, respectively. The tribes in Maine have been fighting to address the problems with the Maine Indian Claims Settlement Implementation Act of 1980, which declares that Congress approve and ratify any transfer of land or other natural resource located anywhere within the United States from, by, or on behalf of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, the Penobscot Nation, the Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians, or any of their members.

"The tribes in Maine have fewer rights than most other tribes across the country because of this one court settlement from the 1980s," Sway explained. "This is a particular issue for communities of color because it addresses ways in which the white settler state has disadvantaged the tribes, and these bills are trying to fix those problems."

Agricultural workers are generally excluded from traditional labor protection laws, however several bills pertaining to agricultural workers, most notably LD 151, sponsored by Rep. Thom Harnett, would allow farm workers to unionize. In Maine, many farm workers are immigrants and people of color.

"This bill would address historical harms that have kept any Black and brown people from the benefits of the labor movement," said Sway. "In the next session, we're looking for either a veto from the governor or, if there's not a veto, an attempt to override it."

Last session, LD 764 resulted in the creation of a Criminal Records Review Committee which will be recommending legislation to the judiciary committee about criminal records sealing. "In Maine, once you're convicted for a crime, it's very hard to get away from that criminal record, which can have devastating consequences for housing, employment, student aid – all the things we rely on to have stable lives," Sway said. "That has a huge impact on people of color because they are so vastly disproportionately targeted and punished by the criminal legal system."



Sahra: an education denied

| By Abdirahman Hassan Abdi

“Parents – educate your girls, because if you do, all African families will then be educated.”

— Sahra

Sahra, age 33, was born in Moshe village, which is 13 kilometers northwest of the town of Baidoa.

She lost her father in 1996, when she was 7 years old, after he was killed during violent land disputes. According to Sahra, the peaceful, prosperous farming life they were living was destroyed by her father’s death, and the impact on her education was enormous.



“Days after the death of my father, our barn was burned to the ground, and our cows were looted by the other clan that was fighting ours. My mom rushed me and my two siblings to Baidoa town to escape,” Sahra recalled. However, war caused them to flee Baidoa, and they left for Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia. Once there, her two brothers enrolled in a school for orphans, but Sahra was not allowed to enter the school. In a city where they had no family, they settled into the lifestyle of internally displaced people, and Sahra started work selling tea in the streets of Bakara Market.

In a tearful interview, Sahra told *Amjambo Africa* that she was denied a chance to get an education. “My brothers were accepted into school because they were males, but I was obliged to support my mom, a role reserved for girls in Somalia. I felt disgraced, and could not hold back my tears when I saw that some girls were lucky enough to wear uniforms, and be accepted in schools.”

At the age of 15, Sahra married her aunt’s son, and became a mother within one year. She now has nine children – five girls and four boys. She is the only person who earns money in the family. Her neighbors are helping her to educate two of her boys among the 9 children – they realized that her family is in dire need of support.

Sahra said that her husband used to work in Bakara Market, but has been diagnosed with a respiratory infection, and has been told to stay home. So he takes care of the children while she works in housekeeping and related jobs.

“I wash and clean clothes, and in the evening, I sell a kind of pastry, to try to earn enough to put food on the table,” she said.

Sahra dreams of seeing free education extended to all her children. She is looking for a permanent cleaning job in order to earn reliable income to support her family’s needs. She wishes her husband could get proper treatment, but they can’t pay for his medication.

“I would like to see my children going to school to work for a better life and a bright future,” she said, adding that she would never wish anybody to encounter the challenges she has faced. “Parents – educate your girls, because if you do, all African families will then be educated.”

Yusuf Mohamed Idriss Wadajir, the District Education Officer of Banadir Region, told *Amjambo Africa*,

“In Somalia, children are living in poverty. Girls face many education barriers which explain why they are left behind in education.” Wadajir said that barriers to education exist in urban areas, but are most severe in rural areas. “Girls don’t go to school because many parents want them to work in the home, and many times they force them into early marriage. They are reluctant to have their daughters participate in society by going to school.”

Many families also cannot pay school fees for all of their children, and prioritize the boys’ education. The United Nations Children’s Fund and CARE International have been working to improve education for girls in Somalia. They have partnered with the Ministry of Education on programming. “These programs that aim at helping girls go to school have been yielding results. In 2020 and 2021, in many areas of the country, girls were at the top of their classes, with the best marks,” said Wadajir.

Contributed by Abdirahman Hassan Abdi, who is based in Mogadishu

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Nigeria's S-Deli organization works to save indigenous sign languages

By Violet Ikong

Nelson Igelle is a deaf student studying architecture at the Enugu State University of Science and Technology in Enugu State, South-Eastern Nigeria. Now aged 28, Igelle lost his hearing at the age of three. He learns with the help of an interpreter who goes to school with him every day and translates his lecturers' words into sign language. His interpreter signs for him using American Sign Language, which is the main one taught across Nigerian institutions.



When he returns home for the holidays, Igelle interacts with his parents and other family members through gestures or writing because they do not understand American Sign Language. But his parents have difficulty understanding him, and Igelle is not alone. Many Nigerian deaf children have difficulty communicating with their family members and others around them because, unlike other African countries like Ghana, South Africa, and the Gambia, the Nigerian government has not yet approved a national sign language.

Leonard Ugwanyi, a senior sign language lecturer at the special education unit of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, in Enugu State, said he often feels frustrated that the system forces deaf students to communicate using American Sign Language. He believes that students would understand indigenous signs better than a language from abroad. Nigeria is home to a plethora of undocumented and unrecognized Indigenous sign languages, but these are on the verge of extinction due to lack of use, said Ugwanyi.



Team and volunteers of S-Deli

For this reason, he said, "When teaching, I try to use both the American and Indigenous sign languages to teach my students, so they understand better."

The World Health Organization estimates that 1.5 billion people globally live with some degree of hearing loss, out of which 430 million people require rehabilitation services. About 70 million use about 300 different sign languages to communicate.

In Nigeria, a 2016 study showed that as much as 23.76% of the country's population suffers from hearing impairment. And the lack of an approved national sign language hinders effective communication between deaf people and those around them.

Finding a solution

Emmanuel Asonye is a researcher in sign language linguistics at the University of New Mexico. In 2014, he learned that deaf Nigerian people were having a hard time communicating with people around them. To change that narrative, he founded Save the Deaf and Endangered Languages Initiative (S-Deli), a nonprofit that promotes deaf literacy in Nigeria by documenting and saving Indigenous Nigerian sign languages from extinction.

