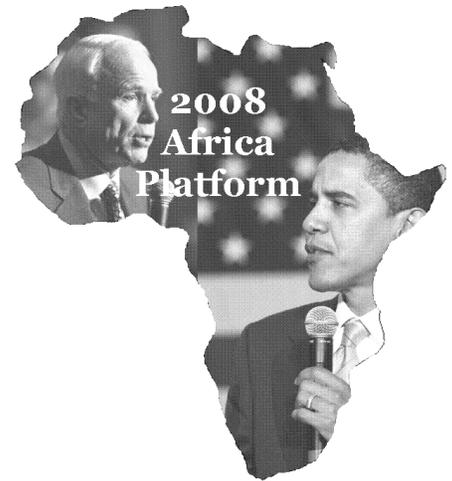


Obama and McCain on U.S.-Africa Policy

By Gbenimah Slopadoe



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On the November 5th, 2008, U.S. citizens will go to the polls to tap once again into the ocean of democracy upon which this nation was founded. American voters will cast their votes for either Senator Barack Obama or Senator John McCain, according to the issues that voters prioritize. For those who have an avid concern for U.S.-Africa relations and the implications of a new administration on the African continent or those who are simply curious about each campaign's platform in regards to issues that affect Africa, below is an objective list to help satisfy your curiosity.

Democratic Platform:

Barack Obama's administration will:

TRADE

- Strengthen the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) to enable African producers access to U.S. markets.
- Establish "an Add Value to Agriculture Initiative, creating a fund that will extend seed capital and technical assistance to small and medium enterprises."

HIV/AIDS

- Invest at least \$50 billion by 2013 for the global fight against HIV/AIDS.

DARFUR

- Work in partnership with Africa to tackle the Darfur issue.
- Exert U.S. pressure on the Khartoum government, holding it accountable under the Comprehensive Peace Accord.

ENVIRONMENT

- Launch a Global Energy and Environment Initiative to ensure African states have access to low carbon energy technology and can profitably participate in the new global carbon market.

("AFRICA PLATFORMS" continued on page 2)

SAVE THE DATE!

The 7th Annual
Ecumenical Advocacy Days

"Enough for All"

March 13th-16th, 2009
Washington, DC

*The Annual AFJN
Member Meeting will take
place on March 14th!*

www.advocacydays.org

(“AFRICA PLATFORMS” continued from page 1)

- Promote a green energy economy to reduce America’s dependence on foreign oil. Twenty-four percent of U.S. oil supplies now come from Africa.

DEMOCRACY

- Strengthen Africa’s democracy, human rights transparency, accountability, and defend the rule of law in states such as Zimbabwe.

OTHER ISSUES

- Double the U.S. annual investment in foreign assistance from \$25 billion to \$50 billion by 2012.
- “...make the Millennium Development Goals, which aim to cut extreme poverty in half by 2015, America’s goals.”
- Fully fund debt cancellation for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) to provide sustainable debt relief.
- Establish “an Add Value to Agriculture Initiative, creating a fund that will extend seed capital and technical assistance to small and medium enterprises.”

Republican Platform:

John McCain’s administration will:

TRADE

- Advocate expansion of trade with African nations.

HIV/AIDS

- Support PEPFAR, acknowledging that HIV/AIDS threatens to destabilize entire societies due to the large

number of orphaned youths.

- Continue the U.S. role as the “unrivaled leader in fighting the disease” that afflicts much of the continent.

DARFUR

- End the genocide in Darfur
- Support Africa’s elected leaders in resolving the situation in Darfur as well as other human tragedies on the continent.
- Assist African leaders with humanitarian aid, transportation, and material supply.

ENVIRONMENT

- Reduce the U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

DEMOCRACY

- Support sanctions against Zimbabwe which threaten the promise of democracy on the continent.
- Promote free elections and the reinstatement of civil government in Zimbabwe.

OTHER ISSUES

- Work to increase investment in Africa. McCain asserts that “republican-sponsored legislation has brought jobs and investments to Sub-Saharan Africa.”

