Community Voices and the Impact of Global Awareness

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Community Voices and the Impact of Global Awareness

Arch Grieve, Eugenie Kirenga, Martha-Jeanette Rodriguez, Welcome Dayton, Cyril Ibe, and S. Michael Murphy II

In this session, distinguished members of the larger Dayton community spoke about how they have promoted global engagement in the area and made suggestions on what additional steps need to take place to turn Dayton into a genuinely global city/community.
Arch Grieve

**Dayton as a Global City: Dayton Council on World Affairs and Dayton Sister City Committee**

The Dayton Sister City Committee was created by the Dayton City Commission in 1964. Committee members are volunteers appointed by the Dayton City Commission. The Dayton Sister City Committee is a member of Sister Cities International, created by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1956 in conjunction with a conference on citizen diplomacy. Its mission is to “promote peace through mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation—one individual, one community at a time.

The Dayton Council on World Affairs is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has served the Dayton region for 70 years by educating and engaging the local community with global programs. DCOWS believes that the more we understand the world around us, the better we will be positioned to meet the challenges ahead.

**Upcoming Adult Programming: Dayton Sister City Committee**

- Adult exchanges
- Monrovia, Liberia, artist residency
- Oiso, Japan/Dayton 50th anniversary celebration

**Recent Adult Program DCOWA Events**

- China Town Hall: Local Connections, National Reflections, featuring the Honorable Condoleezza Rice
- Fair Trade Coffee event featuring Derek Petrey, professor of Spanish and director of the Center for Teaching and Learning at Sinclair Community College
- Global Views, Local Brews: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Dayton Connections

**Youth Programs: Junior Council on World Affairs**

- Thomas V. Pearson Academic Quiz Bowl
- National WACA Quiz Bowl Competition
- Annual Jacob Dorn Youth Forum
- Geography Bowl
- International Career Fair

**Youth Programs: Dayton Sister City Committee**
- Exchange: Dayton/Oiso, Japan
- Exchange: Dayton/Augsburg, Germany
- Dayton/BiH Internship Exchange

**Four Cities Young Leader Academy**
- Local residents host attendees

**Join Us!**
- Dayton Sister City Soiree: Fundraiser for Dayton Sister City Scholarship Program; April 25, 2019, Lily’s Bistro
- Money supports scholarships for student exchange
- First two awarded in 2019 for Augsburg exchange

**Get Involved**
- Follow on social media
- Join DCOWA mailing list
- Become a member of DCOWA
- Speak at upcoming Global Views/Local Brews event
- Let DCOWA advertise your internationally focused event
- Join Dayton Sister Cities Committee as a friend or committee member and get involved in committee work.
- Find us online: daytonsistercitycommittee.org and dcowa.com
Eugenie Kirenga

What are you doing to promote global consciousness in your work?

As someone who works with different people from all over around the world (refugees and immigrants), my role is to ensure that those people are getting help they need to be integrated. I meet them through outreach education, and tell them about their rights and provide my contact information to them in case they need more help with anything. To be able to succeed, I work with community leaders, schools, churches, and other organizations that work closely with this population. The immigrants and refugees are coming from different background and have different cultures. Sometimes they are isolated from other people because of language barriers. The receiving community (Americans) recognizes them because of their outfits, how they talk, or how they behave. They may judge them in negative ways or in positive ways. It depends. One of my roles is to advocate for them and have their voices to be heard. The most vulnerable ones are the ones who don’t speak English because they don’t know how to express themselves or how to talk to those who judge them about their cultures or their ethics of conduct. It is also difficult to get the basic needs because of poor communication. To be able to help them, I must identify their issues first, and then do advocacy accordingly to what I heard from them or what I experienced myself. Of course, you need the support from individuals or organizations who understand these new community members.

How do you plan to build on that work to continue promoting global awareness?

The ways I plan to promote global awareness is having more relationship with the receiving community and have conversations with them about immigrants’ and refugees’ issues to continue the advocacy. A deeper relationship with immigrants and refugees to understand more in depth what they are going through is also a key
for advocacy. I have to encourage those who can speak English to tell their stories about their experiences. Our political leaders have to know what the refugees and immigrants need in order to make policy changes. As one of the New African Immigrants Commission board members, one of my duties is to advocate for the needs of African immigrants and refugees. One of my responsibilities is to communicate with legislators and amplify the voices and concerns of immigrants and refugees. My new goal is to ensure that the legislators are not ignoring issues immigrants and refugees face. This is also why voting in public elections matters. We have to elect officials who work for all people.
Martha-Jeanette Rodríguez

What are you doing to promote global consciousness in your work? How do you plan to build on that work to continue promoting global awareness?