"I started learning British sign language about four years ago," said Sinmi Labisi, a Nigerian volunteer for S-Deli who

recently finished her master's studies in International Development at the University of Sheffield, England. "I was planning on moving to the next level of my sign language education and decided to go online and search for Nigerian sign language, but I couldn't find anything."

Asonye's organization began investigating why it was difficult for deaf pupils and their parents to communicate. "If you go to the Deaf communities in rural Nigeria, you will know that there are sign language varieties used in these communities, which are not known to those in the urban areas," he said. "We found out that the [American] sign language that is taught to the students at school is different from what they knew before they went to school, and with time, they forget how to communicate with their Indigenous sign language."

S-Deli started looking at the various sign languages taught across deaf schools in the country. They analyzed samples of sign language varieties from schools in Owerri, Imo State, in South-Eastern Nigeria, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. In 2017, they proceeded to analyze sign language varieties in schools in Lagos and Enugu state. After collecting samples of the language taught in these schools, S-Deli started digging deep to collect samples of sign language varieties used in rural areas across different regions of Nigeria.

In 2018 and 2019, S-Deli documented Indigenous sign languages in Magajin Gari and Ibokun communities of Kaduna and Ogun states, and has now completed more than 10 documentations. The work is done by recording deaf children and their parents. The interviewer asks questions, such as how to describe a plate using sign language. The organization collects the specimens and takes them for analysis. Asonye's team found that only about 1% of parents understood their deaf children.

Now S-Deli is developing a sign language mobile application called "Indigenous Hands." The application will launch in early 2022 in Google and Apple stores. It will include at

least 10 Indigenous sign languages used across Nigeria's six regions; more languages will be added as they are discovered. "Our aim is to help deaf students and hearing people learn Indigenous sign languages for effective communication, and there will be a feature in the app that allows users to search signs that relate to a particular topic, like health, and others in their preferred sign language," Asonye said. "When we met some of the deaf students when we started the organization, we discovered that some of them,

especially those from rural areas, had sign language varieties they came to school with. But soon, [they] dropped those signs because they were told that those signs were just gestures."

Onyinye Nwandikom, S-Deli's head of projects, said that in the future, the application will include live tutors, so that students will be able to interact with sign language teachers in real time for a better learning experience. She said it would also have a virtual community where students can interact and ask questions.

Difficulty choosing a language and other drawbacks

The group plans to work with the Nigerian National Association of the Deaf to push for the national adoption of its documented sign languages. "Before we began the documentation of Indigenous sign languages, we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Nigerian National Association of the Deaf. After we are done with the documentation process, we will work with them to push for the adoption of Indigenous national sign languages in the country," said Nwandikom. "There are different varieties of sign languages in Nigeria. So, it is difficult to pick one as a na-



A Hausa interpreter signs for S-Deli's team during documentation process

tional sign language." However, Onyinye said the group would work with the Nigerian National Association of the Deaf to push for the adoption of as many indigenous sign languages as possible.

S-Deli depends on community-generated funds and donations to run its activities. Asonye said the organization is seeking corporate donors. The group faces distrust from the deaf community, the very people it is working to help. This further slows the pace of development.

"There's a level of distrust that most deaf people in our communities have concerning people who can speak. Most times, when we go to the communities, these deaf persons find it difficult to trust us or talk to us, and this makes our work difficult," said Blessing Ini, an interpreter at the organization.

Distrust arose because deaf people in Nigeria continue to face stigmatization and are denied opportunities, Ugwanyi said. "The country sees deaf people as people who have nothing to offer to the government. There should be a special ministry for people with disabilities like them. In other countries, you see deaf people being entrepreneurs and taking on different jobs. But when you come to Nigeria, it is hardly so," he lamented.



Emmanuel Asonye, founder of S-Deli.

Ugwanyi and Asonye believe that the first step towards tackling distrust is to include members of the Deaf Community in national and state policy and decision making on issues concerning sign language, unlike the current arrangement where hearing people control such policies and decisions. They say a second step is to ensure that schools for deaf students have adequate and well-trained tutors. "We have inadequately trained personnel in our deaf schools," said Ugwanyi. The University of Nigeria, for example, has only two teachers who teach students with hearing loss.

Nelson Igelle, the architecture student, participated in S-Deli's documentation process in Abuja. Now he says he cannot wait for the launch of the "Indigenous Hands" application in 2022. He believes the application will allow him to learn and understand Indigenous sign languages so that he can finally communicate effectively with his family.



A video recording documentation process.

Violet Ikong is a freelance writer based in Nigeria who reports on solutions-based stories. She has been published in *Prime Progress*, *The Record UNN*, and *Niger Delta Post*.



Health & Wellness

Translations available on AmjamboAfrica.com

Mental Health: Home begins in the body

By Kholiswa Mendes Pepani

Deciding to leave home and begin again somewhere new is never easy. Stepping out into the abandon of an uncertain beginning takes courage and resilience.



Leopold Ndayisabye

While prospects of arriving in a new location may offer relief and hope for fresh opportunities, migrating is packed with countless psychological stressors that make adjusting to a new community incredibly challenging. The extensive changes and losses faced are isolating, and when feelings of homesickness and disconnection begin to manifest as an incurable sadness or anxiety, knowing where to turn can be hard. Many refugees and immigrants suffer in silence with feelings of alienation, hopelessness, and depression. They tend to shoulder the burden of a distinct set of hardships, considering that they were forced to leave home, and faced significant stress and trauma before and during their journey. But struggling with such a disruptive change is natural, especially when the journey itself is traumatic.

Leopold Ndayisabye, former president of the Rwandan Association of Maine and a former caseworker for Preble Street, explained that the most pressing struggles associated with the process of transitioning to the U.S are overcoming war and trauma, loss of community and family support, unemployment and housing stress, racism and discrimination, and the pressure to acculturate.

"Adjusting to a new lifestyle is very tough. Suddenly you arrive with nothing and it can feel like a loss of identity, like there is no capacity to be yourself. New Mainers are coming from very different communities of support, with distinctive cultural roles. They find themselves totally isolated and alienated from society. This drastic change can create a lack of self-esteem, and when you can't trust yourself, how can you trust that others want to help you?"

Ndayisabye went on to say that after undertaking such a physically, mentally, and emotionally taxing journey, refugees can struggle to feel safe and, as a result, harbor a great sense of suspicion and hypervigilance, making it hard to adjust or ask for help. "A lot of the refugees were struggling to get food, struggling to get water, struggling for basic survival before they arrived in Maine. This situation naturally has a huge impact on their mental health," he said.

