



AFRICAN SERVICES COMMITTEE

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Rallying for Immigrant Rights



ASC Joins Fellow Advocates in Human Chain of Solidarity

The frustrations of immigrants were powerfully voiced recently in front of 26 Federal Plaza as African Services' Bakary Tandia, along with ASC clients, joined immigrant families, area leaders and immigrant rights organizations in a massive human chain of solidarity.

Chanting, "stop separating our families," the group demanded immediate action on the part of Congress and the Obama administration.



"Separating families has reached the level of a humanitarian crisis in our communities," said Ramatu Ahmed, African community leader affiliated with ASC. "We cannot allow the government to silently watch this tragedy unfolding."

Read the full story [here](#).

News and Activities

African Services' Superstorm Sandy Team



Since beginning our partnership with New York State through the New York Rising Super Storm Sandy Recovery program this year, ASC has been sending staff into some of the hardest hit areas offering legal, health and housing assistance to immigrants currently living in, or displaced from areas affected by Superstorm Sandy.



Our dedicated Superstorm Sandy Grant Legal and Housing team can be seen pictured above (from left) legal advocate Niat Amare, staff attorney Deirdre Stradone, staff attorney Corina Bogaciu, housing assistant Carmen Hernandez along with co-executive director Kim Nichols, as they enjoy a breezy commute on the Staten Island Ferry en route to one of our legal services offices on Staten Island.

Niat is seen in the image to the left helping a client at one of our Staten Island legal services offices. ASC's Sandy Grant team has provided legal, housing and health services to nearly 70 clients since the start of the program.

Learn more about this exciting program [here](#).

Hepatitis Program: Raising Awareness on Global 'Silent Killer'



World Hepatitis Day and the First-Ever NYC World Hepatitis B Awareness Week

ASC took part in a five-borough World Hepatitis Day awareness campaign, followed by a "Freeze Mob" at Foley Square. World Hepatitis Day is recognized around the globe to raise awareness on the real-life impact of viral hepatitis. The World Health Organization estimates that nearly 400 million people have chronic viral hepatitis worldwide and most of them do not know they are infected. More than 1 million people die each year from causes related to viral hepatitis, commonly cirrhosis and liver cancer. It is important to know the risk factors for hepatitis, talk to family and friends who may be at risk, speak to your health care provider about treatment and strategies to remain healthy.



African Services' staff also joined council members, healthcare providers and advocates on the steps of City Hall to proclaim July 21 to 27 as the first-ever New York City Hepatitis B Awareness Week, which culminated on the 28th with World Hepatitis Day. The effort aimed at building hepatitis awareness among the public, especially within immigrant communities, renewing support for people living with the disease, and encouraging all New Yorkers to learn their status and receive the hepatitis B vaccine.

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

Click [here](#) to learn more.



African Services in the News



Lillian Agyei, [interim] testing center coordinator at ASC, administers a TB test to a client from Burkina Faso.

Lisa De Bode at Al Jazeera America recently spotlighted African Services' testing center in the following story "**Funding Cuts May Leave New York City Vulnerable to Tuberculosis.**"

NEW YORK - Eradication had been the idea. But two decades after health care workers turned the tide on tuberculosis in New York City, no one in the few remaining TB clinics can celebrate its demise.

For the first time in a decade, the number of confirmed cases in the city has gone up, according to the New York City Health Department's 2013 report, and the once declining rate of active infection has slowed to a constant. Even if the current infection numbers remain low, budget cuts could result in the city being ill prepared for any future outbreaks. New York's last wave of TB, in the 1980s and 1990s, killed thousands of people.

Facing funding cuts, some clinics have closed, and at least one has started charging for TB screenings. With TB most common among the homeless, immigrants arriving with little money and the immune-compromised, the \$30 that is sometimes needed to be tested is often hard to come by.

At the African Services Committee (ASC) clinic in Harlem, workers at times waive the fee for patients at risk of TB, such as Ibrahim, a man in his late 20s, who asked that his real name not be used. After he arrived in New York from Burkina Faso two years ago, it was determined that he was a potential candidate for TB. With no health care, his case might have gone undetected if he'd had to pay the full price.

Lillian Agyei, testing coordinator at ASC, said that since the clinic started charging most patients, the number of visits had dropped dramatically. In 2009, about 4,500 people were tested for tuberculosis. Last year, only 534 clients sought the service, according to internal statistics. Agyei said these were mostly people who needed the test for administrative reasons related to employment or study, not individuals who found themselves at risk of infection.

The ASC co-executive director, Kim Nichols, said the dramatic fall in people being tested could hamper efforts to battle the disease.

