

# ANNUAL REPORT

FY13: October 2012 – September 2013

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Executive Office of the Mayor  
**Ngozi Nmezi, Director**



Dear District of Columbia Residents and Stakeholders:



It is with distinct pleasure that we present to you the FY 2013 Office of African Affairs' Annual Report. The three-fold mission of OAA mirrors Mayor Vincent C. Gray's vision for the District of Columbia: to improve the overall quality of life for the District's diverse African constituents and their families; to increase civic and public engagement in the District's African community; and to support community development. Through our five core programmatic areas, OAA has organized and hosted over 20 community programs and trainings and reached close to 1,800 participants and District residents. From informational workshops to health education and business and workforce development programming, OAA partnered with DC government agencies, federal government, community based organizations and faith based organizations to provide assistance, information, resources and services, to the District's African community.

OAA's mission is made even more meaningful by the measurable change that occurs when constituents are empowered, businesses are strengthened, and the richness of our city's multicultural diversity is celebrated. In response to the needs of the rising number of African constituents with varied skills seeking employment, OAA launched bi-weekly Job Circles to provide training and a safe space for sharing culturally-specific challenges to entering the workforce. These job circles culminated in a job fair through which the lives of 10 constituents were positively improved when they were hired on the spot by DC government agencies and nonprofit organizations. OAA's Think.Eat.Act.Move (TEAM) Africa was a three-month long health education and outreach campaign designed to address health disparities in the District's African immigrant community. The campaign, which reached over 1,000 residents, closed with a festive health fair which featured health screenings, movement exercises, and cooking demonstrations.

We remain committed to positively impacting business and economic development in our great city. It's why OAA and the Office of Deputy Mayor's Office of Planning and Economic Development hosted a targeted informational workshop on the Great Streets Capital Improvement Grant, the Mayor's multi-year, multi-agency commercial revitalization initiative to transform emerging corridors across the District into thriving and inviting neighborhood centers. Of the thirty-five businesses that participated in OAA's informational workshop, three African-owned businesses were awarded the grant which helped strengthen their businesses, while contributing to the social and economic reinvigoration of the city's Georgia Avenue's corridor located in Wards 1 and 4. Mayor Gray and OAA closed out the fiscal year with over 700 guests at the historic Howard Theatre in celebration of African Heritage Month. At our 4th Annual Heritage Month Celebration: *A Tribute to Past & Present Leaders in the African Community*, seven local African trailblazers were recognized for their leadership in the African community and attendees enjoyed an eclectic mix of performances which spanned across many African music genres.

As we look to the year ahead, we take note of recent demographic trends that indicate that African immigrants are one of the fastest growing foreign-born populations in the United States and that locally Africans now constitute 17 percent of the District's foreign-born population. This reflects both the African community's potential and OAA's exciting challenges ahead as we work to meet the community's needs, empower individuals, families and youth to live their best lives, and enable businesses to thrive and contribute to the dynamic District that we call home!

With warmest regard,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ngozi Nmezi".

Ngozi Nmezi  
Director, DC Mayor's Office on African Affairs



The mission of the Mayor's Office on African Affairs (OAA) is to ensure that the full range of health, education, employment, social services, safety, business and economic development information, services and opportunities are accessible to the District's African community. By serving as the liaison between the District's African community, District government agencies, and the Mayor, OAA aims to:

- Improve the quality of life of the District's diverse African-born constituencies and their children;
- Increase civic and public engagement in the District's African community, and;
- Support community development by building the institutional capacity of community-based organizations, and the local business sector.

The Office accomplishes these goals by providing targeted capacity building, linkage to District government agencies and access to information and resources to the District's African constituents through its five core programmatic areas:

- **Capacity Building** – this program aims to strengthen the District's African businesses and community-based organizations through technical assistance and organization development consulting;
- **Outreach & Education** – this program ensures that the District's African communities are aware of District government services and programs;
- **Multicultural Awareness and Development** – this program promotes awareness of the rich cultural and linguistic diversity within the District's African community.
- **Constituent Services** – OAA provides culturally and linguistically targeted one-on-one consultation and service referral to District residents.
- **Youth Engagement** – this program connects the District's African youth to leadership development, civic engagement, and academic enrichment opportunities.

In FY13, OAA hosted a total of **23 community events** and trainings, reaching over **1788 District residents** and participants.