The stigma of mental illness

In addition to leaping over various psychological and structural obstacles, one of the greatest barriers to immigrants' care is the taboo associated with mental illness. Although cross cultural conversations have made significant progress in

dismantling stigmas about mental health, many African and South American families continue to struggle with addressing mental illness. A large number of these immigrant families view

mental health challenges in a negative light because it is generally linked to weakness or permanent institutionalization. As a consequence, people can receive the mere suggestion of seeking a psychologist can as insulting and a threat to their immigration process. Ndayisabye said, "Because mental health is taboo in most African cultures, a lot of the refugees are unwilling to talk about their trauma. There is a fear to disclose their pain. An unhealthy resilience builds, and when they are alone or feel safe enough, the repressed pain comes out as a breakdown. At that point intervention may be too late."

Compounding these difficulties is a serious lack of access to resources. When New Mainers arrive, they have limited access to healthcare and means of social support. As most do not speak English, the language barrier becomes an added frustration. While community programs do their best to help, the lack of structure, cultural sensitivity, and funding often falls short in building trust and ensuring that the families are able to thrive long term.

According to Abusana Micky Bondo, co-founder of In Her Presence, a nonprofit focused on empowering migrant women in Maine, the need for compassion and a sharp sense of cultural competency becomes crucial to embracing New Mainers before they become lost in a community without adequate networks of support. When Bondo first met In Her Presence co-founder Claudette Ndayininahaze, the women talked about the immense struggles they themselves faced as immigrant women of color, and felt compelled to create a space to empower women like themselves. They decided to begin by hosting a yoga class for immigrant women.

"At first, 12 women came and we began by translating the gestures ... As we started to explain things, it became clear that it was only anxiety holding us back from finding out why they had come. Once we started to listen to all the whys, we knew that we needed to build a more robust program of support so that their voices could be heard – a program where we could start building strategies to overcome the challenges we were facing. No one could do it for us. We can build allies, but we needed to stand for our families and ourselves. We are women, mothers, and spouses; we are the pilots of our homes and it was us who needed to do it," Bondo said.

Bondo's ability to help others and bridge a gap that was missing in the community has been a success. At first the organization struggled for funding and recognition, but In Her Presence has now grown to be a pillar of support for many. The organization gives women tools to support their families. Language barriers separate New Mainers from having full autonomy over their intimate lives, so In her Presence created a program called "Find Your Voice," which works to create a contextual vocabulary for successfully going to the doctor, bank, and school. In addition, they host workshops

to help parents better understand their children's transition into the U.S., and offer career and relationship support.

Taboos about mental health make it difficult at first for women to share their hardships, Bondo said. "Because of the taboo, we end up walking in denial. It's hard to recognize

that you might have a problem, especially if you don't know what it looks like." Many people who struggle turn to substances as a method of coping with anxiety and depression.

"Migrants end up working incredibly hard to survive and, at the end, it takes a piece of them. Their families break apart, their children cannot cope, all because they

are too afraid to name that they are having a hard time coping with psychological issues," she said. "It's hard when you come from a place where these things are never talked about."

This year, In Her Presence began hosting a workshop with medical providers called "Heal Your Body," in an attempt to start the conversation about mental health. "When the nurse started talking about the signs, a lot of the women began breaking down. In the stillness, they were able to recognize that this is what they've been going through – that it has a name, and treatment," she said. "They are able to realize that their minds are struggling because of too much stress, trauma, and overworking. We need to start talking about this. We need to name it, so we can find help."

In order to provide help to friends and family who might be struggling, recognizing the signs is important, as is finding an approach that incorporates an understanding of cultural backgrounds. Leaning on local churches and communities for support is a helpful first step.

Signs and symptoms of declining mental health

According to the American Psychiatric Association, the first few warning signs of deteriorating mental health are sleep or appetite changes (dramatic sleep and appetite changes or decline in personal care), mood changes (rapid or dramatic shifts in reactions or depressed feelings), withdrawal (recent social withdrawal and loss of interest in activities previously enjoyed), drop in functioning (unusual drop in functioning at school, work, or social activities, such as quitting sports, failing in school, or difficulty performing familiar tasks), problems thinking (problems with concentration, memory, or logical thought and speech that are hard to explain), apathy (loss of initiative or desire to participate in any activity), feeling disconnected (feeling of being disconnected from oneself or one's surroundings; a sense of unreality), nervousness (fear or suspicion of others or a strong nervous feeling), and substance abuse (drinking more than usual or using illegal drugs).

If you or someone you love is struggling with mental health symptoms, or with thoughts of harming yourself or others, it may be time to reach out for help. Please call the Maine Crisis Line at 1-888-568-1112, dial 911, or go to the nearest emergency room for help. Talking about mental health is uncomfortable and sometimes unfamiliar, but opening up and leaning on someone else for support can make a big difference in getting through the darkest days. Even when someone is far from home, there is hope, support, and ways to cope. We must take care of our whole selves, because home begins in the body.



Abusana Micky Bondo



THIS IS NOT NORMAL. YOUR FEELINGS ARE.

We've come a long way since the beginning of the pandemic, but it's still a part of our lives. At StrengthenME, we're here to make things a little easier. We offer tips, resources, and real support from fellow Mainers. We'll get through this. And if you need help, we're here.

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WHAT TO DO WHEN INTERACTING WITH IMMIGRATION OR THE POLICE

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS



DO NOT OPEN DOORS

Immigration and the police can't come into your home without a warrant signed by the judge. They can only come in if you let them.



DO NOT CONSENT

If the officers try to search your car, home, or person, say out loud: "I DO NOT CONSENT TO A SEARCH." Keep repeating it.



REMAIN SILENT

Use your right to remain silent. Immigration and police can use what you say against you. Say "I CHOOSE TO REMAIN SILENT."



DO NOT SIGN ANYTHING

Do not sign anything before talking to a lawyer. Memorize the phone number of a trusted person or family member. If you are detained they can call an immigration lawyer.



STAY CALM

Do not fight, argue, or resist. If it feels safe, video or photograph what is happening.

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING IMMIGRATION LAW YOU CAN CALL IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT (ILAP). 207-780-1593.

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING ADJUSTMENT OF LEGAL STATUS FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLEES YOU CAN CALL CATHOLIC CHARITIES REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES. 207-871-7437

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WHAT TO DO WHEN INTERACTING WITH IMMIGRATION OR THE POLICE

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

ANYTHING YOU SAY CAN BE USED AGAINST YOU. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOT PROVIDE FALSE DOCUMENTS. IF YOU WISH TO REMAIN SILENT, SAY IT OUT LOUD. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO SPEAK WITH AN ATTORNEY. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE TO SIGN ANYTHING BEFORE SPEAKING WITH AN ATTORNEY.