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"There will be those few cases that we would have treated or screened in previous years who will not be picked up until they have active TB, or have already infected other people in their households," Nichols said. "You lose the opportunity to intervene before a person develops active symptoms."

Nichols said the drop in screenings at ASC is the result of municipal and federal budget cuts, which have been enforced despite confirmed cases in the New York area rising from 651 in 2012 to 656 in 2013, according to the latest figures.

"You hope it's not a trend," Lee Reichman, executive director of the New Jersey Medical School Global Tuberculosis Institute and former New York City health director, told Al Jazeera. Reichman oversaw the city's response to the TB outbreak of the late 1980s and 1990s, in which more than 12,000 people died. At the time, authorities scrambled to spend \$1 billion to quell the epidemic. Now, he said, the numbers are still in their "early stages."

"If we don't do something about it, [this] may increase more. It may actually affect the rate. It's a warning sign," he said.

Even though some experts fear cases could increase, the New York City Health Department's Bureau of Tuberculosis Control reduced operating hours at two chest clinics in 2013. The NYC Health Department did not respond to Al Jazeera's request for comment, but according to the 2013 annual report, the hours were cut "due to decreased use and financial constraints." At the Charles P. Felton National Tuberculosis Center at Harlem Hospital, operations have been discontinued and testing resources diverted to other clinics in New Jersey, Florida, Texas, California and Minnesota.

Bill Bower, former director of education and training at the center and an assistant professor at Columbia University, said the decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was taken in response to local rates nearing national averages. From a case rate of 220 per 100,000 residents in 1991, exceeding that of many developing nations, central Harlem now registers 4.8.

"TB incidence in Harlem ... had been reduced considerably. It was time to spread state-of-the-art TB care, training, materials and medical consultation across the country," he said in an email.

But health care professionals at ASC said community organizations like theirs are left to pick up the slack while government providers take "a back seat."

Read the full story [here](#).

Welcome Aboard!

Meet Four New Faces at African Services



Community nutrition educator Valry Leroy (left) and nutrition program assistant Jasmin Tepale

There have been quite a few new additions to the ASC team, so we thought it would be fitting to highlight a few of those new faces here. Look out for images of more new staff in upcoming newsletters.



Legal advocate Niat Amare (left) and immigration attorney Wandl Reyes-Ortiz

Fun in the City

Kim Nichols, Co-Executive Director recommends...

Harlem Eats

Harlem Eats, Uptown's food truck and street food market, presents New Yorkers with the opportunity to come together and experience Harlem's burgeoning food scene every Saturday from May 10-Nov 1st.

When: Every Saturday throughout the summer (May to October) 11 am to 5 pm

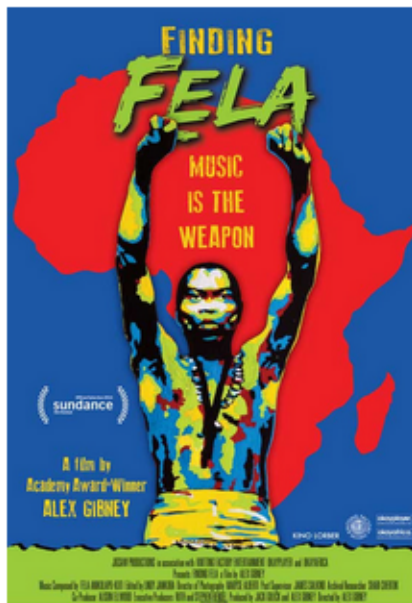
Where: Frederick Douglass Blvd. between 117th and 118th street

Click [here](#) to learn more.



Erik Omile, Communications Director recommends...

Finding Fela



No individual better embodies African music of the 1970s and '80s--and its pivotal role in postcolonial political activism than Fela Kuti. After quickly taking his native Nigeria by storm, the pioneering musician's confrontational Afrobeat sound soon spread throughout the continent and beyond, even as it made determined enemies of the repressive Nigerian military regime.

Within the past decade, a resurgence of interest in his work has posthumously repopularized Kuti, culminating in the massively successful Broadway show *FELA!*, written by Jim Lewis and directed by Tony Award winner Bill T. Jones. Academy Award-winning director Alex Gibney interweaves the show's skillful staging with a treasure trove of period interviews and hypnotic performances to recapture the essence of the man, his music, and his enduring cultural and political relevance.

When and where: Opening Friday, August 1 at various locations.

Click [here](#) to for more information.

Hallways of ASC

Overjoyed!



ASC's supervising attorney, Kate Webster, is all smiles alongside two overjoyed clients moments after they received their long-awaited green cards. Kate has been assisting Titilope (below right), a client from Nigeria, and Yawari (left), a client from Togo, since 2011 and as can be imagined, these images capture just a fragment of happiness felt all-around.

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

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



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