These outreach and engagement activities mirrored the **Mayor's key priority goals**, and provided an opportunity for the **Mayor, OAA, and over 25 District government agencies to interface with the District's African community** in direct and meaningful ways.

These activities combined:

- Large annual celebratory community-building events such as the Mayor's DC African Heritage Celebration and the TEAM Africa Wellness Fete;
- Culturally and linguistically targeted education programs addressing urgent needs and access gaps;
- Technical assistance and consulting services to strengthen businesses and civic institutions;
- Partnership with District government and nonprofit agencies and delivery of trainings to build cultural competency for service providers.



## CAPACITY BUILDING

OAA works to build the capacity of local entrepreneurs, small businesses, community-based organizations and faith-based organizations through technical assistance and linkage to resources. As part of a concerted effort to further spur economic development within the local African business community in FY13, OAA worked to connect businesses to opportunities, and provide organizational development consulting to business leaders.

- **GREAT STREETS CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT GRANT WORKSHOP** - On Wednesday, January 23, 2013, the OAA partnered with the Deputy Mayor's Office on Planning and Economic Development (DMPED) to host an information session for African-owned small businesses located in Ward 1 along Georgia Avenue. The workshop introduced the Great Streets Small Business Capital Improvement Grant, a multi-agency and multi-year effort to transform under-invested corridors in the District into thriving neighborhoods. For the thirty five small business owners who participated, the session provided an intimate bi-lingual setting to hear directly from DMPED about the grant application process, and allowed them to connect with technical assistance and grant writing assistance providers. Three of the businesses that OAA engaged through this program successfully applied and received a Great Streets Grant to enhance their small business.
- **BUSINESS WORKSHOP ON COMPLIANCE & RESOURCES**: On Thursday, August 15, 2013, OAA partnered with the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) and the DMPED to host a second informational workshop for African-owned store owners and merchants. Over twenty-five businesses owners learned about regulations governing the sales of synthetic narcotics and drug paraphernalia, and received the second round of information on the Great Streets Capital Improvement Grant. Following this workshop, a third of these businesses reported having applied for the grant, and an additional three African-owned businesses were among 19 businesses awarded in the second phase of DMPED's grant disbursement.
- **AFRICAN-OWNED BUSINESS DIRECTORY PROJECT** - Georgia Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street are two of nine neighborhoods identified by DMPED as under-invested corridors in the District. Both are known to be home to large and growing concentrations of African-owned businesses and merchants. In FY13, OAA's business engagement efforts were largely focused on ensuring that District government resources, regulations, and opportunities were accessible to businesses in Ward 1, particularly those run by Limited English Proficient or Non-English Proficient (LEP/NEP) merchants. OAA worked closely with DCRA, DSLBD and DMPED to enhance culturally and linguistically targeted engagement and education in these corridors. A multi-lingual team of staff and volunteers conducted door-to- door visits, distributed informational material in Amharic and French, and hosted workshops in multiple African languages. In the process, OAA collected unique data on 100 African-owned businesses on Georgia Avenue, thereby launching the African Business Directory Project now scaled to encompass all sectors and DC wards.
- **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR INCUBATION OF THE 'DC AFRICAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE'** - In FY13, OAA continued to incubate the efforts of African business leaders spearheading the creation of an African Chamber of Commerce. Throughout the year, OAA convened these leaders for six strategic planning sessions as a result of which the group identified the scope and mission of the organization. As a first step, this group embarked on a preliminary data collection and research effort to document the presence of African-owned businesses in the District and determine their aggregate contribution - in terms of revenue and job creation - to the local economy. OAA continues to offer technical assistance in the form of facilitating meetings, strategic planning, and providing linkage to research, resources, and best practices.



## MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS & DEVELOPMENT

OAA recognizes and respects the diversity of the District's African residents. It works to promote awareness and appreciation for the rich multiculturalism within the District's African community through **cultural events, the arts, and dialogues**.



