

SPECIAL EDITION

Nigeria
April 2011
Elections

CROSSROADS

Vol. 16
Number 7

A Newsletter of the United States Mission, Nigeria.

April 2011 Elections:

Civil Society, Democracy and Elections



Presidential Proclamation
**National African
American History
Month 2011**

The great abolitionist and orator Frederick Douglass once told us, "If there is no struggle, there is no progress." Progress in America has not come easily, but has resulted from the collective efforts of generations. For centuries, African American men and women have persevered to enrich our national life and bend the arc of history toward justice. From resolute Revolutionary War soldiers fighting for liberty to the hardworking students of today reaching for horizons their ancestors could only have imagined, African Americans have strengthened our Nation by leading reforms, overcoming obstacles, and breaking down barriers. During National African American History Month, we celebrate the vast contributions of African Americans to our nation's history and identity.

This year's theme, "African Americans and the Civil War," invites us to reflect on 150 years since the start of the Civil War and on the patriots of a young country who fought for the promises of justice and equality laid out by our forbearers. In the Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln not only extended freedom to those still enslaved within rebellious areas, he also opened the door for African Americans to join the Union effort.

Tens of thousands of African Americans enlisted in the United States Army and Navy, making extraordinary sacrifices to help unite a fractured country and free millions from slavery. These gallant soldiers, like those in the 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment, served with distinction, braving both intolerance and the perils of war to inspire a Nation and expand the domain of freedom. Beyond the

battlefield, black men and women also supported the war effort by serving as surgeons, nurses, chaplains, spies, and in other essential roles. These brave Americans gave their energy, their spirit, and sometimes their lives for the noble cause of liberty.

Over the course of the next century, the United States struggled to deliver fundamental civil and human rights to African Americans, but African Americans would not let their dreams be denied. Though Jim Crow segregation slowed the onward march of history and expansion of the American dream, African Americans braved bigotry and violence to organize schools, churches, and neighborhood organizations.

Bolstered by strong values of faith and community, black men and women have launched businesses, fueled scientific advances, served our Nation in the Armed Forces, sought public office, taught our children, and created ground-breaking works of art

and entertainment. To perfect our Union and provide a better life for their children, tenacious civil rights pioneers have long demanded that America live up to its founding principles, and their efforts continue to inspire us.

Though we inherit the extraordinary progress won by the tears and toil of our predecessors, we know barriers still remain on the road to equal opportunity. Knowledge is our strongest tool against injustice, and it is our responsibility to empower every child in America with a world-class education from cradle to career. We must continue to build on our nation's foundation of freedom and ensure equal opportunity, economic security, and civil rights for all Americans. After a historic recession has devastated many American families, and particularly African Americans, we must continue to create jobs, support our middle class, and strengthen pathways for families to climb out of poverty. Read more at: <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>. ❖





Terence McCulley
U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria

In April Elections, the Goal is Ensuring that the Results Represent the Will of the Nigerian People

intended to provide the citizens of Nigeria with greater access to information about the workings of their government. This is a very positive step, as an informed citizenry, the freedom to speak openly, and the right to associate with like-minded citizens remain important bulwarks of democracy.

This issue of *CROSSROADS* focuses on "Civil Society, Democracy, and Elections." In a healthy democracy, elections represent just the starting point for good government -- one that protects and serves the needs of its citizens, including minorities, respects the rule of law, promotes a vibrant civil society, and allows citizens to speak freely.

The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) recently announced that nearly 67 million Nigerian citizens have registered to vote in the April general elections. In this young democracy, each and every individual can exert an important influence on the outcome of elections -- especially local ones -- simply by encouraging friends, neighbors, co-workers, and others to register and vote on issues important to their communities. The United States and other international

partners plan to observe the April general elections, an honor and a responsibility that all of us take seriously, but which matters only if Nigerians exercise their most important civic responsibility by participating in these elections. As a friend and interested observer, I encourage you to vote in these important elections. Participating in free, fair, and transparent elections would demonstrate to the international community the strength of Nigerian democracy.

The Embassy has also worked actively with Nigerian communities and local partner organizations to help address some of the challenges facing Nigeria -- from HIV-AIDS to economic development in the Niger Delta. You can find articles about our joint efforts on pages eight and nine. Another story reports on a strategic dialogue between Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Nigeria's active civil society groups. Each story highlights our countries' rich and long-standing bilateral friendship. Please enjoy this special issue of *CROSSROADS*!

Terence P. McCulley, United States Ambassador to Nigeria

Dear *CROSSROADS* Readers; as Nigeria approaches historic national elections in April, its citizens are actively debating the elements of democracy, how best to exercise their civic responsibilities, and wisely choose their leaders. The National Assembly has approved a Freedom of Information Bill



is published bimonthly by the Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Nigeria. Address all correspondence to the Editor, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive, Central Business Area, Abuja, Nigeria. Tel: (09) 461-4000. Fax: 09-461-4305

LAGOS OFFICE:
U.S. Consulate General, Public Affairs Section, 2, Broad Street, P.O. Box 554 Lagos - Nigeria, Tel.: +234-703-150-4867/2444.

E-mail at: crossroads@state.gov
Website at: <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>

EDITORIAL TEAM
PETER R. CLAUSSEN
(Country Public Affairs Officer)
TINA D. ONUFER
(Public Affairs Officer, Lagos)
DEBORAH ROBIN CROFT
Information Officer
IDIKA U. ONYUKWU
(Editor)

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Nigerian Ambassador to the U.S. Ambassador Ade Adefuye (left), and U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria Terence McCulley (right) applaud Greg Gottlieb and Fatima Bamidele at the joint communiqué on Agric and food Security in Abuja. Embassy Photo by Susan Jatau.