The U.S. is a pot of immigrants, and every day more people are coming, even though our country has created difficult situations for immigrants. In my work as an immigrant resource specialist, I have been educating immigrants and Americans that are born here about differences between the cultures, looking for understanding and empathy. Over the last few years, I participated in several panels and voices of immigrant experiences where I had the opportunity to share my own story and invited other immigrants to do the same. These voices and experiences are giving space to immigrants to teach about their cultures, and to help native-born Americans become conscious about the real situations of why people come to the U.S. and all the challenges that they have to confront. Also, these experiences help both immigrants and native-born Americans to learn about why the other person reacts a certain way or doesn’t understand them (examples: eye contact, etc.).

I organized presentations at churches and ESOL schools about civil rights related to employment and housing and invited attorneys from ABLE to educate families about how to respond when facing immigration officers. Also, I invited police officers to teach about how to respond to the police and know about their rights. As a part of this education, I have been doing power of attorney clinics for parents that, in case of emergency, may need to leave their children with a family member or friend.

One thing that Latinos Unidos is doing, which is very helpful to promote global consciousness, is with a local Rapid Response group. We are inviting Americans who want to support immigrants and refugees to meet with us and look for ways to support families in different areas. We are looking for people who are available to support with transportation—providing rides to those who need to go to court in Cleveland or Cincinnati and Columbus for reporting to ICE—and to provide supplies and economic support. This economic
support is only for people who are most vulnerable and have the best chance of staying in the U.S.

Other ways that I promote global consciousness is by sharing about different situations of my clients, and looking for organizations that can help them. At conferences like the National Immigrant Integration Conference and organizations like Welcoming America, I look for support with information about how to respond to my clients’ situations. I have been learning what different organizations are doing, and they provide support with information that helps me to improve in my work.

This year I will continue promoting global awareness with the work that I have been doing. I will continue to help the community become conscious of how important it is to support each other so that we can all have a better life. I will work on a program to help lift people out of poverty and keep doing the small business and co-op training that I have been doing with Latinos Unidos.
Welcome Dayton: Immigrant Friendly City
City of Dayton Human Relations Council
371 West Second Street, Suite 100
Dayton, Ohio 45402
937-333-1406
www.welcomedayton.org

• Welcome immigrants to Dayton.
• Ensure immigrants have the same rights and opportunities.
• Build immigrant leadership, engagement, and inclusion.
• Encourage a well-informed, safe, and connected community.

Civil Rights Play

Latinos Unidos

International Women’s Day

Welcoming Schools

World Refugee Day

Business and Economic Development
  • Taqueria Mixteca restaurant
  • Business resource fair

Community, Culture, and the Arts
  • World Refugee Day
  • World soccer games
  • Hispanic Heritage Festival
  • Dia de los Muertos

Government and Justice
  • Mexican Consulate
  • Police department building trust and relationships
Cyril Ibe

‘Good Evening Africa’: Radio Meets Storyteller

Storytelling in Speaking to the African Condition

When the host of Good Evening Africa was offered an opportunity to introduce the live performing arts and radio conversation series last March at the University of Dayton’s Global Voices symposium, the storyteller ended by calling the attention of his student and community audience to that age-old truism that we, as humans, embody personal stories unique to each of us. We enrich our collective life experience by willingly sharing our stories with one another, thus unleashing the innate power of storytelling to impact lives. As the iconic African American poet and writer Maya Angelou would remind us, “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.” More on this theme later.

For now, the late legendary Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe often repeated the saying of his Igbo people that: “Wherever something stands, something else stood before it.”

Here’s the story that stood before the birth of Good Evening Africa in Chicago in 2002, and it goes back to my childhood in southeastern Nigeria—in Igboland. As a child, my favorite and number-one pastime was not soccer—and believe me, I played enough soccer and caught enough goals as a goalie. Rather, my favorite pastime was literally crawling at the feet of my paternal grandfather and other elders of my village as they told stories. They shared personal coming-of-age narratives, entrepreneurial pursuits, and folklore. It was fascinating to me, heart-warming, imagination-stretching. As I listened, I asked questions and relished their answers. They admired my curious young mind. While my peers ran around in the compound playing soccer in the open space, or chasing livestock on the loose for entertainment, I always wondered why they did not bother to lend their ear to the tales of our elders.