For the full platform statements, see:

- <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/foreignpolicy/#onafrica>
- <http://www.democrats.org/a/party/platform.html>
- <http://www.gop.com/2008Platform/NationalSecurity.htm>

On Halloween, Participate In Fair Trade Trick-or-Treating!

Perhaps you are aware that a large percentage of the world’s chocolate comes from Africa. Grown in similar climates and sometimes alongside coffee, cocoa is one of the most important cash crops on the African continent. In fact, approximately 70% of the chocolate available in stores today comes from West Africa.

Chocolate is a wonderful treat, and for kids on Halloween, it’s as good as gold. But there is a darker side to this tasty dessert. On many cocoa farms in West Africa, children do much of the work. In Ghana and Cotê d’Ivoire alone, approximately 200,000 children are employed on these farms, many of them trafficked from neighboring countries. Although there are international organizations working to enact laws against child labor in the cocoa industry, they need your help. As responsible consumers, we must commit to buying only fair trade chocolate, recognizing that it is the just and ethical thing to do (and it often tastes better, too!). It may cost a little more, but it doesn’t cost a child his or her days in school. So why not take Halloween, one of the chocolate industry’s most profitable days of the year, and spread the word about the importance of fair trade and ethically sourced cocoa!

This Halloween, you can participate in Reverse Trick-or-Treating! Visit www.reversetrickortreating.org to find out how you can END forced/abusive labor in the cocoa industry, END poverty among cocoa farmers, PROMOTE fair trade, and PROTECT the environment.

Renewing a Pledge to You

By Rocco Puopolo, s.x.
Executive Director

Two years ago, when I came to Washington as AFJN's new director, one of my hopes was that I could offer to AFJN members what AFJN offered me when I visited the city in the 1990's to advocate for Sierra Leone. I naively thought that many members did this. However, I learned that the staff would welcome more, but few took the time to come and personally walk the corridors of Congressional buildings. Because of my personal advocacy work, the staff and board of AFJN asked me to offer the keynote address at the 1999 annual meeting. And so I shared my thoughts and experiences on advocacy which I entitled, **"Becoming respectfully insistent for the love of God and Africa."** Now, I have renewed my pledge to be of service to you if you can give us a few days of your time here in Washington.

As a citizen and a missionary I often wrestled with the question, "How do I carry the lives and voices of those I have come to know in Africa to the policy planners here?" After my first return from Sierra Leone in 1984 I found myself in DC participating in a two week seminar sponsored by USCMA for those on furlough, returning or readying to go to Mission. One day in our program was dedicated to advocacy, beginning at Network and learning the power and process of advocacy, government structure, and the role of "We the people." Later in the day, we went on visits to House and Senate offices. Not only did I spend that day on the Hill, but I stayed in the DC area for three days after the program ended, extending my concern to those at State Department as well as the World Bank.

"Direct your passion and perspective to the formation of a just and fair policy for Africa... this shapes public opinion and creates political will."

I was amazed at the hearing I received. I found that the gift of living in Sierra Leone for an extensive period of time was valid, and that it gave me a rare and needed perspective to present to our policymakers. We have to keep reminding ourselves of our legitimacy and then move with it. Although we personally value this knowledge, how often do we write ourselves off as being "just simple missionaries," as if we have nothing significant to say to structures and governments whose policies do have an impact on the persons we serve? One of the legislative aides I

spoke with at that time appreciated the time I gave her and remarked that missionaries could do a better job of "linking" with others to help them understand Africa as we do.

This does take time and flexibility. Each time I came to DC in the 1990's I planned to invest a week. I always ended up staying 10 days. But it was important to plan a week. It took all of one day to put my thoughts on paper in a brief, specific and clear manner to present to staffers on the Hill. The contacts and channels which AFJN had at its disposal led me to persons, agencies and offices that took on a direction and time table all its own. I had an average of 5 appointments each day! AFJN's credibility in Washington gave me a trusted welcome at each meeting and my presence gave AFJN greater strength and gravitas. We as individuals, AFJN as an organization, as well as the people we advocate for, all gain.

I had two assumptions that directed my preparations: I am offering them a rural perspective that they are not going to find in another agency's report, and I assume that they do not know much about the Sierra Leone situation as we see it. They may understand Africa from their experience and study, but this is the Sierra Leone I know. This is specific, and this is from the ground.