IN YOUR CAR

- You must provide your license, registration & proof of insurance
- If officers try to search your car, say "I DO NOT CONSENT TO A SEARCH."
- You have the right to remain silent

IN SOMEONE ELSE'S HOME OR CAR

- Ask if you are free to leave
- You have the right to remain silent

IN PUBLIC

- Before saying anything ask "AM I FREE TO GO?"
- In Maine you should be prepared to give your name and address
- If the police try to search you, say "I DO NOT CONSENT TO A SEARCH."
- You have the right to remain silent

IN YOUR HOME

- There are two ways police can enter your home:
 - with a valid warrant
 - with your permission
- Do not open the door
- Always ask for identification
- Ask to see a warrant
- You have the right to remain silent
- If officers try to search your home, say "I DO NOT CONSENT TO A SEARCH OF MY HOME."

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING IMMIGRATION LAW YOU CAN CALL IMMIGRANT LEGAL ADVOCACY PROJECT (ILAP). 207-780-1593.

FOR INFORMATION REGARDING ADJUSTMENT OF LEGAL STATUS FOR REFUGEES AND ASYLEES YOU CAN CALL CATHOLIC CHARITIES REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES. 207-871-7437

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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE

Unemployment insurance available for reduced or ended work hours

By Sue Hamlett



Throughout the pandemic, Maine Equal Justice and our partners have worked with hundreds of Mainers seeking unemployment benefits. We wrote our new guide to the Basics of Unemployment in Maine (maineequaljustice.org/people/help-is-available/unemployment-insurance/) to answer common questions such as:

- How do I apply for unemployment benefits?
- How long will I have to wait before I get paid?
- Can I get unemployment benefits if my hours have been cut?
- What are fact-finding interviews, deputy's decisions, and appeals?
- What must I do to qualify for UI?
- How can I get more training and education?
- What will happen if I am offered a job I don't want to accept?

The Maine legislature passed a bill this year to improve the unemployment program and those changes are included in the guide. One big change in the law is that you can earn more money each week and still qualify for partial unemployment benefits.

At this time of year, many people in Maine work seasonal jobs. You might be able to get unemployment when your seasonal job ends, even if your employer says you can't. Some seasonal jobs, during some times of the year, can qualify.

The best way to find out if you qualify is to apply. You can apply online at ReEmployME (reemploye.maine.gov/accessme/faces) or by calling the Maine Department of Labor at (800) 593-7660 between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. If English is not your first language, you may want to request an interpreter.

After you open a new claim, you still need to enter a weekly claim at the end of each week to get unemployment benefits.

Non-citizens are eligible for unemployment if they were working with a valid work permit and have a current work permit. You also have to be physically able to work, available to work, and looking for work (see more about this in our guide).

Often the Department of Labor system asks non-citizens for extra verification of identity. If this happens, your unemployment account may be locked. You will need to take photos of your identity documents and upload them to the Department of Labor website. You may have trouble entering information for your weekly claims while your account is locked, but once your identity is verified you should call the Department of Labor and ask for help entering any weeks you missed. Call us if you're having a hard time with this or with any other barriers filing for unemployment.

We have heard from many people how frustrating and complicated these systems can be. When basic support for your family is on the line, it can be very scary to deal with barriers, delays, and mistakes. If you can't find the answer to your question in the guide, see below how to contact us.

Do you need help making ends meet while you wait for unemployment insurance? Or have you been found ineligible for unemployment? While you are waiting for unemployment benefits to start, or if you can't get unemployment benefits, call the Maine Department of Health and Human Services at (855) 979-4357 to ask about MaineCare, Food assistance (SNAP) benefits, or – if you have children at home – Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Emergency Assistance.

Go to the Maine State Housing website (mainehousing.org/programs-services/rental/rentaldetail/covid-19-rental-relief-program) and apply for Emergency Rental Assistance or call your town office to ask about General Assistance to help with your rent. Your weekly unemployment benefit cannot be considered income to you for any of these other programs if you are not receiving it.

If you need help with any of these programs you can email us right from our website at maineequaljustice.org/contact-us/ or give us a call at (207) 626-7058, extension 205.



New Year's Resolutions

By Stefanie Trice Gill



Here are some New Year's Resolutions (personal and professional goals) to consider for advancing careers in specific fields in 2022:

Accountants: Learn QuickBooks. Brush up on Advanced Excel by taking a local or online class. Do your own taxes this year to learn the process. If you want to help others with their taxes, sign up for a free tax preparation training course, like the one from CashMaine (www.cashmaine.org/volunteer/tax-preparer)

Electricians: On the Electricians' Examining Board website (www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/electricians), select "Apply for an exam" and follow the links to select "Journeyman Examination." The board will tell you what you need to get licensed. No transcript evaluation is needed. Consider taking a course to help you prepare for the exam.

Engineers: Register with www.NCEES.org and download the transcript request form it generates. Send an email to introduce yourself to the State Licensure Board for Engineers (www.maine.gov/professionallicensing/professions/engineers); they will guide you through the process..

Plumbers: Go to the Plumbers' Examining Board website (www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/plumbers-examining-board) and select "Apply for an exam" and follow the links to select "Journeyman Examination." The board will tell you what you need to get licensed. No transcript evaluation needed. No cost.

Land Surveyors: Register with www.NCEES.org then email your local Board of Licensure for Professional Land Surveyors (www.maine.gov/pfr/professionallicensing/professions/board-licensure-professional-land-surveyors) and tell them you want to get licensed. If you need help studying for the six-hour Fundamentals of Surveying (FS) licensure exam, sign up for a class.

Lawyers: Go to the Maine Board of Bar Examiners website (mainebar-examiners.org/foreign-legal-education/) Read about the provisions for foreign-trained lawyers to qualify for the Maine Bar exam. Submit your transcripts and course descriptions to them for review.

Tech: Introduce yourself to someone you know who has "made it" in tech in the U.S. and ask for ideas, connections, and internships. Inquire at the Roux Institute (roux.northeastern.edu/admissions/scholarship/request-information/) about their certificates and master's degrees, and corresponding scholarships. Or consider something quick, like online training in SQL and Python or Tableau, or a "bootcamp" in web development.

All of the above careers are open to you, even if you have no U.S. degrees, training, or experience.

So what's stopping you? Make a resolution to take a step forward for your career in 2022!

Updates from ILAP

By Julia Brown



ILAP creates new resource page for families in immigration court

Maine continues to welcome more newly arrived families who are in immigration court proceedings. Some of these families are on something called the "dedicated docket," which is a fast-track immigration court process.

