

EUROPEANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT AND BLACK EUROPEANS  
ADVANCING EMPOWERMENT, EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS  
United States Study Tour  
November 17-23, 2013  
Washington, DC



From November 17-23, seventeen European Rights Leaders of African descent participated in an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) sponsored study tour to Washington, DC. Delegates participated in a series of consultations with Congress, U.S. government officials, foundations, research institutions, and academia to advance civil and human rights for Europeans of African descent. Delegates represented ten countries: Austria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Malta, Moldova, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, and United Kingdom.

### Key Findings and Recommendations

**Black Europeans/People of African Descent** have had a presence in Europe for centuries, with current estimates around 15 million and growing. Many have long held citizenship, while others are more recent arrivals. Yet, the contributions and histories of African descendants, including the transatlantic slave trade and colonialism, are often not included or are misrepresented in European history and textbooks. Educational curricula, historical sites, and media should be updated and utilized to accurately relay the European presence, contributions, and experiences of African descendants.

**Racism** efforts in Europe rarely include people of African descent, despite Europe's 'black' population reporting some of the highest rates of hate crimes, racial profiling, and discrimination in education, housing, justice, and other sectors. Reliable statistical data is needed to address these issues. People of African descent should be included in the design and implementation of European anti-discrimination and inclusion efforts.

**Empowerment** initiatives focused on political leadership and voter education, advocacy and community organizing, litigation and victim's legal assistance, grant writing, entrepreneurship and philanthropy, as well as educational exchanges, including special initiatives for women, youth, and migrants, were identified by delegates as tools that would greatly assist African descendant efforts to address racial discrimination and foster inclusion in Europe.

**Support** is desperately needed to address racism and discrimination, and fund African descent-led civil society initiatives. A lack of 'will' from governments and private entities to support anti-discrimination and inclusion efforts was identified as the major obstacle to improving the situation of African descendants. Delegates recommended the creation of a 'President Obama Fund' to kickstart global African descent led civil society efforts and encourage other funding.

*The Europeans of African descent study tour to the United States was sponsored by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) with the support of the U.S. Department of State in cooperation with the U.S. Helsinki Commission (CSCE).*

## HELSINKI COMMISSION HEARING



*“The first basic point that we need to win on is for people to understand, governments to understand, Europe to understand that there’s strength in diversity and they shouldn’t fear diversity [...] The United States has had a rough past towards full participation. But today [...] recognizes that in diversity we have strength.” - U.S. Helsinki Commission Chair ,U.S. Senator Ben Cardin*

The study tour began with a public U.S. Helsinki Commission hearing, where six members of the delegation provided testimony on the situation of the estimated 15 million People of African Descent who make up Europe’s Black population. The hearing highlighted Europe’s challenges to being inclusive democracies in the face of demographic changes leading the continent to become more racially and otherwise diverse. Issues from throwing bananas and other racist acts targeting Black cabinet-level officials in Italy and France to the often unacknowledged centuries long presence of Black Europeans in educational and historical venues were discussed. Dangers associated with the rise of xenophobic political parties who espoused hate and sanctioned vigilantism were underscored by a powerful testimony from King Charles Asante-Yeboah, head of Ukraine’s Africa Center, in which he showed a picture of his brutalized face following a hate crime in which he was attacked by 15 men. While, Jallow Mamadou provided testimony revealing a more than twenty percent increase in anti-Black hate crimes in Sweden - mirroring other official findings of African descendant victimization within the European Union (EU). Their testimonies highlighted the need for increased funding to combat racism and hate crimes, and provide assistance to victims and their families. The dire situation of African refugees and migrants in Malta was also highlighted, with a call for more humanitarian immigration laws and efforts to address abuses of migrant labor, including labor trafficking in the EU. Issues impacting migrant women from discrimination in social services to employment were raised. The political participation of African descendants in upcoming EU elections and other areas of empowerment were discussed as critical to combating racism and fostering inclusion. Witnesses thanked the Helsinki Commission and US State Department for their ongoing support of OSCE engagement with African descent civil society and stressed the importance of expanding OSCE and OSCE participating States’ efforts to address racism and discrimination faced by People of African Descent.

*“Similar to the experiences of many African Americans, black Europeans have increasingly become the targets of discrimination, pernicious racial profiling and violent hate crimes impacting equal access to housing, employment, education. And all of that adds up to a lack of justice.” - Helsinki Commissioner , U.S. Representative Alcee L. Hastings*

## U.S. CONGRESS AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Congressional meetings provided delegates with an overview of the history and impact of the U.S. Civil Rights struggle, including more recent diversity efforts in the U.S. Congress. Discussions with Judiciary Counsel, Keenan Keller, focused on the role of legislators in the development of 'anti-discrimination' policies. Current events such as the Trayvon Martin case, immigration, and voting rights were highlighted as examples that the United States civil rights journey was still underway. Meetings with Congressional Black Caucus Members included Helsinki Commissioner Representative Alcee L. Hastings and Judiciary Committee Member Representative Sheila Jackson Lee, who pledged to work with delegates, including through official country visits, to support their human rights efforts.