After my Washington visits I was able to use the material I had prepared in a variety of ways locally, sending it to Diocesan and City papers as well as local Cable TV stations. Maybe it was because the horror of the Sierra Leone situation shocked the media into attention back in the 1990's, but in any case, the preparation found me ready.

So, we invite you to come to DC to exercise your right as a citizen to advocate for the Africa you know and love. Direct your passion and perspective to the formation of a just and fair policy for Africa. The issues are many, but with our help, you may find that your ministry and concern are real life examples of larger overarching issues. Your presence and witness can be a powerful contribution to bettering the lives of the peoples of Africa. Some of you may wish to come as part of a larger conference and lobby day such as Ecumenical Advocacy Days or Social Ministry Days by USCCB. But if you wish to come in a smaller group or by yourself, know you are welcome. Our voices, our experience, and our perspective needs to be put out there, brought together, and shared. Ultimately, this shapes public opinion and creates political will.

AFJN's Notre Dame Student Chapter: A Look Back at a Year's Activities

For five years now, there has been a student chapter of AFJN on the campus of Notre Dame University. They collaborate with other student groups on campus, as well as individuals working in academia, peace building, and general awareness to form a unified voice to change perceptions of the African continent. What follows is a snapshot of what AFJN-ND did this past academic year.

AFJN-ND hosted a **"How to Go to Africa"** night that gathered students who have traveled to Africa via all routes offered by Notre Dame to teach interested students about ways to get to Africa, including: the Center for Social Concerns; ISLA-UROP grants; Kellogg-Kroc grants; Nanovic grants; Learning Beyond the Classroom grants; Student International Business Council; Notre Dame Millennium Development Initiative – Ford Family Program in Human Development and Solidarity; and School for International Training (Study Abroad). Emphasis placed on the service, study, and research aspects of traveling to the continent.

Interested in starting an AFJN student group? Contact us at afjn@afjn.org and we'll help you get started!

With the help of NETWORK, a Washington-based Catholic Social Justice Lobby agency, AFJN-ND offered students direction in how to be active in contacting and **influencing their elected representatives** on issues that they are concerned about, especially with the upcoming elections in the Fall of 2008.

Together with neighboring Indiana University-South Bend, Saint Mary's College, Holy Cross College, local high schools and local parishes, AFJN-ND participated in the annual **Gulu Walk**, which is a solidarity walk with the 'night commuters' of Northern Uganda, children who had to walk up to 8 miles each evening to sleep in safety. Although most children no longer commute, hundreds of people walked miles throughout the city to raise awareness about the injustices that still exist for thousands of Ugandan children in Gulu.

AFJN-ND organized a trip for students to the **Northern Uganda Symposium and Lobby Day** in Washington, D.C., a conference calling for U.S. action in Ugandan peacebuilding.

Through a partnership with the local American Red Cross, AFJN-ND assisted local African refugee populations and increased awareness about issues that refugees and asy-

lum-seekers face. AFJN-ND organized a "cookbook project" that gathered information about traditional African meals, their food staples, and stories that go along with them. It also provided information about where to find certain traditional foods in local markets in South Bend.

A night of music and learning – **Artists for Africa** – was held at Legends of Notre Dame (the on-campus restaurant) sponsored by AFJN and the ND-8 task force. Africa-related groups are encouraged to set up information tables during the event.

Africa Week was held in late spring, co-sponsored by AFJN-ND the African Students Association to celebrate African culture, traditional African dance, music, dress, and more. Activities included: an Africa Mass with a native African priest presiding; food and culture nights; 'fireside chats' with prominent University figures discussing what Africa and African culture means to them; and finally volunteer work with refugees in the South Bend community.

Another collaborative initiative was the **"Framing Realities" Photo Show**, a collection of student experiences across different cultures that explored the effects of poverty through photo imagery in an effort to better understand our place in the world. Photos were sold for \$15 each and all proceeds went to benefit the American Red Cross Refugee Program in South Bend and the VEMA Women's Center in Tanzania.