At the end of each storytelling session, the elders rewarded me with treats – kola nuts, dried meat, and palm wine, which were
reserved for adults and men advanced in age like themselves. And sometimes with cash rewards as well.

I was not a boy who kept those stories to himself. What good are stories if one day they would die with the few people who heard them? I would take my treats, call my peers to gather, and I retold them the stories. I lured them with my rewards, particularly the dried meat and cash, and it often worked. I delighted in telling them the same stories I had just heard from our elders, meticulously retelling them in the voices of the original storytellers, even mimicking their tones and mannerisms. When the elders passed by, they winked at me with approval.

Top photo: Tom Carroll of Seefari plays live for a radio audience as Good Evening Africa is introduced at Central State University in October 2017.

Bottom photo: Performer David Bamlango, poet Kabuika Kamunga, and Simone Kashama, all from the Democratic of Congo; novelist Benjamin Kwakye (center, standing) and performer/dramatist David Donkor, both of Ghana; and Nigerian flutist Mayi Ojisua were pioneer guests of Good Evening Africa, held in Chicago in 2002.
What’s in a Nickname?

They nicknamed me “Oji Onu Ibeya,” which roughly meant several different things: the one who reports to others, the Spokesman. Later in my childhood, this nickname came with several elder-directed oversight responsibilities over my peers, but that’s another story.

Radio Meets Storyteller and Storytelling

Fast forward to my time as a radio host and producer in Chicago in 1990s through early 2000s. My magazine-style radio program focused on Africa, dishing a rich blend of conversations on the performing and literary arts, politics, and more on Africa and their extended global connection in speaking to the African condition. Whenever I interviewed an African writer, or any writer about Africa, or a performer, storyteller, poet, I would always think to myself: I wish I could magically expand the audience to let more people hear their story, beyond the people who would listen to them on Chicago airwaves.

Stories of African immigrants penning tales and singing their blues in foreign lands around the world. Tales of former Peace Corps volunteers, missionaries, and academics whose direct contact with Africa has forever changed their feelings and perspectives on the continent.

Thus, Good Evening Africa was created as a live performing arts and radio conversation series in April 2002, to offer a unique radio platform to harvest and celebrate African stories from myriad storytellers willing to share on radio—itself a distinct medium for storytelling.

Good Evening Africa was launched at a restaurant named Ethiopian Diamond Restaurant. About a dozen African immigrants in Chicago—along with their African American, Afro-Caribbean cousins, and even former Peace Corps volunteers and missionaries who had served in Africa—were present as well. They all gathered to celebrate Africa with the arts. They spoke in poetry, music, drama, and in conversations with the radio host who extended an invitation.
The live performances, readings, and conversations were recorded and shared later with a larger radio audience on a Chicago college radio station. The audience, in unmistakable terms, showed their appreciation of *Good Evening Africa*, as Chicago media weighed in equally and approvingly with rave reviews.

The following is a sampling of the feedback received:

*Good Evening Africa* is, indeed, a powerful medium of expression for the many and diverse voices of Africa.

Congolese poet Kabuika Kamunga

*Good Evening Africa* was GREAT. … The creativity was enormous.

Chicago attendee Patricia Deer

It is so good to have such a cross-section of culture in one place. It fed me in so many wonderful ways. It made me homesick for the Caribbean.

Poet/writer M. Eliza Hamilton Abegunde

It was quite excellent, refreshing and satisfying. You may just have stumbled onto something fantastic.

Chicago attendee C. Emeka Ukachukwu

We took *Good Evening Africa* to different venues around the great city of Chicago, the City of Big shoulders—art galleries and museums, school auditoriums, and theaters—from 2002 to 2004.

In early 2005, I became a transplant from Chicago back to the Miami Valley region of Ohio. *Good Evening Africa* remained unpacked until October 25, 2017—a significant milestone indeed. On that day, Chicago’s loss became Central State University’s gain.
An audience of students and community members witnessed the unpacking, and relaunching, of *Good Evening Africa* in a university performance space. This was made possible through the vision of Dr. Robert Franklin, WCSU’s general manager, who sees unique potential for this culture-rich program, even imagining worldwide distribution of the show.

