

AMJAMBO AFRICA

ENGLISH | FRANÇAIS | IKINYARWANDA | KISWAHILI | SOMALI | PORTUGUÊS | ESPAÑOL

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Local News Day • April 9th



Introducing...Amjambo's new editor! see page 5



Darlène Nkurunziza and Emma Ndabitungentyo

Siku ya Kimataifa ya Wanawake huko Portland: Umoja, tamaduni, na matumaini katikati ya wahamiaji Na Rachel Ndjondjo | Photos Mark Mattos

Kila mwaka mnamo Machi 8, dunia inaadhimisha Siku ya Kimataifa ya Wanawake. Imeadhimishwa tangu mwaka 1910 chini ya mada tofauti, sikukuu hii hutoa wakati wa kutambua nafasi muhimu wanawake wanayoicheza katika jamii na kutafakari juu ya mapambano yanayoendelea ya usawa wa kijinsia. Zaidi ya kumbukumbu, siku hii hutoa

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Celebrating perseverance and hope: Common Threads Fall 2025 graduates honored in Westbrook By Rachel Ndjondjo | Photos Mark Mattos

On Sunday, March 22, 2026, the Westbrook Community Center filled with pride and emotion as students, families, educators, and community members gathered to celebrate the graduation of the Fall 2025 cohort of the Common Threads program, offered through Westbrook Adult Education.

More than a ceremonial milestone, the event marked a turning point in the lives of many

Continued on page 2

Am·jam·bo:

\ äm-jäm-bò\ n. A Swahili greeting meaning "matter," "issue," or "words" in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi. Amjambo Africa is a program of Ladder to the Moon Network.

Biddeford hosts 5th Annual Community Iftar, bringing unity and celebrating community

By Dhananji Rathnayake | Photos Mark Mattos

“What I find deeply powerful about Ramadan is that it transforms patience and gratitude into compassion for others,” said Eisha Khan, organizer of the Biddeford Community Iftar. “When you fast all day, it becomes impossible not to think about those who face hunger and hardship every day, whether in our local communities or around the world. Fasting sharpens our awareness of one another and reminds us to care, reflect, and act with compassion.”

Over 300 guests gathered on March 15 at the Harold Alfond Forum at the University of New England (UNE) for the 5th Annual Biddeford Community Iftar, a special evening celebrating faith, unity, and community. Iftar is the evening meal that Muslims eat to break their fast at sunset during the holy month of Ramadan. The event was organized by Biddeford Mayor Liam LaFountain and his wife, Eisha Khan, in partnership with the Muslim Student Association at UNE and volunteers from the Maine-Health MMC Biddeford spiritual care team.

“I feel so happy,” said Alaa, one of the attendees. “I bring my kids, my family, and my friends. This is so amazing, and I’m very thankful.” The evening began with a Surah recitation by a youth volunteer. Mayor LaFountain and his wife welcomed guests, highlighting the importance of building community and sharing the spirit of Ramadan. Khan explained that the event was originally designed to recreate the sense of togetherness during Ramadan that she felt as a child.

“I grew up in a community in Houston where every iftar is a community gathering. You never have an iftar by yourself; you always have it with your family,” Khan said. “When I moved to Biddeford, I didn’t know how to find that community, so we wanted to bring that feeling here.”

Khan described Ramadan through three key values: patience, gratitude, and compassion. She explained that fasting teaches patience and helps people appreciate everyday blessings. “When you break your fast, everything that is typically ordinary becomes extraordinary — the first sip of water, the first bite,” she said. “It reminds us of deep gratitude for all the blessings we have.”

In recognition of Women’s History Month, volunteer Nadia Zankanawi recited verses from the Quran. Later, a youth volunteer gave the adhan (call to prayer), marking the time for guests to break their fast together. The keynote speaker, Bilal Afzal, president of the Muslim Student Association, reflected on the spiritual significance of Ramadan and the importance of connecting with the Quran during the holy month. He reminded attendees that Ramadan commemorates the time when the Quran was revealed and encourages believers to reflect deeply on its message.

“The main thing is that we continue these practices even after Ramadan,” he said. “We should use this time to reflect and think about how we can better ourselves.” He also emphasized the value of life and the opportunity to observe Ramadan each year. “Life is too short,” he said. “Some of my own close friends are not here today to experience another Ramadan.”