And finally, in great Notre Dame fashion, AFJN-ND has a concession stand at its football games, giving it great visibility to ND's many guests and football enthusiasts, as well some welcome income for its projects.

Through initiatives of its own as well as many in collaboration with other student groups, AFJN-ND offers opportunities to engage in advocacy and education on issues relating to Africa. We invite other universities to get in touch with us about how to start an AFJN chapter and to be part of the greater movement toward social justice in Africa.

Former leader of the AFJN-ND group, Sara Snider, interned with AFJN in the summer of 2007. Sara graduated in May and is now a Peace Corps volunteer in Mali.

Violence as a Path to Power: A Trend in African Politics

By Bahati Ntama Jacques

Looking over the African political landscape today, it seems that the preferred and only option to stopping months or years of violence is by giving a government seat to those who use violence. Why reward those who use violence to fulfill their political dreams? What does it mean for the democratic process in Africa? A number of examples from recent history can be cited, and seen side by side, a disturbing trend arises.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Jean Pierre Bemba, leader of the Uganda-based rebel group, the Movement de Liberation du Congo (MLC) and Azarias Ruberwa, leader of the Rwanda-based rebel group, the Rally for Congolese Democracy (RCD) were each given the position of vice president in the Congolese transitional government in 2003 under the mediation of the international community. This was not because of their competency to govern, but because the war had to end through multi-party compromise.

The Republic of Kenya illustrates this trend from another angle. Raila Odinga, leader of the opposition and presidential candidate in the 2007 elections, was given the position of prime minister in an effort to end the unprecedented violence that claimed hundreds of Kenyan lives following the elections. While there are different opinions on who is responsible for the violence, the question remained for most people: who won the presidential elections? Did the appointment of Odinga as Prime Minister solve the issue of rigging the elections that Kenyan president Kibaki was accused of? Did this deal establish the truth on the matter? What happened in Kenya is good material to help us answer our question about this trend of violence and reward in African politics..

In the case of Zimbabwe, before, during, and after the presidential elections this year, President Robert Mugabe adopted the method of violence to keep power. Mugabe's

ZANU-PF party violence against the opposition leader's supporters forced Morgan Tsvangirai to drop out of the presidential election run-off. This strategy allowed President Robert Mugabe to remain in power. As of Monday September 15, 2008, the opposition leader Tsvangirai is Prime Minister as a result of a power sharing deal. Sound familiar? Zimbabwe is not Kenya, but the violent circumstances of each election were so similar that the international community believed each crisis could be resolved in the same way.

They Killed and Became Head of State

Historically, the worst cases of this trend have been military coups or civilian armed rebel leaders who become heads of states. Once in office, these former rebel leaders prepare elections a few years later which are often unfair and never transparent. In these cases, the election process is used to take care of two things. First, in the case of a military regime, it allows the government to transition to a civilian regime and appear legitimate. Second, it is a malicious way to move on from the fact



Presidents Mwai Kibaki of Kenya and Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe.

that these leaders took power by force which most of the time involves the loss of the lives of innocent people and human right violations. Some examples are President Yoweri Museveni of Uganda who took power in 1986, and President Idriss Deby of Chad who has served as president since 1990. Concerned about how to stay in power, they use force to silence and suppress civil society and the opposition in addition to manipulating the constitution to accommodate their ambitions.

The bottom line is that this trend may compromise the democratic process in Africa. Free and fair elections are an imperative to help Africans improve their livelihood, provide the proper space and voice for civil society, and claim their rightful place in the community of nations. Many

(ELECTIONS continued on page 7)

AFJN and the Second African Synod

By Jimmy McTiernan, M.Afr.

An African Synod guides the pastoral activities of the Church in Africa. On November 13, 2004 Pope John Paul announced his intention to convoke a second African Synod. Pope Benedict confirmed the decision on 22 June 2005, and asked that, “*according to accustomed practice, the Lineamenta, ...we are meant to foster extensive discussion on the synodal topic.*” This discussion is meant to happen from the grassroots up and will be the basis for the working document which will guide the Bishops during the Synod. The results of that discussion should be submitted to Rome by the 30th of October 2008.