ILAP has created a new resource page with self-help materials for newly arrived families who are in immigration court proceedings. ilapmaine.org/new-arrivals-in-immigration-court

Build Back Better passes House with some immigrant protections

In November, the House passed the Build Back Better Act. The bill includes work permits, protection from deportation, access to certain benefits, and the ability to travel for about seven million undocumented immigrants who have lived in the U.S. more than 10 years.

We are disappointed that Build Back Better does not currently include a path to citizenship, which is what immigrant communities want, have fought for, and deserve. However, the inclusion of immigration protections in the Build Back Better Act represents an important step forward toward relief for millions of undocumented immigrants.

CALL TO ACTION: Contact Maine's senators

Now it's on to the Senate! Call or email Maine's senators and demand that they support immigration relief in Build Back Better:

Sen. Susan Collins: (202) 224-2523

Sen. Angus King: (202) 224-5344

Work permit renewals

Individuals waiting for their asylum case to be adjudicated need to be able to work in order to provide for their families. Some Mainers with pending asylum applications have lost or will lose their jobs due to the government's extreme delays in renewing their work permits. The government sometimes is taking 10 months (or more!) to approve a work permit renewal.

What you can do: If your work permit is up for renewal, you should renew as early as six months before it expires. When you submit a renewal, you should get a receipt notice from the government, letting you know they have received the application. This receipt notice extends your work permit 180 days past its expiration date, and you can show the notice to your employer. Find more information here: help.asylumadvocacy.org/renewal-delays/



Each month "Let's Talk" will focus on sayings that might sound funny or confusing to a new language learner. So if you have ever thought "What did they mean by that?" or "What are they trying to say?" this column is for you.

It's that time of year again when everyone is thinking about the year that has passed and looking ahead to the New Year.

Many people use this time to evaluate and reevaluate what has worked or not worked for them in the previous year. Often, people use the New Year to set goals for future endeavors...so get out your calendars, planners, and journals, and here's to a purpose-filled 2022.

Here are four idioms – expressions in which the meanings of the words are not the same as the meaning of the saying – which one might hear used in connection with goal setting.

Buckle down — Get serious about a task or work diligently on a task or a problem

"Hugo needs to buckle down and study for his SATs if he wants to get into the college of his choice."

Explore all avenues — Try everything in order to find a solution or to obtain a desired result

"Casho is exploring all options so she can have the best outcome with her sickness."

Lay the foundation — Prepare or provide the basic ideas or structures for something

"The competing companies laid the foundation for a more friendly business relationship in the future."

At all costs — In any way possible, regardless of risk or expense

"Adelia wants to win the election at all costs, so she regularly checks in with her campaign staff"

If you have questions about sayings you have heard Americans use that you don't understand, or if you have questions about American culture, please email your questions to Claudia at amjambofrica3@gmail.com and "Let's Talk" will be happy to help.

Claudia Jakubowski has her master's degree in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages).

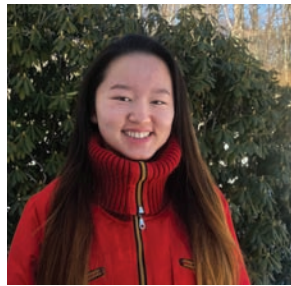


New Voices

A lost daughter

By Zabrina Richards

In China, between 1999 and 2016, 78,257 children were adopted by Americans, and I was one of those 78,257 children. At the time, China had a one-child policy. The majority of children who were adopted from China were girls, because China valued – and still values – their sons over their daughters. The one-child policy was more than propaganda-turned-legislation. It separated actual families, cut cultural ties for adopted children, and has made many adoptees question their self-worth.



At three years old, I was adopted by my white American family. The majority of my life I have been surrounded by white people. At one point in my life, I believed I was white. “My family’s white, my friends are white, of course I’m white.” Growing up, I felt like I was caught in between two worlds: the white world and the Chinese/Asian American world. I didn’t fit into the norm of the communities I was in. The only community that I felt like I could put myself in was the Chinese-American adoptee community. I didn’t speak my native tongue fluently, I didn’t grow up eating congee and steam buns for breakfast, and I don’t have Chinese American parents. I felt lost.

When white people see me, they make one of three assumptions. The first assumption is that I’m a friend of a friend. They automatically assume I am not part of my family because I am not genetically related to my family. The second assumption is that my father is Asian and I’m biracial. The third assumption is that I’m an international student, and my mom is someone who is just housing me.

But when Asian American people meet me, they see me as one of them. They see my family, and they know I’m adopted. They tell me about beauty standards in China. They speak to me in my language, while I respond in broken Mandarin. They smile at me, they fully embrace my identity and my family. With Asian Americans, I am accepted. With Asian Americans, I don’t have to choose, because we all share the experiences of being Asian in America.

However, the experience of a Chinese American adoptee is very complicated. You’re told that you’re too Chinese by some, but also too whitewashed by others. But after being told to assimilate into white American culture, I’m tired of trying to fit into white American culture. My journey of self-acceptance in relation to my Chinese heritage is long overdue. I want to know my first language, my hometown’s cuisine, and my culture. I want to learn about my motherland. And my experience as a Chinese American has taught me that extended family is not only either your forever family, or your biologically related family – it’s the community that fully accepts you and embraces you.

Zabrina Richards (she/her) identifies as a Chinese American adoptee and is currently studying at university. In the future, Zabrina wants to hold office and write legislation to uplift marginalized communities

“Do you celebrate the holidays?”

By Nsiona Nguizani

Every year, beginning around November 1, I am asked the same question over and over: “Do you celebrate Thanksgiving? Do you celebrate the holidays?”

I can understand why people might wonder whether or not immigrants would celebrate the holidays, but honestly, I think the season means more to recent immigrants than it does to anyone else. Most recent immigrants cross the Atlantic or the Pacific running for their lives, and at their arrival find safety. We are definitely thankful for this.

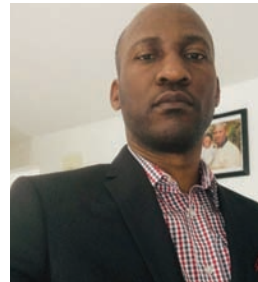
As immigrants, we left everything behind and came to this country hoping to start over. We wanted to seize the chance to live again, to succeed, to thrive, to work hard, and make a home for ourselves in the U.S., where there is freedom, opportunity, and basic human rights that for so many of us immigrants did not exist in our home countries. So, we are thankful. Immigrants want nothing more than to feel welcomed to and a part of the host country.