The Maine Middle Eastern Ensemble, led by oud player Eric LaPerna, performed a blend of traditional Middle Eastern and Eastern Mediterranean music. The group featured musicians on qanun, guitar, and darbouka. Guests also enjoyed a meal that included a variety of traditional and local dishes.

Several attendees reflected on the impact of the gathering:

- “This is why I love living in Biddeford. You get to be in community with people of different faiths, languages, and ages. This is what makes Biddeford beautiful.”
- “In a world that is becoming increasingly divided, gatherings like this remind us of our shared humanity and serve as a beacon of hope.”
- “I haven’t left my home due to fear, but I knew I would feel safe here.”

The event illustrated the power of community, bringing together people of different backgrounds in a shared moment of understanding, compassion, and unity.



Continued from page 1

participants — a moment of transition toward new opportunities and a more stable future.

From the outset, instructor Apphia Kamanda set a reflective and uplifting tone. Addressing graduates directly, she praised their resilience in the face of adversity.

“Even when the journey was not easy, your determination and perseverance brought you here,” she said.

Kamanda emphasized that the day represented far more than the completion of a training program — it symbolized hope, transformation, and self-esteem. Many students began the program uncertain of their abilities; they now leave with confidence, discipline, and a renewed sense of purpose.

She also highlighted that Common Threads extends well beyond technical training. “Every stitch represents patience, precision, and hope,” she noted, describing a program that shapes not only skills but character.

Kamanda extended her gratitude to key partners, including Jen Mull, Alice Shea, and Katie Dube, whose contributions helped foster an inclusive and supportive learning environment.

Taking the stage next, Common Threads founder Dory Waxman spoke candidly about the challenges students face, including adapting to the imperial measurement system and mastering professional English vocabulary.

While these obstacles may appear minor at first glance, she explained, they demand significant effort, focus, and persistence. She

also acknowledged the crucial support of Rebecca Copeland, who assisted students through linguistic and academic transitions.

Drawing from her own experience as part of the first cohort of Westbrook Adult Education, Waxman underscored her deep understanding of the students’ journey. She expressed pride in their achievements and extended gratitude to families for their often unseen, yet essential, support.

One of the most moving moments of the ceremony came with a speech by Elyse Uwera, who spoke on behalf of her fellow graduates. With sincerity and emotion, she expressed deep appreciation for the instructors and the institution.

For many participants, she explained, joining the program was a life-changing decision — whether to pursue a new career path, acquire new skills, or rediscover long-held aspirations.

“We found here a space where we could believe in ourselves,” she said.

Uwera highlighted the program’s tangible outcomes: increased confidence, strengthened discipline, and the ability to transform ideas into real projects. She also acknowledged the challenges, particularly language barriers, emphasizing the critical importance of support in English and mathematics.

Her speech concluded on a hopeful note, looking toward the future. Some graduates are preparing to enter the workforce, while others are launching their own businesses. Many continue to build their professional paths with ambition and determination.

In a post-ceremony conversation, Ka-



manda offered further insight into the program. The training lasted approximately three and a half months, from September to January, with a break during the holiday season. The class — a diverse group of participants — reflected the program’s inclusive mission.

Teachers delivered instruction primarily in French to support students still developing their English skills, demonstrating a flexible and responsive teaching approach.

Addressing recent challenges, including concerns related to Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activities, Kamanda explained that these challenges emerged after the training had concluded. As a result, the graduation ceremony was postponed from January to March to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all

participants.

Despite these challenges, the outcomes remain overwhelmingly positive. Watching students — many of whom began with little or no prior experience — progress toward employment stands as a profound source of pride for the program’s team. A new session is already underway and is expected to conclude in June, further underscoring the program’s continued impact and success.

Beyond the diplomas, the ceremony stood as a powerful testament to perseverance, community support, and the transformative power of opportunity. In Westbrook that Sunday, attendees did not just celebrate the end of a program — they celebrated the beginning of new journeys shaped by resilience, dignity, and hope.