U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission: Agric and Food Security

The inaugural meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Working Group of the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission met on February 15–16, 2011, in Abuja, Nigeria. The meeting was co-chaired by the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs. Fatima B.A. Bamidele and USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Food Security Greg Gottlieb. The Nigerian delegation included officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Ministry of Water Resources, Federal Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Central Bank of Nigeria, and National Investment Promotion Council. The U.S. delegation included officials from the State Department, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the

Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Commerce. Representatives from both the Nigerian and U.S. private sector also participated in the discussions.

The governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the United States of America acknowledge the shared objective of strengthening the agriculture sector in the region, and that improvements in policy and its implementation can promote overall economic growth and increase the income of farmers and others in the agriculture value chain.

The U.S. government will support Nigeria's Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) Commitment and align its agriculture programs with the National Agriculture Investment Plan (NAIP) within the CAADP framework. The Nigerian government committed

to achieve at least 6 percent annual agricultural growth by allocating not less than 10 percent of the national budget to agriculture sector, such as increasing farmer access to markets with roads and improving access to agriculture inputs, processing, and post harvest storage facilities.

The U.S. government will provide policy support for the Nigerian government to review agricultural policies that inhibit investment in the agricultural sector, and promote agribusiness loans and other mechanisms to create better jobs and build productivity in the sector. The U.S. government will provide additional policy support for Nigeria's draft biotechnology law currently under consideration by the National Assembly.

Both governments will work together to facilitate regional

agricultural trade by improving the flow of road traffic along the two major trade corridors, improving the efficiency of port operations, strengthening customs operations and regulations, and reducing protective barriers and logistical hurdles pertaining to agriculture and trade. The U.S. government will assist the Nigerian government as it works to improve harmonization of regional trade policies.

Both governments will seek to connect private companies from their respective countries to encourage investment in Nigerian agriculture.

Both governments intend to follow-up on these commitments and



USAID Deputy Assistant Administrator for Food Security Greg Gottlieb, left, and Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs. Fatima B.A. Bamidele exchange signed copies of the joint communique in Abuja.

seek further collaboration to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the Agriculture and Food Security Working Group.

Both governments agree to convene the full meeting of the Binational Commission in Abuja in summer 2011. ❖

BNC Highlights:

February 15–16, 2011 - The inaugural meeting of the Agriculture and Food Security Working Group of the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission met in Abuja, Nigeria.

Sept. 13, 2010 - U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission Niger Delta & Security Cooperation Working Group Meeting convenes for its third full working group meeting in Washington, hosted by the Council on Foreign Relations.

May 27, 2010 - U.S.-Nigeria Nuclear Safety, Security, and Nonproliferation Consultations.

These discussions mark another step in U.S.-Nigerian bilateral efforts to work more closely together on commonly held international security objectives.

May 25-27, 2010 - Launch of First Working Group of the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission.

May 25, 2010: Under Secretary María Otero led the U.S. delegation to launch the Good Governance, Transparency and Integrity (GTI)

Working Group of the Binational Commission in Nigeria on May 25-27. This is the first of four working groups to convene on this issue.

Apr. 6, 2010: Signing Ceremony for the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission

Secretary Clinton "Today, we are taking a concrete step forward that will strengthen and deepen the partnership between our two nations. This new vehicle for cooperation grew out of discussions we began during my visit to Nigeria last August. And it reflects the commitment of the United States to this absolutely critical bilateral relationship."

Apr. 6, 2010: U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Nigerian Secretary to the Government of the Federation Yayale Ahmed inaugurated the U.S.-Nigeria Binational Commission, a strategic dialogue designed to expand mutual cooperation across a broad range of shared interests. The Commission is a collaborative forum to build partnerships for tangible and measurable progress on issues critical to our shared future. ❖



Ambassador Anthony Holmes, right, cheers as Kano State Education Commissioner Musa Salihu unveils the plaque of the newly renovated classroom blocks. Embassy Photo by Idika U. Onyukwu

For Students in Tudun Maliki Special Education School, It's Time to Smile Again

By Idika U. Onyukwu
Editor Crossroads

Mujahid Adamu's face glows with joy. A speech-impaired student, Mujahid watched as Ambassador Anthony Holmes, the deputy to the Commander of the U.S. Africa Command, formally commissioned their newly-renovated hostel. A few minutes later Mujahid was called upon by his school principal, to deliver an appreciation using sign language.

Tudun Maliki Special Education School, Kano—where Mujahid is a student—provides junior and secondary school education to more

than 1,379 students, ages 6 through 30, with speech and hearing disabilities. The school has 48 teachers and 30 non-teaching staff on its payroll. According to the principal, Malam Isa Musa, the school is the only institution in Northern Nigeria that provides these students with the special education they need at both the junior and secondary school levels.

“We receive students from all of the Northern States in Nigeria like Adamawa, Yobe, Gombe, Borno, including students who come as far as from Lagos and Abuja,” said Malam Musa.

In remarks at the commissioning ceremony of the newly renovated buildings, Ambassador Holmes in

the company of the Kano State Commissioner for Education, Honorable Musa Salusi, said educational opportunity is fundamental for the provision of security for a country like Nigeria and no less so for the United States. He noted that the U.S. believes that the socio-economic development of Nigerian youths is critical to the shared objectives of both countries and that is why the U.S. Government is happy to be a supportive partner with the Government of Nigeria and Kano State with this kind of project.

The eight renovated buildings included 2 classroom blocks, 2 brand new latrines, one male hostel, a female hostel, and two toilets. Ambassador

USAID Nigeria Country Director Dr Ray Kirkland presents books to Isa Musa, Principal Tudun Maliki Special Education School Kano Jan 27. Embassy Photo by Idika Onyukwu

Holmes said the total cost of the renovations was approximately 100,000 USD.

The special school also received a total of 5,000 books and 500 mosquito nets presented to the school's principal by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Nigeria Country Director, Dr. Ray Kirkland. The books were donated by the USAID American Educators for Africa project.