After our separation from our homeland, family, culture, and so on, we want the holiday’s spirit of unity to celebrate how far we’ve come in the land of opportunity with a big family meal. And participating in something that has become such a part of American life means a lot to us, because it helps to validate our progress toward an American identity.

America was created by the confluence of many people and cultures. I urge that your holiday meals be a beautiful blend of the classic U.S. staples, along with the food of other cultures. Immigrants feel loved, special, and valued when people show interest in their background, culture, and who they are overall as persons. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how precious immigrants are to this country. Every time a citizen expresses interest in us, it shows a spirit of inclusion.

The greatest gifts longtime Mainers can give recent immigrants during this holiday season are love and acceptance – welcome them in, invite them to the feast, and show them how we celebrate here.

Nsiona Nguizani is the president of the Angolan Community of Maine. He arrived in the U.S. in 2012, and is now a permanent resident.



Childhood Holidays in Africa

By Gashi



When I was a child, in the community I come from, holidays were not a time to travel for enjoyment or learning. During my childhood, the holidays were a time to participate in the work of the family. An example was herding livestock, such as cattle. Or going out to the fields to harvest maize, beans, bananas, and so on. We worked to take care of our own family’s food needs, not for trading purposes. I was so busy working during vacation that I was deprived of time to monitor my studies.

The life I lived taught me many things, including patience. I learned to imitate the sounds of animals and birds, and also to know the weather. During the holidays, my whole mind grew, because I was no longer in school, and was learning traditions and customs. And then when I returned to school, I had to put in a lot of effort and make sure I did well in my studies.

What I can say is that most children in sub-Saharan Africa try hard to ensure that they fulfill the responsibilities given to them by their parents during the holidays. They use a lot of energy and draw on their skills to do well.

But the vacation was always a challenging time, and children would have to stay home until they finished the duties their parents gave them – they couldn’t go anywhere to play with other kids until they’d finished all their duties. It was the same in any household you visited – a grandfather’s house, or an aunt’s – life was the same as at home, and work responsibilities were the same.

Traditions and customs of Americans and Africans from sub-Saharan Africa are very different. Here in the United States, when children go to school at this time of year, they are told by their peers where they will travel for the holidays. But for us as children back home, what we talked about was where we would graze livestock, or what fields we would harvest.

I believe there is a great change for today’s generation, unlike our own, because globalization has taken root everywhere. But even though the world is like a single village in some ways, people’s lives are not the same. When it comes to living conditions, and a country’s economy, things are still very different in different parts of the world.



Holiday Traditions

By Bénédicte Wonganombe

Cultural traditions provide us with a source of identity. They tell the story of where we came from and remind us of what has shaped our lives. They connect generations and strengthen our group bonds. They help us feel that we are part of something unique and special.

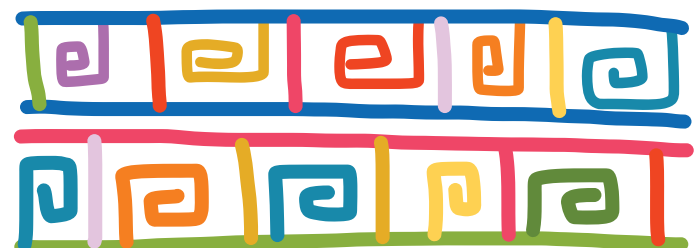
I’ve passed three Merry Christmas and Happy New Year holidays since I’ve been here in the U.S. I remember my first Christmas. Everything outside was white because it was

snowing – trees, roads, and cars. There were many kinds of decorations. The landscape of the city seemed like something from a fairy story book or movie, such as we had seen at the elementary school in my country, which was DR Congo. We took many pictures outside playing in the snow. Later that night, we went to the theater. Many kind people gave us gifts of chocolates, books, and warm clothes. I really liked it – this special time erased many worries that we had from our countries.

In my country, the Christmas and New Year holiday traditions are almost the same as here. We set off fireworks, put up some decorations on the tree and in our houses. However, in my country, a difference is that we spent all night outside. During the daytime hours of

December 24 and December 31, families built small houses with palm leaves beside their main house. We prepared by shopping for food, clothes, and drinks. Then on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve we danced, ate, drank, and sang until morning. We also put on a play about the birth of Jesus Christ on the night of the 24th. The adults usually went to the Christmas vigil Mass on December 24. Kids and young people went during the day on December 25. We were excited to go to that Mass because everyone could wear their new clothes, shoes, and decorations in their hair. It was very amazing! We kept the palm leaf house that we built on December 24 to use on the night of December 31 to January 1. New Year’s Day was like a big party. My father usually invited extended family, and we all cooked, ate, and celebrated together.

So, the cultural traditions of Merry Christmas and Happy New Year are special both in my country and here in the U.S. Both of them make kids, youth, and adults happy.



A community-based approach to health-care

By Rupal Ramesh Shah



“I was inspired by the Navnirman Andolan movement in the Indian state of Gujarat in 1974 to demand the removal of the chief minister. People were tired of the corruption and economic turmoil. It was a revolution that led to many changes, and since then I have always believed in working for and with the people.” – Nimitta Bhatt

The past couple of years, as the world has experienced a pandemic, healthcare has become a central topic in every conversation and on every news outlet. In low- and middle-income countries, as well as in some communities in Maine, community health workers have been at the forefront of the pandemic, caring for their patients. In fact, the pandemic has highlighted that the healthcare workers who know, understand, and have cared for their communities for years continue to have more success in caring for them during this pandemic. This piece describes one such community and its healthcare workers.

Nimitta Bhatt and her lifelong partner Ashvin Patel have dedicated their lives to bringing quality healthcare to the most rural communities in Gujarat. In 1987, they formed the non-profit Trust for Reaching the Unreached (TRU), located in India’s Panchmahal and Vadodara districts. “At that time, we had no money, just inspiration and ideas,” said Patel. With a starter loan of 20,000 Indian rupees, and hope, they decided to give life to their vision.

Many of TRU’s patients and their families are agriculturists, industrial workers, and construction and casual laborers – those who pick up odd jobs when available. As a result, most villagers from both districts earn modest wages. Ac-

ording to Bhatt, access to quality healthcare remains one of the biggest concerns for these citizens.

Bhatt studied science at St. Xavier’s College in Kolkata and has been involved in health management for over 25 years. Although she does not have formal training as a social worker, she has acquired a deep understanding of the field by paying close attention to the community’s healthcare needs. From programs on nutrition to mental health to sanitation, Bhatt has developed expertise about the specific needs of the community she serves.