Lunar New Year 2026 Celebration: *A living tradition in the heart of Maine*

By Rachel Ndjondjo | Photos by Mark Mattos



On Sunday, March 1, the Westbrook Performing Arts Center came alive with the colors and sounds of the Lunar New Year, thanks to a large celebration organized by the Chinese & American Friendship Association of Maine (CAFAM). From 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., families, curious visitors, and enthusiasts of Asian culture gathered in a warm, festive atmosphere while learning about traditional customs.

The event's tone was set at the entrance, where a vibrant poster depicted a stylized horse in geometric shapes and bold colors, surrounded by Chinese characters and traditional lanterns. This artwork symbolized the renewal associated with the Lunar New Year, while showcasing a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity. The chosen aesthetic reflected the cultural roots of the celebration while remaining open and inviting.

The venue itself was carefully chosen. Located at 471 Stroudwater Street in Westbrook, the Westbrook Performing Arts Center is known for hosting large-scale artistic events. Its spacious and well-equipped facilities provided the perfect setting for an intercultural celebration of this magnitude.

The day's program was designed to immerse visitors in Asian traditions. The space was divided into multiple zones featuring craft workshops, food vendors, and thematic presentations, which offered attendees opportunities to explore the culture from culinary, artistic, and educational perspectives. Children's hands-on workshops were a major focus. True to tradition, CAFAM provided activities inspired by the zodiac sign of the year—the horse—allowing young participants to engage with Lunar Calendar symbols through play and creativity.

The culinary offerings provided a true feast for the senses. Food stalls offered a taste of Asian cuisine, turning the celebration into a shared experience of flavors and discovery. A highlight of the day was the performance by the Chinese Folk Art Workshop (CFAW Boston). Specializing in Chinese folk arts, this troupe added a spectacular element to the event. With their traditional costumes, synchronized choreography, and lively music, the audience experienced ancient art forms passed down through generations. Cultural performances like these are central to the celebration, preserving a rich heritage while sharing it with a diverse audience. The

organizers also ensured the event was accessible to everyone. Practical information and ticketing were available online, and the poster even included a QR code for quick access to event details.

To understand the significance of this initiative today, it is important to look at its origins. The Chinese & American Friendship Association of Maine was founded on August 8, 1988, with the mission of promoting Chinese culture and strengthening ties between communities. Shortly after its creation, the association hosted its first Chinese New Year banquet. Though modest, this event marked the beginning of a tradition that would flourish and represented the first

large gathering organized by CAFAM to celebrate the Lunar New Year in Maine.

In 1991, the South Portland Public Library invited CAFAM to organize a cultural fair, which became a major milestone for the community. This collaboration led to the first true Chinese New Year Fair in southern Maine. Over the years, the event grew in scale and changed venues: first a library, then the YWCA on Spring Street in Portland, followed by Catherine McAuley High School on Stevens Avenue, before finally settling at the Westbrook Performing Arts Center. From the start, the celebration — today called the Lunar New Year Celebration — has stood out for its wide range of activities.

Early editions included creative workshops for children, always connected to the year's zodiac animal, and in the early 2000s programming expanded to include performances like the ribbon dance, performed by students from CAFAM's Chinese school. After the school closed, the association began inviting professional groups to maintain performance quality.

Additionally, conferences and educational programs were integrated to cater to adult audiences. Over the years, topics have ranged from Chinese history in Maine to Qi Gong philosophy, from acupuncture and traditional healing arts to economic relations with China, and more. This intellectual dimension gives the event depth far beyond a simple festival.

Today, the Lunar New Year Celebration in Westbrook reflects decades of cultural dedication. Through its artistic performances, culinary offerings, craft workshops, and educational talks, it provides an immersive experience of Lunar New Year traditions and demonstrates the vital role cultural associations play in promoting community, dialogue, and intercultural understanding in Maine.



We need each other: Ubuntu

By Susan Lebel Young

To start our 27-person monthly “Creative Ideas” Zoom meet-up, our long-time leader said, “My South African friend is teaching me about *Ubuntu*, translated as, ‘I am because we are,’ which speaks to our interconnectedness. Kindness, generosity, and community well-being are keys to a heartfelt life. We are meant to help each other, to treat each other with respect and dignity.”