*Representative Sheila Jackson Lee addresses delegates*

***"Data would help us immensely in identifying where resources should be targeted to combat the daily reports of discrimination we receive experienced by the Black community both within our countries and at the borders."***

***- Jallow Momodou, Vice President, European Network Against Racism, Sweden***



*Delegates meet with Maria Meier of the Senate Democratic Diversity Initiative*

Office of Personnel Management's Diversity and Inclusion Office, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Justice Office of Civil Rights, and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services representatives showcased the multiple tools the U.S. government utilizes to recruit and employ diverse populations, statistically track demographics and inequality, and address discrimination and hate crimes. The Presidential directive *-Executive Order 13583-- Establishing a Coordinated Government-wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the*

*Federal Workforce* - was particularly discussed as a forward-looking initiative given major demographic changes taking place in the United States. Delegates noted that restrictions many European countries have on ethnic data collection have hindered the development of European policies and other efforts to combat discrimination in employment, justice sectors, and at borders. Additionally, class action lawsuits, court supplied legal assistance, employment compensation, and other aids for victims of discrimination were discussed as possible models for assisting African descent communities in Europe. The need for anti-discrimination training for European law enforcement officials ranging from police and border agents to prosecutors and judges was particularly stressed by delegates. Delegates also noted how U.S. citizenship laws fostered a greater acceptance of diversity and discussed how recent efforts to restrict European citizenship were detrimental to inclusion.

## CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS



In a special session with Reverend Jesse Jackson, strategies for addressing issues of racism in Europe and across the globe were discussed. Citing a trip to Malmo, Sweden in support of Jallow Mamadou's case, Reverend Jackson cautioned that the U.S. Civil Rights struggle was far from over and called to expand the fight to achieve racial equality and justice across borders. A Black Entertainment Television segment on the exchange can be found here:

<http://www.bet.com/video/news/global/2013/black-europeans-face-familiar-struggles.html>



In exchanges with African-American and anti-discrimination civil rights organizations (The Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation, the National Action Network, the American Civil Liberties Union, Trans Africa, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, and Anti-Defamation League), delegates relayed the dire situation of African descent communities in Europe. U.S. civil rights organizations particularly stressed that despite 2013 marking the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Movement, continuing racial disparities in voting rights, education, health, prisons, housing, wealth, and justice generally remained. Given commonalities between the U.S. and European situation, exchanging information on organizing minority communities to advocate change through political participation was cited as key. Other possible areas of international collaboration included combating racial profiling and hate crimes. Professional exchanges were highly recommended to improve capacities in the areas of data collection, legal assistance, and advocacy in support of racial justice. Importantly, the lack of funding for anti-racism civil society initiatives in both the United States and Europe was cited as a major hurdle to effective collaboration.

*“There is a need for research, communication, and networks of policymakers, lawyers, and civil rights activism [and] strategies between the European Union, OSCE, and US government [to respond to discrimination].”*

*-Wade Henderson, Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights*

## FOUNDATIONS AND THINKTANKS



*Delegates discuss challenges to an inclusive Europe at Open Society*



*Delegates discuss their work with Vice President Gail Christopher of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation*



*At GMF, delegates exchange views with political participation organizations: Victory Fund, IMPACT DC, National Democratic Institute, Women's Campaign Fund/She Should run, ACYPL, New American Leaders Party, Center for Progressive Leadership, Running Start, Millennial Action Project, People for the American Way/Young People For the American Way*

Meetings with foundations and thinktanks (Open Society Foundations, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, German Marshall Fund, the Foundation Center, Baoba-Fund for Racial Equity) focused on the potential for a diversified Europe pending the inclusion of and partnership with minority communities. Delegates presented their work, with projects ranging from monitoring hate crimes to anti-racism educational initiatives in schools and assisting African refugees. The severe physical and mental health implications of racial discrimination were discussed, including the lack of trained health professionals to address such issues in Europe. Several delegates relayed that funding for their organizations had shrunk in recent years due to the economic downturn, and reiterated the need for more funding streams for African descent led initiatives and anti-racism work. Open Society discussed its new European headquarters and project focused on combating racism and xenophobia with a special initiative around European elections. Kellogg discussed its deep commitment to combating racism, highlighting its America Healing initiative to address the ramifications of racism in the United States and a recent meeting with European luminaries focused on addressing the global legacy of racism. The Baoba Fund noted similarities in the situation of African descendants in Europe with those in the Americas (estimated 150 million). The Foundation Center discussed its use as a resource to locate funding for human rights and other initiatives. The German Marshall Fund (GMF) highlighted programs focused on diversity efforts in policymaking as a mechanism for advancing inclusive policies in Europe for an increasingly diverse demographic. A GMF facilitated conversation between delegates and political empowerment organizations in the United States allowed delegates to share obstacles to voting and running for elections in their countries. These issues ranged from voter apathy to obtaining voting rights for migrant communities. Other issues included racist threats suffered by African descent politicians fomented by racist political leaders and political organizations (e.g., death threats towards Italian Minister Cecile Kyenge). The need for voter education, diversity efforts for political parties, campaigning know how, and other components of minority political participation were slated for follow on conversations and initiatives.