**FOURTH ANNUAL DC AFRICA FESTIVAL AND MAYOR'S 2<sup>nd</sup> PROCLAMATION OF SEPTEMBER AS AFRICAN HERITAGE MONTH-** Mayor Gray and the Office on African Affairs (OAA) held the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual DC Africa Heritage Celebration on September 30<sup>th</sup> at the historic Howard Theater. Mayor Gray, members of cabinet, special guests from the African diplomatic corps, and 700 hundred District residents attended this historic celebration commemorating African Heritage Month in DC by paying tribute to past and present leaders of the African Diaspora. The event featured performances as diverse as the community itself, including a demonstration of a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony. Mayor Gray's remarks on this occasion highlighted the cultural and economic contributions of DC's ethnically and linguistically diverse residents, and his administration's commitment to build a unified city that thrives on the full engagement of its diverse populations. The Mayor also honored seven exceptional community leaders who have worked to nurture and strengthen the District's African community through activities in business, public service, institution building, advocacy, Pan-African bridge-building, cultural education, and the arts.

### 'THE CONVERT' & 'THE ROLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN':

**PLAY & PANEL-** In honor of Black History Month, the OAA partnered with the Woolly Mammoth Theater to host a panel discussion on the "Role of Women in Traditional African Cultures and Christianity." The dialogue followed a performance of Danai Gurira's powerful play 'The Convert' which explored the 'complex cultural and religious collisions that shaped post-colonial Africa'. Panelists Emira Woods (Co-Director of Foreign Policy at the Institute of Policy Studies), Jummy Olabanji (Emmy award-winning reporter), Elmina Bell (youth leader from School Without Walls) and Rev. Dr. Mankekolo Mahlangu-Ngcobo (community leader and health advocate) reflected on their personal journeys and examined the evolving role of African women, the impact of Christianity and colonization on indigenous African cultures, and the potential role that faith-based institutions play in strengthening communities.





## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

OAA's outreach and education program ensures that the District's African communities access District government services and resources. In FY13, OAA implemented robust **workforce development** and **health education** programs through interagency coordination and community-based partnerships.

### WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

- **JOB CIRCLES & JOB FAIR:** In response to evident gaps in access to jobs and culturally-targeted career development pipelines to sustain the rising population of both low-skilled and high-skilled African constituents in DC, OAA launched its biweekly Job Circles. Over 112 job seekers were supported in their job search efforts in these circles which were designed to provide safe space for job seekers to discuss culturally-specific job search challenges, identify unique employment opportunities that harness multilingual skills, and develop their job search skills. Participants reported that language, accents, and other cultural differences posed barriers to employment, particularly in supervisory and management positions. For OAA, these job circles provided new sample data on the workforce profile of the District's African immigrant community. Over 40% of Job Circle participants had a bachelor's degree, and nearly 17% had graduate and more advanced degrees. These high-skilled job seekers expressed the need for targeted support helping to rebuild their professional careers in the U.S. and navigate the cost and process associated with recertification and accreditation of foreign credentials. Following eight coaching and training sessions, the job circle process culminated in a highly successful job fair. Over 150 DC residents attended the event and 10 participants were offered DC government and nonprofit jobs on the spot.



### HEALTH EDUCATION

- **TEAM AFRICA HEALTH EDUCATION CAMPAIGN:** In February 2013 OAA launched Think.Eat.Act.Move. (TEAM) Africa to address health disparities in the District's African immigrant community and to tackle glaring barriers to access related to language, lack of culturally-tailored health education, stigma, and unaffordability of care. Through March, April, and May, the TEAM Africa campaign relied on a 13-member coordinating committee, social media, multilingual outreach teams, community/faith-based host partners, and interagency collaboration to successfully reach over **1000 District residents**. These residents participated in roving workshops on mental health, health literacy, and nutrition uniquely tailored to their ethnic, religious, language, and culture groups. Workshops were conducted in Amharic, French, Arabic, Tigrigna & Oromifa for members of diverse community-based host partners, namely: the Ethiopian Community Center; the Ethiopian Evangelical Church; African Students Association at Howard University; Oromo Community Organization; Nigerians in the Diaspora (DC Chapter); Carlos Rosario International Public Charter School; and First Hijra Foundation Muslim Society of Washington. A TEAM Africa educational video was also produced and used as a social media tool for garnering wide support for the campaign and for promoting positive choices that lead to a healthy lifestyle. These activities culminated in the first Annual African Wellness Fête, a celebratory fair which combined mini-workshops, government and nonprofit health resource providers, health screenings, cooking demonstrations, and movement exercises.