With the commissioning of the newly renovated buildings, the U.S. Embassy Office of Security Cooperation Humanitarian Assistance program has completed three major projects within a period of twelve months in Kano State alone. In January and June last year, the OSC-HA program, constructed



and commissioned a medical waste incinerator at the Muhammadu Abdullahi Wase Specialist Hospital and renovated a burned-down block that will serve as the only Intensive Care Unit for the same hospital. ❖



Mujahid, a speech-impaired student of Tudun Maliki expresses the school's appreciation (through sign language) to Ambassador Holmes and to the people and government of United States of America.



(L-r), Dennis Flemming, Andrew Fawthrop, PIND Chairman, and USAID Nigeria Country Director Dr. Ray Kirkland prepare to sign the MOU on Niger Delta development in Abuja. USAID Photo by Ebun Aleshiloye

USAID and Chevron Sign Partnership to Develop Niger Delta

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Chevron Nigeria Limited signed a \$50 million dollar agreement to create opportunities for residents in the Niger Delta region to improve agricultural development, build the capacity of local government and civil society organizations and promote conflict resolution..

Both organizations recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Abuja to create a new partnership, the Integrated Peace and Development Alliance (IPDA), to advance the cause of Niger Delta communities. The signers were USAID Mission Director Ray Kirkland; Mr. Dennis Flemming, the Project Director of the Chevron-endowed Niger Delta Partnership Initiative (NDPI) Foundation Inc.; and Mr. Andrew Fawthrop, Chairman and Managing Director of Chevron Nigeria Limited. Mr. Fawthrop is also the Chairman of the Foundation

for Partnership Initiatives in the Niger Delta (PIND), a Nigeria-based, non-profit affiliate of NDPI. The Memorandum of Understanding establishes that the U.S. Government, through USAID, provides \$25 million, and NDPI Foundation Inc. also provides \$25 million, each over four years to IPDA towards assisting residents in the Niger Delta region.

The IPDA will foster development of agricultural markets, support conflict resolution initiatives, and assist community groups and local government agencies to improve partnership and dialogue.

At the MOU signing, USAID/ Nigeria Mission Director Ray Kirkland said, "The United States Government, through USAID, is committed to working with the private sector in Nigeria to establish innovative and dynamic partnerships such as the one being signed today to promote socio-economic development in the

Niger Delta region to foster peace and stability and improve the quality of life for residents." Andrew Fawthrop, Chairman and Managing Director of Chevron Nigeria Limited, and Chairman of PIND applauded the partnership saying that, "Chevron has a strong association with USAID and we are delighted to partner with them under the auspices of PIND to help deliver better social and economic outcomes in the Delta region."

Chevron works with a range of organizations in the Niger Delta to help address health issues such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and river blindness, to increase access to quality education and training and to build opportunities for local business development and growth. The company's Global Memorandum of Understanding program is a model for community participation and empowerment reaching some 400 communities and 600,000 people in the region. ❖



Before & After

Bayan Loco Health Center before (left) and after PEPFAR's intervention (right).

PEPFAR Transforms Hut Clinic in Bayan Loco

By Susan Jatau

Bayan Loco, a rural community in Kafanchan, Kaduna State has a new clinic located at the Fantsuam Foundation through the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). The Fantsuam Foundation, a non profit organization based in Bayan Loco, Kafanchan, had been providing basic health services to members of the community including taking delivery of babies from a hut within its premises.

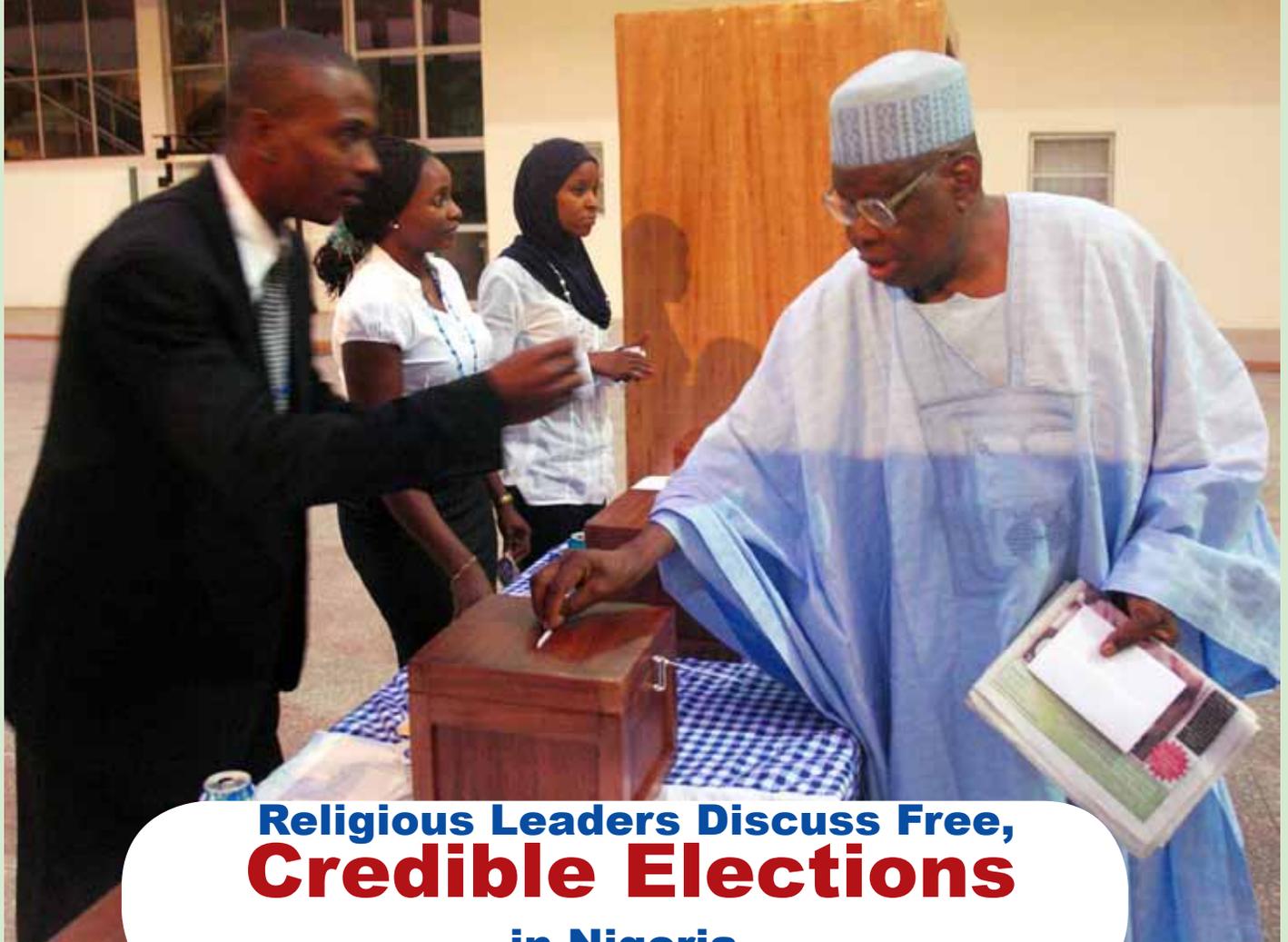
Mr John Dada of the foundation said they started primarily as a micro finance organization to help the rural poor especially women and contribute to reducing poverty. "However as time went on we discovered that the people had health challenges as well, especially HIV/AIDS, that was affecting their ability to repay the loans," Dada explained. "We decided