Then, as always, our leader repeated our guidelines. “They are the same as Ubuntu: kindness, generosity, compassion, non-judging. We’ll honor them. We’ll also honor the great civil rights leader, Jesse Jackson, who said, ‘Never look down on anybody unless you are lifting him up.’ He meant lifting everyone. Tonight, we’ll focus on Jesse Jackson’s wisdom: ‘It’s time for us to turn to each other, not on each other,’ and ‘We must learn how to live together ... to co-exist and not to co-annihilate.’ Now we’ll gather in break-out rooms for this question: How do you live these ideals day-to-day, moment-to-moment?”

Idea flowed in our group of five: “*Look for goodness.*” “*Keep returning to the heart.*” “*Be a loving voice.*” “*See divinity in people.*”

Big questions also arose: What do we do when threatened or bullied? How do we tend our hearts if we live in systems shaped by bias and hate?

We paused with the weight of these matters, feeling the heaviness. Our and newly-trained small-group facilitator seemed nervous with our silence. Her fingers fidgeted. Her eyes darted around. Her words finally came: “OK, let’s check in. How’s everyone doing?”

No response. Without waiting, she exclaimed, “My 15-year-old will NOT do his homework! Teenagers are the WORST! They complain. They moan about how unfair life is. Teenagers are tough.”

A cascade of voices erupted: “*My 13-year-old, too.*” “*My 18-year-old has no idea about work.*” “*I tell my son and daughter to study, but they’re glued to their phones.*” “*Just lazy.*” The chorus crescendoed.

My gut clenched. My throat dried. I thought, and wanted to say that, perhaps non-judgement is hard and therefore Ubuntu is more than an ideal or a longing, but rather a steady training. I wanted to remind us about kindness, generosity, and compassion. I wanted to say something about lifting up. But I froze, unable to speak. So, I didn’t. I couldn’t. I wondered why I wouldn’t defend my values to the group. I wondered why we turn on people. Does heartlessness arise from group think? How do we hold heartfulness, when loud voices hold a different view?

Then my friend Jean spoke her truth alone:

“My teens are good kids.” The group quieted. I thought, “This is seeing divinity in people. This is generosity offered from our own divinity. To be the first, this is courage, from the French word, *coeur*, heart.”

Jean’s daring reminded me that to *live* Ubuntu, as if it’s a verb, as if it calls for actions, might require repeated and focused practice. And maybe, to direct or redirect us toward kindness, we need role models. We need a “we” because our best intentions can dissolve under the force of peer pressure if we don’t feel held in community. No longer alone in dissent, and emboldened by Jean’s bravery, I started, “The teens...” But a cue flashed on our screens: *Now join the big group.*

I hurried, “The teens I know are the best!!” And then, click, we landed on the large screen.

Perhaps the confidence to make caring choices rests in the medicine of empowering, empathic social connections. Safe spaces help us access kindness when alone in the midst of un-

kindness. When we feel the grace of tender human bonds, we enjoy the gentling of being met, seen, and lifted up. But how do we shift from shutdown to fearless opening? How do we change? How do we find courage? We need support. We need teachers. We need practice. We need each other.

Ubuntu is South African. Yet its call to *coeur* has no borders. Perhaps its inspiration can bolster us here and now. Perhaps Ubuntu is an invitation.



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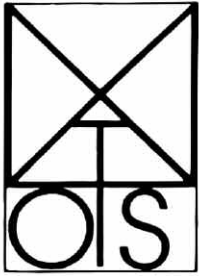
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Amjambo Africa welcomes letters to the editor, notices of local events, photographs, and suggestions for future stories.

Contributions are published at the discretion of the editor and as space allows.

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Amjambo Africa does not take positions in support of or in opposition to candidates, political parties, or legislation. We rely on factual reporting and our mission is to inform the public.

As Amjambo Africa marks its 8th anniversary and welcomes its new Chief Editor, Elias Taye, we are proud to share a selection of voices from our readers.



I truly appreciate the work you're doing. By sharing what's happening across the state, your publication has become an essential source of information. You're educating a large number of community members — both immigrants and the broader host community — who rely on your newspaper to understand what's going on around them.