AFJN wants to tap in to that discussion. It is AFJN’s way to contribute to the banter and barter between our Churches. God is there at the center of this rich mix, channeling that palaver. The Church in the northern hemisphere can now find inspiration in the vitality and experience of the African Church. AFJN offers faithful advocacy here in DC to foster support and understanding between the people of the U.S. and the people of Africa. The African Synod is a blessed moment for such dialogue and can be a bridge over which the U.S. Church and the African Church traffic enriching information and inspiration. The Synod can be a graced moment when our two Churches can grow in understanding and commitment “*to become Samaritans to the many brothers and sisters who are asking for help and compassion (cf. Lk 10: 29-37), and to aid the many people who are poor and in need of human warmth, so as to give witness to God’s love (Mt 25: 31-46).*”

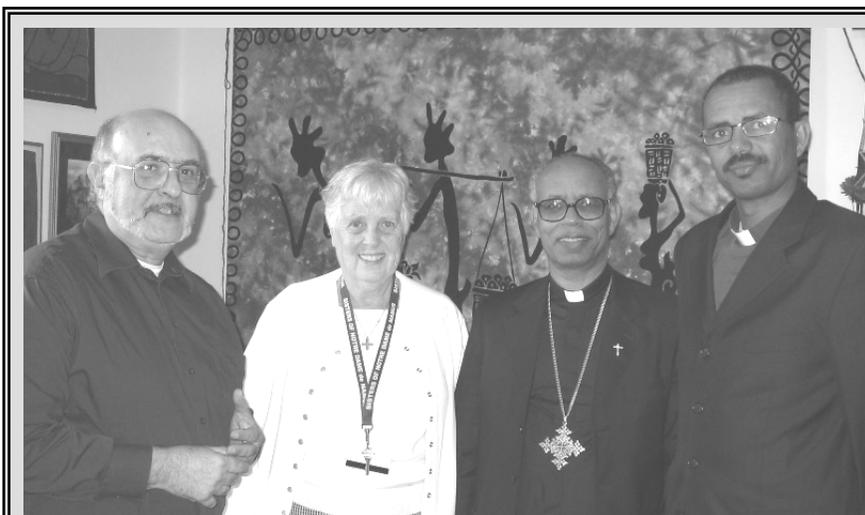
The Perspective, *Quo vadis, Africa?* This question comes from page 15 of the Lineamenta. It answers that “*the Church-Family of God in Africa has no other response*

than that of Simon Peter: Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the message of eternal life” (Jn 6: 68). Nor do we in the US have any other answer. Peter’s answer and ours is in supporting each other into the heart of Jesus. On pages 36-38 of the Lineamenta there are other questions aimed at answering *the* question: Africa, all of us, *quo vadis?* **And AFJN concludes with six questions which we would like to pose to our African partners and members.** These six questions are offered only to evoke your imagination. Your insights or answers will help AFJN maintain a better focus in its commitment to Africa.

- What would you like to say to us in the U.S.?
- What would you like AFJN to say for you to the U.S.?
- How have you experienced U.S. support for Africa, who gains?
- Do you experience the U.S. Church as genuinely concerned for and with Africa?
- What specific issue for the promotion of reconciliation, justice and peace would you like AFJN to take to Church or Civic Leaders here in the U.S.?
- How can AFJN help you collaborate more effectively with Churches in the U.S. and of other continents, with other believers in Africa and with the followers of new religious groups or movements?

Please send us your responses at afjn@afjn.org—we look forward to reading them! Our prayer is that this synodal moment in the African Church will shine light on how we in the U.S. can become a more forgiving, just, honest, and compassionate society.

African Synod in Rome: October 4th-24th, 2009



Pictured (L to R): **Fr. Rocco Puopolo**, AFJN Executive Director; **Sr. Maura Browne**, Peace and Justice Director for the SND community; **Bishop Mengheteab Tesfamariam**, Bishop of Asmara, Eritrea, Comboni Missionary, and AFJN Member; and **Fr. Gabriel Woldai**, an Eritrean priest who serves the Eritrean Community in California.

Bishop Mengheteab Tesfamariam and Fr. Gabriel Woldai visited AFJN while in Washington to take part in the 4th Annual Prayer Day for Africa held at the National Basilica of the Immaculate Conception.