to add a health component to their services and so built a hut to provide basic health care especially counseling and testing for HIV/AIDS. The clinic being the only one in the community ended up providing services beyond its initial mandate including taking delivery of babies."

This was where PEPFAR came in through the coordinator of the Ambassador's Self Help program at the U.S. Embassy Karen Mehring. Mr. Dada had written requesting for a grant and following an assessment of their needs, Ms Mehring shared the idea with the PEPFAR office which provided a grant of \$10, 000 for the upgrade of the hut to a better facility. From a hut, the foundation now has a spacious four room clinic where they can conduct counseling and testing with more privacy as well as meet the health needs of the community. In her remarks while formally opening the clinic Karen said the project was much

more than she had imagined it would be. She commended the foundation and hoped the clinic will serve the community even better.

The expansion of the clinic is critical because its services continue to expand. It now coordinates community health committees in 19 communities spread all over the Southern part of Kaduna State. The committees comprising of volunteers are set up by the communities themselves with specific health priorities and keep records of births and deaths. In addition, it runs an Orphans and Vulnerable Children program due to the number of children who are being looked after by grandmothers following the death of their parents. They support this group through provision of school fees, nutrition care and legal protection because some of the kids are stigmatized and accused of witchcraft. Stipends and foodstuff are also provided to enable the grandmothers take better care of themselves and the orphans. ❖



Religious Leaders Discuss Free, Credible Elections in Nigeria

By Joke Omotunde

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s vision was a society in which a family of different races, religions, ideas, cultures and interests can learn to live together as brothers and sisters or perish together as fools. This was the platform on which every speaker based his address at an Interfaith Dialogue: Role of Religious Leaders for a Free, Fair and Credible Election in Nigeria in 2011. It was organized by the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Consulate General, Lagos, to, as Consul General Joseph Stafford put it in his opening remarks, “foster religious tolerance and credible leadership in the Nigerian polity”.

The Consul General, along with other speakers, including Dr. Saheed

Timehin, senior lecturer at Lagos University; Reverend Father Michael Umoh, Project Director of the Center for Media Development, Catholic Archdiocese of Lagos; Bishop Onuoha, Executive Director, Nigerian Interfaith Action Association (NIFAA); and a host of other Muslim and Christian leaders affirmed that interfaith leaders and groups have an important role to play in ensuring free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria this year.

According to the Consul General, the U.S. Mission in Nigeria has in the past, as it is doing now, worked and partnered with a number of interfaith groups to promote mutual understanding between Nigeria and the U.S. in fostering religious tolerance and credible leadership in the Nigerian polity. He said, “we have partnered with the Nigerian Inter-faith Action

Association (NIFAA) and with civil society through our USAID Office, we have also had programs on “Muslim Leaders of Tomorrow” thus promoting Muslim-Christian dialogue in the context of today’s international and domestic political realities. Both Muslims and Christians, he emphasized, are and will be very instrumental and important mobilizers in the historical election Nigeria will hold in April.

Consul General Stafford encouraged all to use the dialogue and more of such interactions to network and explore platforms of understanding to work positively to ensure that Nigeria has a free, fair, and credible election come April 2011.

In his address, Dr. Saheed Timehin quoted extensively from Martin Luther King Jr’s declaration, in which he painted the image of inheriting a “large

house, a great world house in which we have to live together – black and white, Eastern and Westerner, Gentile and Jew, Catholic and Protestant, Moslem and Hindu – a family unduly separated in ideas, culture and interest, who, because we can never again live apart, we must somehow learn to live with each other in peace”.

Dr. Timehin said that though this declaration of Dr. King might have sounded strange at that time, because the world had not become as complex and diversified as today, he was thinking globally. He observed that changes were taking place in America necessitating all to live together with “our seriously different traditions, not only in peace but in some sort of mutual trust and mutual loyalty.”

The task of religious leaders, Dr. Timehin concluded, is therefore to teach, promote and exemplify such ideals that would aid man to be at peace with himself, his fellow human beings and his Creator.

In conclusion, Dr. Timehin quoted the advice said to have been given by a Muslim Saint, Muhyidin Ibn’Arabi:

“Beware of being bound up by a particular creed and rejecting others as unbelief! Try to make yourself a prime matter for all forms of religious belief. God is greater and wider than to



A cross section of participants at the meeting of religious leaders on elections. Embassy photo by Ayo Durodola

be confined to one particular creed to the exclusion of others. For He says, “Wherever you turn, there is the face of God” (2 V115) 4.