***“Politicians are in fact the ones enforcing [black] stereotypes”***

***- Salome Mbugua, Ireland***

## HOWARD UNIVERSITY



*Drs. Marilyn Sephcole, Harold Scott, Elsie Scott, Lorenzo Morris, Santiago, and James Hudson with delegates at Howard.*



At Howard University, (a Historically Black College (HBCU) founded in 1867 to educate African-Americans during segregation), delegates met with students, faculty, and former U.S. executive director of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, James L. Hudson. Meetings with former Director Hudson provided an overview of financing and program options available for vulnerable populations such as Roma and African descendants, through the European Bank. Following a tour in which the University's history was discussed, delegates met with faculty and students to discuss the histories of African descent populations across Europe. Moving personal accounts detailed how racism impacted their everyday lives. Delegates argued that racism is more prevalent and brutal in Europe than in the U.S. in part because there is no public attention or conversation on racism in Europe. Consequently, racism is blatant and violent, but often goes unaddressed. Delegates discussed how they were personally targeted and viewed as being 'disrespectful to their country' when they attempted to speak out against racism. Racial discrimination also negatively impacted the identity of African descent children, who felt non-European as a result of how they were treated. Additionally, African descendants were often not included in history. Even when European colonialism was taught, its impact on people of African descent was often left out. Other issues ranged from how citizenship laws disadvantaged African descent populations to gender issues. "Despite living in my country for 25 years, I'm still not a citizen," remarked one delegate. While another spoke of how women were often targeted for exploit and sexually harassed with little recourse from authorities. While educational exchanges, especially for European African descent youth to study at Howard and other HBCUs were recommended, funding for such programs was highlighted as an ongoing hurdle. Additionally, the need for curricula that included 'black' populations in Europe was cited as critical and another area in which HBCUs could be of assistance.

*"[subtle racism exists] where people are not be killed physically, but morally".  
-Fatima Djalo, Moldova*

## WHITE HOUSE AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES



*Delegates at the White House following meetings*

Meetings with White House National Security Council and Department of State officials focused on the need for increased U.S. government engagement on issues of racial prejudice and discrimination in both eastern and western Europe. Delegates extended invitations for embassy, Special Envoys, and other high level U.S. officials to visit and raise issues of racism with national, state, and local governments in their countries. They also noted how the addition of anti-Black hate crimes and other instances of discrimination to annual U.S. Human Rights country reports would assist their efforts to gain government assistance to fight racism. Specifically the need for US—European government, private sector, and civil society information exchanges on creating anti-discrimination mechanisms ranging from data collection and complaint offices to legal remedies were discussed. Delegates raised the dire situation of funding and highlighted the immense work they could do to protect, foster equality, and empower African descent communities in Europe if a special funding initiative were to be created for African descent civil society —i.e., an 'Obama Fund.'



*David Hinson, Minority Business Development Agency Head*

A conversation with the head of the Minority Business Development Agency offered delegates a view of the importance of engaging the private sector in civil rights efforts. For-profit entities and entrepreneurship were highlighted as having been integral to the empowerment of African-Americans. Black owned banks and other business enterprises were also discussed as key interlocutors in advancing U.S. civil rights initiatives. Minority business hubs were discussed as possible mechanisms for furthering economic inclusion for African descent and other minority populations in Europe.



*Delegates meet with State Department officials*

### Austria

*Chibo Onyeji*, Deputy President, Radio Afrika TV; former Chair, European Network Against Racism (ENAR)

### Germany

*Jamie Schearer*, Initiative Black People in Germany (ISD)

### Hungary

*Frank Ekiudoko*, Vice-President, Ebony African Cultural, Arts and Human Rights Organization

*Miriam Ekiudoko*, President of the Ebony African Cultural, Arts & Human Rights Organization; Co-Chair of the Hungarian Africa Platform