— Claude Rwaganje, Executive Director of ProsperityME



Autrefois, nous avions des journaux en français ici à Lewiston et dans plusieurs villes du “Petit Canada” en Nouvelle-Angleterre, notamment dans les années 1960.

Cela m'a donc fait énormément plaisir de découvrir Amjambo Africa et de voir toutes les langues dans lesquelles vous publiez. C'est extrêmement important pour les personnes ici de pouvoir lire dans leur langue.

J'utilise également Amjambo Africa avec mes étudiants, dans le cadre de mon engagement comme bénévole en alphabétisation.

— Cecile Thornton, présidente et lauréate 2024 du Franco-American Hall of Fame du Maine

Elias Taye takes the helm as Editor-in-Chief of Amjambo Africa

Elias Taye took over as Editor-in-Chief of *Amjambo Africa* on April 1, succeeding Kathreen Harrison. An experienced Ethiopian journalist and editor, Taye has reported across Africa and internationally. He brings a decade of experience in reporting, fact-checking, and editorial leadership to the role.

Taye's vision is to strengthen *Amjambo Africa* as a trusted platform for thoughtful journalism, connecting the diaspora and global audiences. He plans to expand investigative reporting, highlight African innovation and culture, and amplify authentic voices that are often underrepresented in international media.

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief Kathreen Harrison reflected: “Co-founding and leading *Amjambo Africa* for the past eight years has been one of the most satisfying experiences of my professional life, and I leave with great memories.”

In an email interview, Taye responded to questions from veteran *Amjambo Africa* journalist Eloge Willy Kaneza, sharing insights about his journey in journalism, his vision for the publication, and the new directions he hopes to introduce.

Q&A with Elias Taye

Could you introduce yourself and tell us about your journey in journalism?

I am an Ethiopian journalist and editor with more than a decade of experience covering politics, conflict, and governance across the Horn of Africa. I previously reported for the Associated Press and the German Press Agency for a decade, and later founded Ethiopia Check and Meseret Media. My work focuses on credible reporting, fact-checking, and strengthening independent journalism.

You have reported extensively across Africa and internationally. Which experiences have most shaped you as a journalist?

Covering major political developments and conflicts in Ethiopia and the region shaped my understanding of responsible journalism. Reporting breaking global news reinforced the importance of accuracy and speed. Building fact-checking initiatives also deepened my commitment to combating misinformation.

What inspired you to accept the role of Editor-in-Chief at Amjambo Africa?

I believe that *Amjambo Africa* offers a strong platform to connect African stories with diaspora audiences. I was inspired by its mission to highlight immigrant perspectives that are often underrepresented in global media. The role allows me to bring together my experience in reporting, editorial leadership, and digital media.

What is your vision for Amjambo Africa as you take on editorial leadership?

My vision is to strengthen *Amjambo Africa* as a trusted platform for thoughtful and balanced journalism. I intend to shape it as a hub for “service journalism.” Expanding its digital reach and contributor network will also be a priority.

How do you plan to strengthen Amjambo Africa's connection with diaspora communities in the United States and beyond?

We will actively engage diaspora writers, scholars, and community voices. Listening to community interests and reflecting their experiences in our coverage will be key. Expanding digital storytelling and interactive platforms will also help deepen this connection.

Are there editorial priorities or new directions you hope to introduce under your leadership?

Strengthening investigative and analytical reporting will be a priority. I also want to expand coverage of innovation, entrepreneurship, and cultural influence within African communities worldwide. Reinforcing strong fact-checking practices will remain central to our work.

Immigrant stories are often told through external lenses. How important is it for immigrant journalists and media platforms like Amjambo Africa to tell their own narratives?

As someone who worked for a global media outlet from Africa, I understand that it is extremely important for immigrants to tell their own stories with authenticity and context. Local journalists understand the cultural and social complexities that are often overlooked. Platforms like *Amjambo Africa* help ensure immigrant voices shape global narratives.

Journalism today faces many challenges: financial pressures, misinformation, political tensions. How do you plan to navigate these as Editor-in-Chief?

Credibility and strong editorial standards will guide our approach. Building diverse partnerships and sustainable media models

will also be important. Most importantly, we will remain committed to accurate and responsible journalism.