Reverend Father Mike Nsikak Umoh on his part, provided a must do list for his religious counterparts who have found themselves in politics. According to him, the issues to consider are uplifting the status of women; respect for life at all stages; imbibing the spirit of transparency and accountability; safeguarding the rights of children, the poor, orphans, widows, the weak of society; not using one’s authority for exploitative practices; discouraging money politics and political manipulation of the masses; fostering political education

and awareness to assure free and fair elections; settling of political, land and religious disputes through dialogue and negotiations; being a voice for the voiceless; fostering trust between the elected and the electorate; and pursuing the common good.

Generally, all the speakers at the dialogue reached a consensus that would promote free and fair elections in 2011:

- All religious leaders must preach one man, one vote
- If all religions preach peace, then there must be interfaith tolerance, respect and mutual understanding with one another
- Settle our differences through dialogue
- Value our diversities
- Emulate the United States of America where there is freedom of religion as experienced by some of the speakers who had participated in the U.S. International Visitor’s Leadership Program (IVLP)
- Play down religious differences in the coming elections to elect the most credible leaders
- Religious leaders should stop talking in the abstract, and discuss issues which an ordinary citizen would understand for free, fair, credible elections. ❖



A cross section of participants with U.S. Consul General Joseph Stafford seated right. Embassy photo by Ayo Durodola

Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society on April Elections



Chibuike Mgbeahuruike, Training and Observation Manager Project 2011 Swift Count (TMG), moderates discussions at the strategic dialogue with civil society organized by the Embassy Public Affairs Office, Abuja. Embassy photo by Idika Onyukwu.

By Bartholomew Suwa

The recent launch of Secretary Hillary Clinton’s “Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society” attracted over thirty seven Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in and around Abuja to the Rosa Parks Education and Information Center of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja. The group deliberated on the challenges of the civil society community in Nigeria as well as chart the way forward in the coming years.

On February 16, 2011, the U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, launched the “Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society” at the

State Department in Washington D.C. to in her words “elevate the importance of our relationship with nongovernmental organizations alongside our government-to-government relationships. The Dialogue will also help coordinate the Department’s civil society efforts and reinforce the message that all governments need to engage their citizens and work in partnership with civil society.”

Although Nigeria could not participate in the live webcast through CO.NX on February 16, the viewing of the recorded version on February 22 at the Embassy in Abuja, still evoked vibrant

discussions afterwards. The wide spectrum of NGOs that attended, ranged from international groups such as the Mississippi Consortium for International Development (MCID), International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA), national bodies like the Nigeria Labor Congress (NLC), Nigeria Bar Association (NBA), faith-based organizations like the Federation of Muslim Women Associations of Nigeria (FOMWAN), Jama’atul – Da’awah, to small and grassroots organizations like the Youth Reformation & Awareness Center and Abuja Literary Society (ALS).

Amongst various contentious



Photo: Barrister Rose Nwosu, Regional Vice President (Africa) FIDA, (in red suit), making her contribution on elections at the strategic dialogue with civil society organized by the Embassy Public Affairs Office, Abuja. Embassy photo by Idika U. Onyukwu

group was of the opinion that what was most needed in Nigeria, was capacity building, technical assistance, and information, to enable them empower themselves to serve their communities better.

Participants praised the U.S. Embassy for giving them a platform to come together. There was visible enthusiasm as various groups agreed to network along issues and themes to be more effective and visible in their interventions. For more information on the Secretary's Strategic Dialogue with Civil Societies, log on to <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2011/02/156681.htm>

issues, the group resolved that it was not proper for NGOs to depend on government for funding. They cited the adage which says "He who pays the piper, dictates the tune" to remind themselves of the danger of seeking government funding. Instead of seeking funding from government, they resolved that what government could do for civil society organizations was to create an enabling environment for them to operate and deliver their mandates to the people.

One way of doing this is in legislation: to urge the government to domesticate most of the international treaties and conventions that the Nigerian government had signed years ago but are yet to be domesticated.

Another important conclusion arrived at was that NGOs should lay more emphasis on entrepreneurship and

other empowerment programs to make themselves economically independent. This way, they would not be going cup in hand in search of funding every time.

Reacting to the Secretary's question on what the State Department could do to be more responsive to civil societies, the



Photo: A cross section of participants at the Strategic Dialogue with Civil Society organized by the Embassy Public Affairs Office, Abuja. Embassy photo by Idika U. Onyukwu

Understanding the Principles of True Democracy

By Sani Mohammed
With IIP articles from America.gov

It is necessary to constantly remind ourselves the true meaning of democracy because we are often too busy with self-centered political ambitions to remember what the fundamentals of democracy truly are.

Democracy comes from the Greek word, “demos,” meaning people. Simply defined, democracy means “government by the people or rule of the majority”. In democracies, it is the people who hold sovereign power over legislator and government.

In democratic countries, the majority decides who will rule the nation by the voting process, assuming that the elected ruler will represent the majority's needs, and therefore, prosperity will be assured, but true democracy is more than the act of choosing a candidate.

Although other elements of democracy can develop before competitive elections are held, a country cannot be truly democratic until its citizens have the opportunity to choose their representatives. Elections offer political parties and civic groups an opportunity to mobilize and organize supporters and share alternative platforms with the public. They also serve to encourage political debate. Voter education is therefore very important and key for a true democracy to thrive.

Free and fair elections are indispensable to democracy. For an

election to be free and fair, certain civil liberties, such as the freedoms of speech, association and assembly, are required. Peaceful and efficient transfers of political power are also important elements of a true



democracy.

Although nuances apply to the world's various democracies, certain principles and practices distinguish democratic government from other forms of government.

- Democracy is government in which power and civic responsibility are exercised by all citizens, directly or through their freely elected representatives.

- Democracy is a set of principles and practices that protect human freedom; it is the institutionalization of freedom.