Patel has a medical degree from the Medical College of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda in Vadodara. After working for 15 years in the field, he decided to study epidemiology to develop sustainable health interventions for his patients, and enrolled in the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, where he earned a master’s degree in epidemiology.

“I believe that in order to strengthen the healthcare systems in rural communities, we need to work closely with the community members, as the solutions come from within those systems,” Patel said. “In order to do my work, I have to be able to simplify science and medicine so everyone can understand and appreciate the basic information and knowledge.” This community-based approach is what makes TRU unique.

Together, Bhatt and Patel have built an organization that now serves over 700,000 people a year. The organization offers a number of programs, including a robust mental health program with a focus on children. “Mentally challenged children have a lot of difficulty integrating into the society. It causes further challenges for their families, and therefore, we work with all of them as a family unit,” said Patel.

The key element that makes Bhatt and Patel’s work in mental health uniquely successful is the fact that it is truly centered around the needs of the community. “In our community, people with mental health illnesses lose their standing in their family and eventually their community. However, once the patient is provided supportive therapy and counseling, we provide community-based rehabilitation. According to our records, in 2019 we were able to integrate more than 85% of the patients back into their society,” said Bhatt.

According to a February 2020 study published by Lancet, approximately 197.3 million people in India have mental health disorders. Both Bhatt and Patel say that the need for mental health services for people in low-resource settings such as the villages of Gujarat seems to be increasing. Bhatt pointed out that mental health always disproportionately affects women: “When men suffer, it’s their primary caregiver, such as the mother, wife, or sister, who is highly affected. When the woman suffers, she is shunned by her family and possibly her entire community.”

The healthcare center’s work would not be possible without community health workers, who get on-the-job training while assessing and solving real life issues as they work with experienced peers in areas such as maternal and child health. “This is the model of learning and working we have utilized in the communities of this village for many years. We currently have a group of 25 community health workers that are not only well-trained but also understand the history, culture, and dynamics of this community, which is essential when caring for patients,” said Bhatt. The organization has also trained over 200 nongovernmental organizations all over Gujarat to adopt the basic principles of community health in their ongoing work.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the work of the community health workers, especially in terms of reaching the most vulnerable patients. But Patel remains devoted to her work. “Our work at TRU is deeply intertwined with the needs of the community, which has faced crises such as floods and earthquakes in the past. But our philosophy is to develop solutions together. This pandemic is no different, as we continue our work with the people of the community.”

In this same way, community health workers in Maine also continue the important work on the ground, of caring for the people and providing the most essential resources they need – quality healthcare. Without a dedicated and passionate health workforce, the progress in healthcare could not be made, in Maine and all around the world, especially during this pandemic.

Rupal Ramesh Shah is a third-generation Tanzanian who grew up in an ethnically Indian family in the town of Moshi, at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. Her family immigrated to the U.S. when she was a teenager.

A gift of good fortune

By Coco McCracken

“I thought it was a good thing; apparently it’s worthy of mockery.”



This is the line with which actor/comedian Ronnie Chieng sets up a joke during his comedy special *Asian Comedian Destroys America!* (2019) Chieng’s joke refers to the well-known stereotype that first-generation Chinese parents want their kids to become doctors. The audience laughs hard when he says that not only is the stereotype true, but it’s never been about helping people. “Helping people is the unfortunate byproduct of becoming a healthcare professional,” he continues, to more laughter, and ends with the climax, where he reveals that the biggest holiday of the year – the Lunar New Year – translated into English, means “Hope you get rich.”

Growing up, our aunts and uncles translated “New Year” a little less crudely – “congratulations and good fortune” was the theme of our celebrations. But in my 35 years of being a second-generation Chinese-Canadian, we rarely exchanged any type of gift that wasn’t cold, colorful cash. And at Chinese weddings, registries are a fairly new way of gift giving. When I try to explain to my Caucasian inlaws that giving cash at a wedding isn’t rude, but rather a sign of respect, the notion is still met with raised eyebrows. We like to hide our reverence for money, even though money is what keeps America spinning.

When you’re a kid on the Lunar New Year, there’s only one thing that goes through your head all day (other than homemade dumplings): free money. “Hung bows,” as we pronounced them, are little red envelopes filled with cash which are given to any young, unmarried kids. As I ran around my grandparents’ house with my cousins, my uncles and aunts would stop us mid-staircase slide, and tuck a \$10 or \$20 bill in our little pockets. Once home, my siblings and I would lay out all the red envelopes and count our earnings

for doing nothing. “Why would anyone get married?” I remember thinking to myself as I licked my fingers, and counted my profits once more.

The customs vary from house to house, and region to region. Some families give the envelopes to elderly or unemployed members of the family, for example, while others don’t. In some regions it’s considered best if the money amount inside ends in an even digit, since odd numbers are bad luck. But the exception is at funerals, where giving odd numbered cash is considered good luck. (Yes – we give out cash while we bury our loved ones. We also burn fake paper money because one must keep the good fortune going in the afterlife.)

Any iterations of the number four should never appear inside the red packet, since four is synonymous with death. If you can manage it, the bills should be crisp and new to signify – you guessed it – more luck in money and wealth. All of these layered superstitions provided the backdrop of the values that our family held. But, oddly enough, never once did I think these were shallow or even capitalist values. I should note that our family doesn’t come anywhere close to the Crazy Rich Asians you saw in theaters (in which Cheing also stars) or read about in books. And because I was so used to collecting money at such a young age, my favorite thing to do with the money was to save it.

Now that I’m married, it’s my turn to give cash to my little cousins, mostly at Christmas. Because so many of us are Catholic and mixed, our Christmases have pretty much overtaken the Lunar New Year celebrations. We participate in Secret Santa but we still exchange “hung bows.” My dad makes a turkey and fresh wontons. My aunt brings clams and king crab. My uncle purées a garlic mash. My cousins bring the beer, the wine, the mahjong. Our grandparents aren’t with us anymore, but our parents have eased into their places. We ask them, “How do you even spell hóngbǎo?” We ask them, “Where did the traditions come from?” They know the answers to some of our questions, otherwise they tell us to just Google it. I text my newly married sister and we try to figure out which of our cousins’ little kids still gets a red packet. We will cling onto this little ritual as long as we can, since so many others have already slipped from our grasp.

Chieng resumes his joke about Chinese people loving money. “It’s the money and the prestige. Because if you’re a first generation immigrant, your children becoming doctors is the quickest way you can turn things around. Instant credibility, instant respectability, instant money. You flip the clan narrative around.” Catching my breath from laughter, I pause and rewind this moment. “Respect. Credibility. Flipping the narrative around.” If our fixation on good fortune is ancient, what’s with the modern mockery? Is Chieng doing what so many Asians do in front of American audiences: beat them to the punch line?