In its new form—and articulated at the University of Dayton’s Global Voices symposium—*Good Evening Africa* promises to seek out universities and colleges around the United States to highlight stories on their campuses and communities where their academic works, scholarship, as well as artistic expressions reflect the African condition. In turn, the radio products of this venture can be shared with universities back in Africa at no cost to them.

I have noted, in my communication with top officials of the University of Dayton in pitching a *Good Evening Africa* performance on campus:

> We are drawn by the richness of stories that emerge out of Africa as universities like UD reach out to the continent to provide unique opportunities for their students and faculty to venture into far-flung places in our global world of today. Our unwavering belief is that sharing these stories before a university/community audience and making it available on radio celebrates the rich scholarship and world community engagement exemplified in stories like UD’s.

The same can be said of other American universities, and we are willing to share the stories from one university stage to another.

**Telling the Untold Story Inside You About Africa**

To return to and heed Maya Angelou’s words, we must always seek a larger audience for our stories about Africa by constantly assembling a host of voices to highlight the African condition in a world where diversity of storytellers in our public media and public space worldwide is never a guarantee.
A proverb of the Hopi Native American Indian group reminds us that “those who tell the stories, rule the world.”

Cyril Ibe, creator and host of Good Evening Africa, has been teaching journalism and digital media at Central State University, Wilberforce, Ohio, since 2006.
Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley (CSSMV) offers a humanitarian response to men, women, and children seeking protection from unstable or unsafe conditions in their home country: conditions such as civil war, torture, rape, ethnic genocide, forced conscription, and imprisonment. Refugees who have fled their native lands due to social, political, or religious persecution are welcomed by the U.S. for the opportunity to live in a safe and secure environment. Federal funding is allocated for refugee resettlement services from the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration (DOS/PRM) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR), with the overarching goal to assist refugees achieve self-sufficiency and successful community integration as soon as possible after their U.S. arrival.

CSSMV provides services to an average of 250 newly arrived refugees each year. Funding is used for the initial expenses of rent, utilities, and basic household furnishings/supplies, as well as for case-management and employment services, administrative services, and operating costs. Services for families and individuals begins about two weeks prior to arrival when the resettlement team is notified of the U.S. date of arrival. In this pre-arrival stage, housing is arranged, a case manager is assigned and the bio data information from the case is reviewed by the team for special circumstances to be considered for services. During this two-week period, volunteers are engaged for assistance with housing setup, grocery shopping, and meal preparation. On the day of arrival, the refugees are greeted at the airport and transported to their furnished home where an ethnically appropriate meal has been prepared for them (oftentimes by former refugees that share their culture).

After a brief home and safety orientation, they are left to rest until the following business day when the intake and orientation process begins. Case managers facilitate initial “core services,” ensuring access to appropriate seasonal clothing, a Social Security
card application, enrollment in public benefits (Medicaid, food stamps, cash), access to a comprehensive health screening (including immunizations, a physical exam, and referral to ongoing healthcare services), enrollment in ESOL classes (adults) or school (children), cultural orientation, development of a self-sufficiency plan, and referral to employment services.

Through an eligibility assessment, employable refugees are generally enrolled in employment programs. Employment services include pre-employment orientation, resume development, a weekly “Job Club,” job-development and -placement support, transportation to interviews, job-retention support, interpretation assistance, ongoing assessment of progress, assistance with addressing barriers to self-sufficiency, assistance with access to and/or referral to healthcare or other community resources.

In addition to the expected cases arriving through the assigned process, the CSSMV refugee program also receives “Secondary Migrants” (refugees who were originally resettled in another U.S. city and relocated to Dayton). Though they are not eligible for financial support or the core services as described above, Secondary Migrants are eligible for resettlement-related services for up to five years after their U.S. arrival date. The Secondary Migrants arriving in Dayton generally intend to join a family member, friend, or an acquaintance within their ethnic community, and have hopes to continue pursuit of their resettlement goals in Dayton. The CSSMV refugee team responds through case-management and employment
support, beginning with an assessment of needs that identifies the level of service needed and a plan that helps them continue with their self-sufficiency goals.

*S. Michael Murphy II is a program manager for refugee resettlement in the Catholic Social Services of the Miami Valley Center for Families.*