- Democracy rests upon the principles of majority rule, coupled with individual and minority rights. All democracies, while respecting the will of the majority, zealously protect the fundamental rights of individuals and minority groups.

- Democracies guard against all-powerful central governments and

decentralize government to regional and local levels, understanding that local government must be as accessible and responsive to the people as possible.

- Democracies understand that one of their prime functions is to protect such basic human rights as freedom of speech and religion; the right to equal protection under law; and the opportunity to organize and participate fully in the political, economic, and cultural life of society.

- Democracies conduct regular free and fair elections open to all citizens. Elections in a democracy cannot be facades that dictators or a single party hide behind, but authentic competitions for the support of the people.

- Democracy subjects governments to the rule of law and ensures that all citizens receive equal protection under the law and that their rights are protected by the legal system.

- Democracies are diverse, reflecting each nation's unique political, social, and cultural life. Democracies rest upon fundamental principles, not uniform practices.

- Citizens in a democracy not only have rights, they have the responsibility to participate in the political system that, in turn, protects their rights and freedoms.

- Democratic societies are committed to the values of tolerance, cooperation, and compromise. Democracies recognize that reaching consensus requires compromise and that it may not always be attainable. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, “intolerance is itself a form of violence and an obstacle to the growth of a true democratic spirit.”

References: *America.gov*

The Lasting Impact of Digital Media on Civil Society

By Philip N. Howard

*Philip N. Howard is associate professor in the Department of Communication and affiliate professor, Jackson School of International Studies, at the University of Washington in Seattle, Washington. He is the author of *New Media Campaigns and the Managed Citizen* (2006) and *The Digital Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, which was published in 2010 by Oxford University Press.*



Digital media and social networking supply citizens and civil society institutions with tools for communication and mobilization. They provide arenas where individuals can offer opinions and express dissent and thus strengthen trends toward political democracy.

New information technologies are profoundly reshaping political culture. Twenty-first-century civil society relies upon the Internet and other communication devices for its infrastructure, and for a digital “safe harbor” in which civic conversations can incubate. This is especially true in countries where the national print and broadcast media are heavily censored. In short, technology has empowered new and vital means of political communication and acclimated citizens to democratic thought and action.

Civil society is often defined as the self-generating and self-

supporting community of people who share core values and voluntarily organize political, economic, or cultural activities independent of the state. Civil society groups come in many sizes, from Amnesty International to neighborhood bowling leagues in the United States and the online communities around the world.

Civic groups are especially important during election season because they represent diverse perspectives and disseminate them widely through communications media. The breadth of expressed views assures citizens that in a democracy no one group can claim to represent all of society. Instead, a multitude of groups contributes to the defining of national goals and the shaping of policies.

Creating Virtual Communities

Civil society groups use the Internet as a logistical tool for organization and communication. The Web affords them an information

infrastructure independent of the state, one in which social movements can grow. For example, Tunisian citizens monitoring state corruption organized themselves to create YouTube videos of the Tunisian president’s wife using the state plane for shopping trips to Milan and Paris. The Internet thus has altered the dynamics of political communication in many countries. There, cyberspace is the forum where civil society challenges the state. In some nations, it is where secularism and Islamism compete, in others the forum for political disputes of every stripe.

After an election, the virtual communities that have taken root are almost always independent of state control, though they can be monitored and sometimes manipulated by the state. While political elites do start some virtual communities in an effort to control online conversation, these typically are not successful. In countries like Australia, Canada, the United

States, and the United Kingdom, these are sometimes called “Astroturf” movements. They are artificial, rarely take root, and tend not to last long after voting day.

What do last are the more genuine ties forged between a nation’s civic groups, and between international nongovernmental organizations and like-minded in-country associations. These virtual communities are particularly prominent in countries where state and social elites harshly police offline communities. In nations where covert political opposition is restricted, cyberspace emerges as a substitute forum. Even online bulletin boards and chat rooms dedicated to shopping for brand-name watches become sites that practice free speech and where the defense of free speech supplants timepieces as a topic of conversation. The Internet allows opposition movements based outside an authoritarian-ruled country to reach into and become part of the political communication system. Banning political parties simply means that formal political opposition is organized online, from outside the country. It also means that civil society leaders turn to the other organizational forms that network technologies afford.

Aiding Civic Engagement

Malaysia, Indonesia, and Turkey all recently held elections and, according to most observers, the elections went well. Digital media played a role in political campaigning, and democracy seems stronger for it. Despite these countries’ diverse histories, political culture across all three has taken on similar features:

- Citizens have increased international content in their news diets.
- Family and friends employ



Twitter, Facebook, and Orkut networks in their communications, independent of direct state control.

- Civil society actors have flourished online — even when the state has cracked down domestically.
- Women are drawn into cyberspace discourse in ways not always available in “real” space.

Identity politics — particularly for cohorts of urban, technologically savvy youth — are digitally mediated. From Palestinians to Greeks, Armenians to Hmong, young Internet users learn much about their culture and politics in their diaspora. These new forms of political communication contributed to largely positive election campaigns. Even rigorously Islamist parties needed to moderate their message and employ new information technologies to attract and motivate voters.

Twitter, blogs, or YouTube do not cause social unrest. But today, it is difficult to imagine successful social movement organizing and civic engagement without them, even in countries like Iran and Egypt. Many people in these countries have no Internet or mobile phone access. But those who do — urban dwellers, educated elites, and the young — are precisely the population that enables regime change or tacitly supports an electoral outcome. These are the citizens who support or defect from authoritarian rule, and these are the people whose connections to family and friends have demonstrably changed with the diffusion of new communications technologies.

When an election is over, new media habits remain. Elections have become sensitive moments in which student leaders, journalists, and civil

society groups experiment with digital technologies. Even if their preferred candidates are not elected, the process of experimentation is important because, by using digital media, citizens construct an information infrastructure that is largely independent of the state. Digital media leave a lasting imprint on civil society, one that continues after elections. The Internet allows youth to learn, for instance, about life in countries where faith and freedom coexist. Over time, more citizens are learning to use the Internet, developing their online search skills, and becoming more sophisticated in how they obtain, evaluate, and use information.