If anything, Chinese culture’s obsession with money goes deeper than the items one can spend it on. Money is a symbol of freedom, and respect – especially in North America. How can I blame my grandparents for wanting my dad to become a doctor after having been teased for how they looked, smelled, and sounded their entire lives? Chinese people love money – sure. Wouldn’t you love something that you could control in a country that controlled you? Like many stories in Chinese folklore, there’s always a meaning beyond the surface. It’s really not about the money. After all, when we celebrate together we give money away, and when we die, we burn it.

Coco McCracken (she/her/hers) is a photographer & writer who lives in Portland with her daughter and husband. Born in Toronto, Canada, Coco has always been interested in writing about the intersectionality of place, race, and identity. She currently has a newsletter called Coco’s Echo, and is working on her first book

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Introducing Mayor Deqa Dhalac of South Portland



Mayor Deqa Dhalac of South Portland with Dr. Abdullahi Ahmed
Photo by John Ochira

successfully encouraged South Portland to join Cities for Citizenship, a national initiative to encourage citizenship and civic engagement. She helped pass an important 2019 resolution supporting accelerated climate action. And she helped lead the City's response to the murder of George Floyd.

"When George Floyd was murdered, it really hit home for me," she told Amjambo Africa in October, 2020. So she presented a resolution, affirmed by unanimous vote of the city council, condemning the murder of George Floyd and stating that racism and bigotry would not be tolerated in South Portland.

But Dhalac didn't stop there. "I didn't want us to make a statement and think that work was done. We have to look at human beings in general – not just a small, privileged group, but also the elderly, disabled, LGBTQ." Together with Pedro Vazquez and Margaret Brownlee, she began working toward formation of the permanent South Portland Human Rights Commission, which passed easily through the Council. Unlike many such commissions formed in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder, the one in South Portland is permanent.

"I wanted to create a commission that would be long-term, and not easy to get rid of, unlike many such commissions and steering committees, which are ad hoc, set up for the short term."

Dhalac's new position as Mayor of South Portland is widely touted as significant well beyond Maine's state borders. CNN ran a story on her election with the headline A Maine city that's 90% White now has a Somali mayor <https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/07/us/maine-mayor-deqa-dhalac-somali-cec/index.html>

Pious Ali, in 2013 the first African-born Muslim to be elected to public office in Maine, and now Portland's

longest-serving city councilor, reflected, "I would never have thought that eight years down the road we would have an African immigrant Muslim woman be mayor of Maine's fourth largest city ... it is amazing, good for my daughter and other immigrant girls to see someone like them in a visible, prominent role. It's important."



Fatuma Hussein, Mumina, and the mayor's daughter Saharla | Photo by John Ochira

“Make the change the world needs.”

— Deqa Dhalac 2020

When South Portland's new mayor, Deqa Dhalac, was running (successfully) in South Portland's Special Municipal Election in 2018 to fill a recently-vacated city council seat, she told *Amjambo Africa*, "I want to unite people – bring all of South Portland together to work on the issues all residents of South Portland care about."

In 2018, her goal seemed ambitious for a female Somali immigrant in one of the nation's whitest states. Fast forward to December 6, 2021- just three years later. That was when the entire South Portland city council, along with an audi-



Mayor Dhalac and her son Mahad | Photo by John Ochira

torium full of well-wishers, rose to their feet in a standing ovation for Dhalac as she was installed mayor of Maine's fourth largest city, South Portland. Clearly, she had the unified backing of the Council, which elected her unanimously to her new position.

Dhalac was raised in an educated family in Mogadishu and arrived in the U.S. already speaking English – her father spoke four languages, and had her tutored as a child in English, Italian, and Arabic. A powerful woman, Mayor Dhalac is known to people all over the state for her fierce work ethic, strong ideals, passion for helping Maine, and skills honed by two master's degrees, a background in social work, and years of extensive professional and leadership experience. She has lived in the U.S. for twenty-nine years; in South Portland for over thirteen years; and raised and educated her two children in South Portland.

During her first two terms as city councilor, Dhalac suc-



Do you have **QUESTIONS** about the immigration court process?



If you are enrolled in the Department of Homeland Security's Alternatives to Detention and will have a hearing at an immigration court in one of the 11 cities listed on this flyer, please contact the **Family Group Legal Orientation Program (FGLOP)**.

What is the Family Group Legal Orientation Program (FGLOP)?

The FGLOP is a program that offers **free information** about:

1. The **immigration court process**;
2. Possible **legal options** available in an immigration hearing; and
3. Seeking the assistance of a **legal representative**.



If you have questions, **please contact** the organization *closest to where your court hearing will be held*.

Boston, Massachusetts
Catholic Charities
617-464-8000

Denver, Colorado
Rocky Mountain Immigrant
Advocacy Network
303-433-2812

Detroit, Michigan
Michigan Immigrant
Rights Center
313-329-7900

El Paso, Texas
Diocesan Migrant &
Refugee Services
915-532-3975

Los Angeles, California
Esperanza Immigrant
Rights Project
323-362-2767 (call or text)

Miami, Florida
Catholic Legal Services
561-510-6865
(call or text)

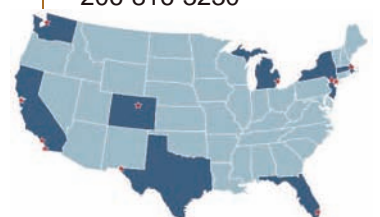
Newark, New Jersey
Catholic Charities
973-733-3516 ext.161228,
or select "5" in directory

New York City, New York
Catholic Charities
315-690-4831
(call or text)

San Diego, California
American Bar Association
Immigrant Justice Project
619-255-8810

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Immigrant Center for
Women and Children
415-728-0420

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Lutheran Community
Services Northwest
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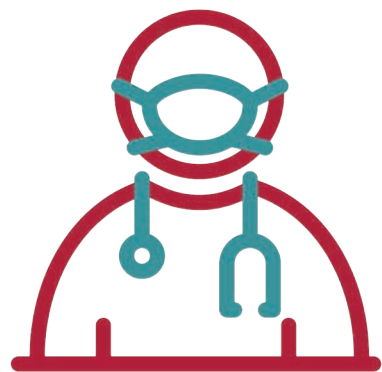


Information on your case, including your next scheduled hearing, is available via phone **1-800-898-7180** and EOIR's website: <https://portal.eoir.justice.gov/infosystem>.

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