- **DC LINK AFRICAN LEADERSHIP SUMMIT:** On Wednesday, August 14, 2013, OAA partnered with the DC Health Link to host a summit intended to educate and inform leaders of the African community, District residents, and small business owners about the affordable, high-quality health insurance options available to them and their employees under DC Health Link, the District's online health insurance marketplace. Over 40 participants including key community leaders representing the District's diverse African communities attended and inquired with particular interest about plans for rollout and engagement of linguistic and culturally diverse populations.



## INTERNSHIP & VOLUNTEERING

OAA's internship program offers hands-on experience and learning opportunities for university students and young professionals seeking to engage in public service, while primarily serving the District's African community.

OAA interns are involved in many aspects of the agency's day-to-day work as they participate in the implementation of program activities and provide support to the staff, while learning about the District's African community.

OAA's internship positions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Program Intern
- Communications Intern
- Grant Writing and Research Intern
- Outreach Intern
- Special Assistant

OAA's Internship and Volunteering programs serve as building blocks for undergraduates, graduate students, and young professionals seeking experience in the public sector, and those particularly interested in servicing the District's African residents. OAA relies heavily on the passion and motivation of interns and volunteers to help the office achieve its goals. Interns assist the staff and are integrated into the day-to-day work of the office, playing an integral role in the implementation of OAA's diverse programs.



Interns and volunteers with OAA Director Ngozi Nmezi and Policy Analyst Winta Teferi

In FY13, OAA had a total of 17 interns who contributed towards serving the District's African community during their time with OAA. Among the nationalities represented were Ethiopian, Ghanaian, Kenyan, Liberian, Nigerian, Sierra Leonean, and Zambian. Each intern brought different experiences, skills, and perspectives which strengthened their collective effort and OAA's vision and ability to improve service to the District's diverse African population. Collectively, this group's rich linguistic skills included Amharic, French, Igbo, Kiswahili, Oromo, Somali, and Twi. The interns represented a host of colleges, among them American University District of Columbia, American University , Calvin College, Dave and Elkins College, George Mason University, Georgetown University, George Washington University, Howard University, Mary Baldwin College, Seton Hall University, University of District of Columbia, University of Maryland Baltimore County, and University of Massachusetts.

### FY 2013 Interns:

Aliou Keita  
Bayissa Gemechu  
Benjamin Nzioka  
Cara Bernard  
Cynthia Onukwuhga  
Esther Orudiakumo  
Hanan Abubakar  
Hermila Yifter  
Kalaeb Brooks  
Keshia Engwenyi  
Mariama Jalloh  
Mercy Anguah  
Mercy Erhiawarien  
Michelle Kayosa-Ajayi  
Nkechinyere Ezekwe  
Nnanna Onywuchi  
Waameeka  
AheVonderea  
Ruth Orudiakumo  
Samia Ahmed  
Vania Iscandari



OAA Fellows (L-R) Sherif Elhassan, Atlas Corps International, and Tsedey Aragie AmeriCorps VISTA.

## **COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AFFAIRS**

*The mandate of the Commission on African Affairs is to:*

- Serve as an advocate for persons in the District*
- Review and submit to the Mayor, the Council, and the Office and make available to the public an annual report which analyses the needs of the African community in the District*
- Alert the Mayor and the OAA on cases of neglect and abuse or incidents of bias against members of the African community in the day-to-day administration of the District and federal laws*
- Assess and comment on proposed District and federal legislation, regulations, policies, and programs and make policy recommendations on issues affecting the health, safety, and welfare of the African community.*

- The Commission on African Affairs was created in 2006, along with the OAA as mandated by DC Law 16-313. It is made up of 11 of 13 members who are chosen by the Mayor and whose appointments are ratified by the Council. Members are knowledgeable, passionate, and dedicated individuals. In appointing the Council on African affairs, representation from public, non-profit, and volunteer community-based organizations that are involved with the District's African community is given due consideration. Members of the general public are also duly considered for appointment.

- Among its FY13 Public Safety and Language Access achievements, the COAA conducted a survey on African languages spoken in the District and informed community members with limited or non-English proficient (LEP/NEP) skills on the availability of free interpretation services available when interfacing with DC government agencies. The COAA also met with DC government agencies and discussed policy and standard operating procedures for serving and engaging LEP/NEP merchants. COAA member Loide Rosa Jorge lauded Mayor Gray's initiative to introduce the District of Columbia Driver's Safety Amendment Act of 2013.