Strengthening Civil Society

Pundits are right to point out that the Internet also is used to support terrorist networks. They note that some ruling elites seek — by censoring new media — to achieve more sophisticated means of social control. But there is more to the story than what is sometimes called “e-jihad,” “terrorism online,” “cyberwar,” and “digital fatwas.” Over time, social media’s role in strengthening civil society will likely prove its most lasting contribution to political culture.

During politically sensitive moments like elections or political or military crises, tools such as mobile phones and the Internet enhance political communication in three ways:

- First, technology users display unusually strong norms of trust and reciprocity in times of crisis. They are likely to share images, help each other stay in touch with family and friends, and help outsiders by supplying information on the ground.
- Second, civil society groups often copy each other’s digital campaign strategies. In part this is because democratic activists will travel from country to country and help local

groups during elections. But elections also are an opportunity for groups to learn about each other's strategies for getting ideas out to the public.

•Third, elections are opportunities to debate all kinds of public issues, including the role of new communication technologies. Questions about technology standards — such as public spectrum allocation, government censorship, and digital access — become topics of discussion. The public may insist that political candidates explain their plans for promoting technology use and for closing the digital divide between technology haves and have-nots.

Statistical modeling of Malaysia's recent legislative elections shows that challenger candidates who blogged were more likely to defeat incumbents who did not. And opposition party candidates who blogged were more likely to defeat government candidates who did not. Today, it is hard for a political candidate to seem "modern" without a digital campaign strategy.

Information infrastructure is politics. In many nations, it also is far more participatory than the prevailing traditional political culture. As a result, the new technology-based politics democratizes the old, elite-driven arrangements. Every time a citizen documents a human rights abuse with her mobile phone, uses a shared spreadsheet to track state expenditures, or pools information about official corruption, she strengthens civil society and strikes a blow for democracy. Digital media's most lasting impact may be that it acclimates citizens both to consuming and to producing political content. ❖

Editor's Note: *This article does not imply U.S. Government endorsement, approval or sponsorship.*

WARNING! Diversity Visa (DV) Program Fraud

The U.S. Embassy in Abuja and U.S. Consulate General in Lagos continue to hear from Nigerian citizens who have received fraudulent e-mails from people claiming to be affiliated with the U.S. Department of State and its Diversity Visa (DV) program. These messages congratulate the recipient for winning the DV lottery, and instruct him or her to send payment for the visa fees to a U.S. Embassy or via Western Union. These messages do not originate from the U.S. Government, and are part of a scam.

No organization or company outside of the U.S. Government is authorized by the Department of State to notify DV applicants of their winning entry, or of the next steps in the visa process. Entrants will never be asked to send money by mail or Western Union at any point in the application process.

Entrants can check their true DV lottery status at <http://www.dvlottery.state.gov> starting on May 1, 2011, and can e-mail KCCDV@state.gov or LagosIV@state.gov for more information about the DV program."

A New Bank for U.S. Visa Fees

Beginning on March 1, 2011, the fee collection point in Nigeria for U.S. non-immigrant visas shifted from the United Bank for Africa (UBA) to the Guaranty Trust Bank (GT Bank). All persons wishing to make a new interview appointment for a non-immigrant visa application will need to pay the visa fee at a branch of GT Bank beginning in March.

However, applicants who have already scheduled appointments for March or April with the U.S. Embassy in Abuja or the U.S. Consulate General in Lagos must pay the \$140 visa application fee at a UBA branch no later than February 28, 2011.

Visa fee collection services will no longer be available at UBA after February 28, 2011. To avoid any confusion or delays on the date of the previously scheduled interview,

applicants should make every effort to pay the visa fee at a UBA branch by February 28, 2011.

The shift to GT Bank is the result of an ongoing realignment of contracts between the U.S. Department of State and the companies which provide visa appointment services.

Please Note: Only the location for non-immigrant visa fee collection and the non-immigrant visa appointment system are changing. All other requirements relating to eligibility and documentation for U.S. non-immigrant visas remain unchanged.

Information about the new visa fee collection sites and about applying for a U.S. non-immigrant visa are currently available on the U.S. Mission to Nigeria website <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov> and after March 1st, on the new U.S. visa appointment website <http://www.ustraveldocs.com/ng>.

University Students Discuss U.S.-Nigeria Bilateral Relations



U.S. Political Counselor Jeffery A. Salaiz (seated left at table) listens to a question posed by a student from the Ahmadu Bello University during a discussion on U.S. foreign policy and the U.S.-Nigeria bilateral relationship that took place Jan. 25. Embassy photo by Sani Mohammed.

On January 25, 2011, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Abuja hosted a 14-member student delegation and an accompanying faculty member from the Ahmadu Bello University, who received a briefing on U.S. foreign policy from the U.S. Embassy’s Political Counselor, Mr. Jeffery A. Salaiz. The students, who are members of the African Society of International Studies (ASIS), in the Department of Political Science and International Studies, said they were at the Embassy to learn about the working relations between Nigeria and the United States and to gain a better understanding of the new U.S.-Nigeria Bi-national Commission (BNC). The students, some of whom may join the Nigerian foreign service after graduation and possibly become future ambassadors for the country, said they also came to

ask questions about the role of the United States in global politics.

Addressing the question on the signing of the U.S.-Nigeria Bi-national Commission agreement, its functions and working structure, Mr. Salaiz said, the Bi-national Commission (BNC) was established in April 2010 as a high-level mechanism to address issues surrounding governance, transparency, (including preparations for Nigeria’s upcoming elections), energy and power, food security and regional security. He noted the United States has also signed similar agreements with Angola and South Africa, all in an effort to engage emerging and existing African powers in strategic dialogue. He further said the BNC is chaired by Nigeria’s Foreign Affairs Minister and the U.S. Secretary of State. He explained that the Commission is meant to expand cooperation and strengthen the bilateral relationship across a broad range of issues because

it sort of establishes the framework for some of the mutual goals that the United States has with Nigeria.