*Shaun Fisher*, Tolerance Education

### Ireland

*Salome Mbugua*, founder and CEO, AkiDwA, Migrant Women's Network

### Malta

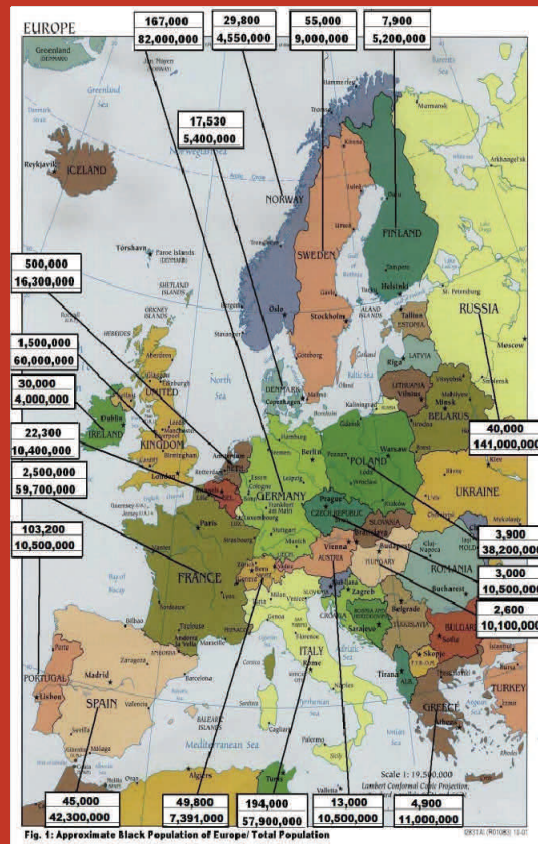
*Hedwig Bvumburah*, Director, Cross Culture International Foundation (CCIF),

### Moldova

*Keita Abdramane*, co-founder and Director, FATIMA-the Society for the protection of children of African origin

*Fatima Djalo*, Moldovan Activist, Media Personality

## U.S. STUDY TOUR DELEGATES



Map by Dr. Allison Blakely  
Boston University; Harvard University WEB Dubois Institute

### OSCE

*Larry Olomofe*, Racism and Xenophobia Advisor, OSCE/ODIHR

### Poland

*Tochukwu Nwolisa*, CEO, Foundation PORTA for Social and Ethnic Minorities

*James Omolo*, Journalist, The Collective Black People Movement

*Abdul Sallau*, Activist

### Slovenia

*Eyachew Tefara*, Executive Director, Institute for African Studies

### Sweden

*Momodou Jallow*, Vice-Chair; European Network Against Racism; Chair, Pan-African Movement for Justice

*Charlene Rosander*, Pan-African Movement for Justice

### Ukraine

*King Asante-Yeboah*, President, Africa Center; Board Member, Council of African Elders

### United States

*Michael Simmons*, Ráday Salon (Hungary)

### United Kingdom

Please follow the links below for additional information on OSCE, OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and US activities on people of African descent:

- [U.S. Helsinki Commission Hearing \(November 19, 2013\) Europeans of African Descent 'Black Europeans': Race, Rights, and Politics](#)
- [US Mission to the OSCE statement at OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Sept. 24, 2013](#)
- [OSCE PA July 2012 Resolution on Addressing Racism and Xenophobia Affecting People of African Descent in the OSCE Region](#) (by MP Kathleen Ferrier and U.S. Representative Alcee L. Hastings) – click on 2012 Monaco Declaration page 67-69
- [OSCE/ODIHR November 2011 Roundtable on the contemporary forms of racism and xenophobia affecting Peoples of African Descent in the OSCE region.](#)
- [OSCE November 2011 Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Prevention of Racism, Xenophobia and Hate Crimes through Educational and Awareness-Raising Initiatives](#)
- [US Mission to the OSCE statement at Permanent Council Meeting Nov. 10, 2011](#)
- [OSCE PA July 2011 Resolution on Strengthening Efforts to Combat Racism and Xenophobia and Foster Inclusion](#) (by MP Kathleen Ferrier and U.S. Representative Alcee L. Hastings) – click on Belgrade Resolutions page 36.
- [US Mission to the OSCE – July 2011 Awareness Raising on Roundtable on Racism Against Persons of African Descent](#)
- [U.S. Legislation - \(August 2011\) H.RES.389: Recognizing persons of African descent in Europe during the International Year for People of African Descent](#), Sponsor: Helsinki Commissioner Congressman Alcee L. Hastings
- [U.S. Legislation - \(August 2011\) S.CON.RES.26: A concurrent resolution supporting the goals and ideals of the designation of the year of 2011 as the International Year for People of African Descent](#), Sponsor: Helsinki Commissioner Sen. Benjamin Cardin
- [Black European Summit \(2009\)](#) Convened by the U.S. Helsinki Commission and the Socialist Party of the European Parliament
- [U.S. Helsinki Commission Hearing \(2008\): The State of \(In\)visible Black Europe: Race, Rights, and Politics \(includes map of Black populations, statistics, policy papers, recommendations\)](#)
- [U.S. Helsinki Commission Hearing \(2008\): Racism in the 21st Century](#)

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