### **COAA Members:**

**Chime Asonye**

**George Banks**

**Guoungou Tereguebode**

**Ify Nwabukwu**

**Jean-Francis Varre**

**Lafayette Barnes**

**Loide Jorge**

**Louisa Buadoo-Amoa**

**Nana Seshibe**

**Sefanit Befekadu**

**Yusuf Yinusa**

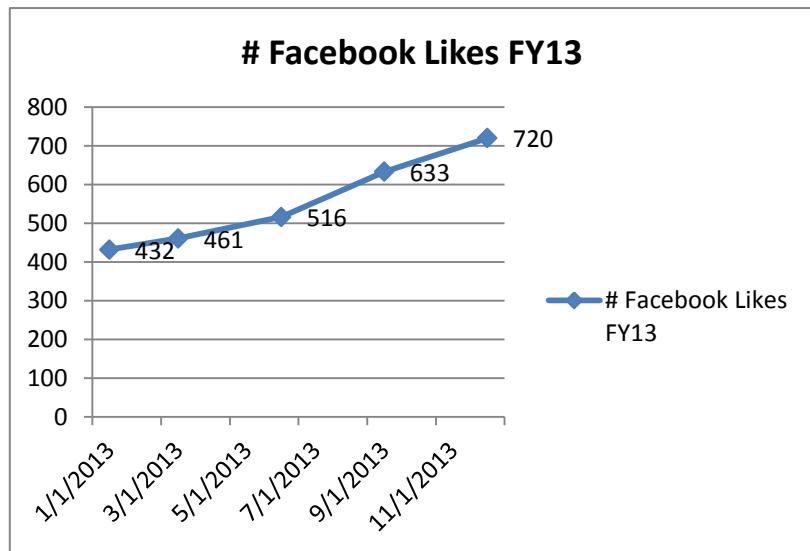


*DC Commission on African Affairs Retreat, October 2012*

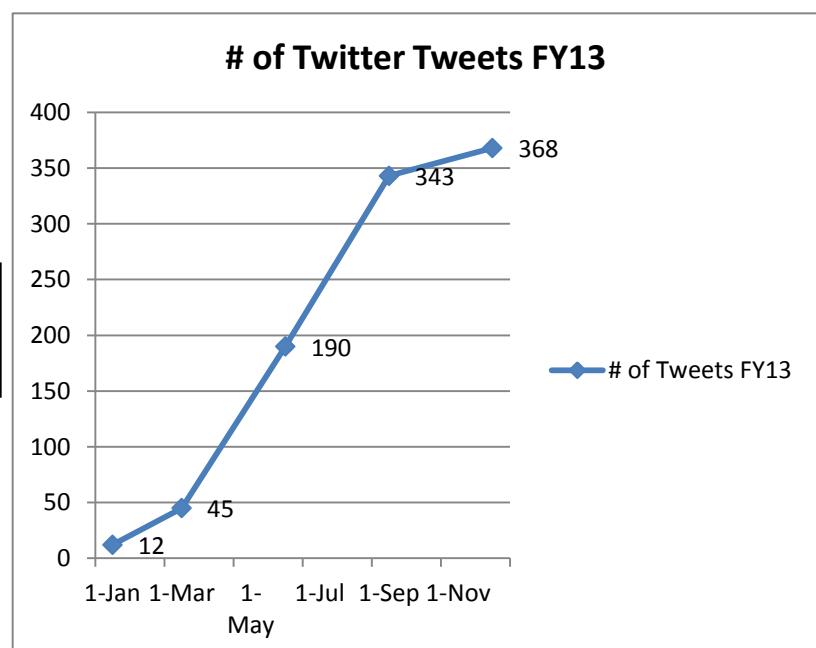
## COMMUNICATIONS

- Throughout FY13, OAA has enhanced its visibility through various means, including social media (Twitter & Facebook), conventional door-to-door outreach, television, radio programs, as well as distribution of flyers to targeted local businesses, individuals, and blogs. In addition to enhancing OAA's visibility, these means of communication continue to play an active role in aiding the promotion of greater civic engagement and participation among the District's African population.

## SOCIAL MEDIA



*In FY13, OAA saw a marked increase in its Facebook followership and presence.*



*OAA recorded great success in communicating with constituents through Twitter, with 368 tweets which relayed important outreach and education information to its followers in FY13*