He recalled Secretary Clinton’s statement at the signing of the BNC in Washington last year. “Today, we are taking a concrete step forward that will strengthen and deepen the partnership between our two nations,” Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said at the joint press conference with Nigerian Secretary to the Government of the Federation Yayale Ahmed in Washington April 6. “And we hope it will support the aspirations of the Nigerian people for a peaceful, prosperous, stable, democratic future.”

Mr. Salaiz also gave the students an outline of the four BNC Working Groups, which include:

- Good governance and transparency — considered essential to Nigeria’s democracy and its prosperity.
- Regional cooperation and development — to improve conditions in the oil-rich Niger Delta

region with a specific emphasis on broad collaboration on security and counterterrorism.

- Energy reform and investment — while Nigeria has abundant oil, natural gas and other natural resources, it lacks an effective electrical system to support the growing demands of the nation.

- Food security and agricultural development — a program to provide Nigerian farmers with modern tools and methods of farming to feed the nation and to lift rural families out of poverty.

Speaking further on these key areas of U.S. development assistance to the country, the U.S. diplomat said that Nigeria is a beneficiary of “Feed the Future” program. In 2009, President Obama announced a \$3 billion U.S. contribution in support of the World Bank’s global agriculture and food

security initiative. Nigeria is also a major beneficiary of the U.S. Global Health Initiative (GHI), which builds on the progress and successes of the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the largest U.S. assistance program to Nigeria. President Obama announced a six-year, \$63 billion Global Health Initiative in May 2009, and this past year, the U.S. spent over half a billion dollars fighting HIV/AIDS in Nigeria.

Mr. Salaiz also spoke at length on other areas of U.S. assistance to Nigeria and engagements with the world in global politics. He told the students that the U.S. is interested in free, fair and credible elections in Nigeria and around the world because democracy, elections and good governance go hand-in-hand. He advised the students that the best way to increase their understanding of the United

States is through cultural exchanges, including the Fulbright and Humphrey Fellowships.

While at the Embassy, the students and their faculty met with Public Diplomacy Officer, Edward Flynn and Cultural Affairs Specialist, James Moolom, who briefed them on U.S. cultural exchange programs and presented them with various reading materials, including the biography of President Obama, books on American history and Embassy publications *CROSSROADS* and *MAGAMA*.

The students were led by Diplomat Akuche Andre Ben Moses, the High Commissioner of the African Society of International Studies (ASIS) in the Department of Political Science and International Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, and staff Adviser, Dr. Agubamah Edgar. ❖

Take Advantage of EducationUSA Resources, CG Stafford Advises Students

The EducationUSA office Lagos in collaboration with the Barack Obama American Corner at the Ovie Brume Center, held a program in observance of Black History Month. Consul General (CG) Joseph Stafford delivered the opening remarks. In line with this year’s theme—African Americans and the Civil War—he discussed the African American struggle and the contributions they made towards the civil war. Consul General Stafford went on to highlight the post civil war achievements of African Americans particularly in education with the establishment of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). He informed the audience that HBCUs form just 105 of the 4200 accredited colleges and universities that the U. S



Participants including journalists who attended the Black History Month program in Lagos pose with the U.S. Consul General Joseph Stafford. Embassy photo by Ayo Durudola.

educational system has to offer. He encouraged students to spend time on research in order to determine which school is a good fit for them.

EducationUSA Advisor Ifeanyi Olagbaju discussed the mission of HBCUs and the evolution of these types of schools. She went further to talk about study in the United States detailing the services of the EducationUSA offices in Nigeria. IRC Director Samuel Eytayo served as moderator at the event. He challenged the students to heed the

CG’s advice by doing research on their own. He advised the audience to take advantage of the resources available at the Public Affairs Section and the American Corners situated in different states of the federation.

In her closing remarks, Mrs. Ola Ezekwu, Chief Executive Officer Ovie Brume Center, told the audience that she did her graduate degree at Howard University and benefitted tremendously from that experience. ❖

IRC Membership News

The mission of the **Information Resource Centers (IRCs)** is to advance the Mission's Public Diplomacy goal of having American values respected in Nigeria by identifying, partnering with, and strategically disseminating information to Nigeria's institutions and contacts that influence policy and public opinion on issues central to U.S. interests. Please register at <http://tinyurl.com/ircregistration> For any enquiries, please write to us: ircabuja@state.gov (North) and wylagos@state.gov (South)

Vol. 4 No. 1&2

January /February 2011



The President gives the 2010 State of the Union Address, White House Photo, Pete Souza, January 25, 2011

The President spoke of his vision and his agenda for the economy in his State of the Union. Watch the speech with our first-ever "enhanced" presentation and view behind-the-scenes photos.

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Website for the State of the Union: <http://bit.ly/hXFJki> Get all the updates by email or **download free iPhone App**. View **photos** of all who sat with the FLOTUS (First Lady of the United States). Join **online discussions** with White House policy experts. Ask questions from POTUS and VP Biden and Social platforms where you can continue with the conversation: Facebook - <http://www.facebook.com/WhiteHouse> and on Twitter - <http://www.twitter.com/whitehouse>

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF MLK DAY

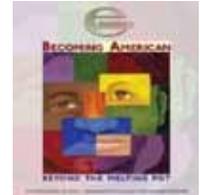


January 17, 2011, is the 25th anniversary of Martin Luther King Day, honoring the man who dedicated his life to the nonviolent struggle for racial equality.

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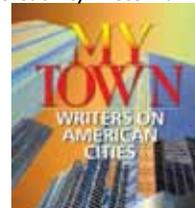
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Plot 1075 Diplomatic Drive Central District Area,
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Telephone: (234)-9-461-4000 Fax: (234)-9-461-4011
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