AFJN Welcomes Fall Intern

Gbenimah Balu Slopadoe II is a junior at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Massachusetts where he is studying Political Science with a Concentration in Peace and Conflict Studies. Born in Monrovia, Liberia, he sought refuge in Ghana, where he lived for 13 years before moving to the United States with his family three years ago. With a passion for Africa and a deeply rooted desire for the continent's recovery, Gbenimah is very interested in post conflict reconstruction and its impetus for develop-

ment and security. At College of the Holy Cross, he chairs the Caribbean and African Students' Assemblage (CASA), and also used his capacity as Class Vice President and Resident Assistant to not only raise awareness on African issues but also support projects such as Samaritans Purse which has become a college tradition. While in DC, Gbenimah hopes to learn from every opportunity given, particularly on the Resist AFRICOM Campaign and will conduct research on arms trade and transfer in Africa.

("ELECTIONS" continued from page 5)

African nations still have a long way to go in finding the path to prosperity, justice and peace.

To make this point, let us take the case of the Republic of Burundi's timeline. From 1962-1966 Burundi was an emerging democracy, but from 1966-1992 Burundi was either a military regime (UPRONA), a one party regime (UPRONA), or both. In 1992-1993 there was a transitional government that led to the first democratically elected president who was killed less than three months in office. For the next eight years, Burundian leadership was in crisis with a continued civil war. Between 2001 and 2005, a transitional government led to the current second democratically elected president. Basically, Burundi has been at war since its independence from Belgium. And being at war distracts any fledgling government from putting into place the needed sound infrastructure that can lead to true growth and development.

The Future of Democracy in Africa

In the context of what is discussed above, skepticism of the future of the democratic processes in Africa is understandable. Looking at the pattern of elections in different African nations, it is legitimate to ask ourselves what will happen before and after the upcoming presidential elections in a number of African nations. The following countries face elections in the coming years: Ghana in December 2008; Cameroon, South Africa, and Angola in 2009; Rwanda, Equatorial Guinea and Central African Republic in 2010; Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Chad in 2011.

The trend of using violence to achieve one's political ambitions happens when African governments are comprised by a powerful executive branch, a weak parliament, and a non-independent judiciary. Added to this is the absence of sound and balanced government of structures like the provision social services to citizens, education opportunities,

and rampant corruption. On the international scene, failed democratic processes in Africa continue to expose its nations to neocolonialism.

Africa Faith and Justice Network's Perspective

"Africans need to define for themselves the meaning of democracy in their own historical and cultural contexts, drawing on their participatory traditions and the experience of democratic societies elsewhere." "Listening to and giving voice to African peoples in our common struggle for democracy; supporting networks between Africans and with North Americans in their struggle for justice in Africa; working with others to influence U.S. legislative initiatives supportive of African-defined democratic structures; fostering reflection on and articulation of a theory of democracy within the context of African countries." (selected quotes from the Africa Faith and Justice Network 2003 Member Meeting Statement) Now, five years later, AFJN is aware that African authoritarianism has not gone away; leaders have continuously failed to manage the great African continent, rich in wealth and people, but an active civil society is yet to happen. Politicizing tribes along with the use of violence continues to prevail as a path to fulfill some people's political ambitions. Elections have lost their meaning and goal, which is to legitimize the government by the voice of the majority through the power of the ballots. Instead, after elections, the rule of the game is "who wins takes it all."

AFJN, in its mission to advocate for just US policies toward Africa, continues to face the challenge of growing authoritarianism in Africa. As much as AFJN is committed to improving U.S. policies toward Africa, the fact remains that African progress will happen by and with Africans. We can point to a dangerous trend, but we are not the ones who can change the course of leadership in Africa. Peaceful elections in Sierra Leone and Tanzania should serve as examples to African leaders as we move away from violence and toward successful democracies.

The Africa Faith and Justice Network, inspired by the Gospel and informed by Catholic Social Teaching, educates and advocates for just relations with Africa.

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Advocacy for justice and peace in Africa doesn't just happen. AFJN needs your help and participation! Thank you for your financial support.