What message would you like to send to current and future contributors?

I encourage contributors to bring bold ideas, strong reporting, and diverse perspectives. *Amjambo Africa* aims to be a collaborative platform for thoughtful journalism.

What values guide your work as a journalist and editor?

Accuracy, fairness, and accountability guide my work.

What motivates you to continue telling African stories at this moment in history?

Africa is undergoing profound social, political, and economic transformation. The global sphere [is] too. These stories deserve to be told with depth and nuance. Contributing to that narrative is both a responsibility and a privilege.

Amjambo Africa is currently expanding and focusing on other immigrant communities. Tell us how you would balance this with its roots in the African experience?

We will stay rooted in African storytelling while also creating a space for shared immigrant experiences. As such, the goal is inclusion without losing our core voice.

What opportunities does this expansion create?

Obviously, it allows us to connect various communities with similar experiences and tell more diverse, relatable stories, and strengthen our impact to our readers.

Outside of journalism, what are your hobbies or passions?

I enjoy watching documentaries, following global affairs, and spending time with my



family. I am also interested in technology and digital media trends. These interests help me stay curious and informed.

How do these interests influence your work or help you stay inspired as a journalist and editor?

They help me stay connected to broader global conversations. Curiosity about technology and global affairs often sparks new story ideas.

What would you like readers of Amjambo Africa to know as you begin this new chapter as Editor-in-Chief?

I am honored to join *Amjambo Africa* at such an important moment. Our goal is to provide thoughtful, credible journalism. I look forward to building this platform together with our readers and contributors.

Continued from page 1

fursa kwa jamii kukusanyika, kushiriki uzoefu, na kulisha matumaini kwa ajili ya mustakabali wenye usaidizi na ushirikishwaji zaidi.

Huko Portland, Maine, sherehe hiyo ilikuwapo kwa mfano wa mkusanyiko wa jamii unaoitwa “Mkusanyiko wa Wanawake kwa Wanawake,” tukio lililoundwa kuunda nafasi ambapo wanawake kutoka tamaduni tofauti wanaweza kukutana, kubadilishana mawazo, na kusherehekea utofauti wao.

Mnamo Jumamosi, Machi 7, 2026, zaidi ya wanawake mia moja wa Burundi walikusanyika kwenye Ukumbi wa Portland Eagles Banquet ili kushiriki katika tukio hilo. Zaidi ya kuwa sherehe tu, mkusanyiko huo uligeuka kuwa wakati wa muunganiko na mshikamano kati ya wanawake kutoka tamaduni na vizazi tofauti.

Mara tu wageni walipoingia ukumbini, hali hiyo ilionyesha roho tajiri ya kitamaduni ya mkusanyiko huo. Washiriki walivaa nguo nzuri za kitamaduni zenye rangi angavu kutoka Afrika na sehemu nyingine. Nywele zilizopambwa kwa uangalifu, vifaa vya jadi, na vitambaa vyenye miundo angavu vilitoa hali ya sherehe na kifahari kwa jioni hiyo. Kicheko na mazungumzo yalimimina chumba huku muziki ukiunda hali ya joto na furaha.

Jioni ilijaa michezo, muziki, na fursa za washiriki kuungana na kila mmoja. Kwa wanawake wengi, tukio hilo lilikuwa zaidi ya sherehe ya ishara tu. Wanawake kadhaa wa Burundi wanaoishi Maine walisema siku hiyo ni muhimu. Kwao, inawakilisha wakati wa thamani wa kushirikiana uzoefu na kuimarisha uhusiano kati ya wanawake.

Kati ya washiriki alikuwa Caritas Igirukwayo, ambaye amekuwa akijiishi Marekani tangu Februari 18, 2025. Hii ilikuwa mara yake ya pili kuhudhuria mkutano huo. Alikumbuka kwamba rafiki mmoja alimwalika kuhudhuria tukio hilo mwaka uliotangulia na kwamba uzoefu huo ulikuwa na alama kubwa kwake. “Siku ya Kimataifa ya Wanawake ni muhimu sana. Katika nchi yangu, Burundi, siku hii pia husherehekewa kwa shauku kubwa,” alieleza.

Kabla ya kuhamia Marekani, Igirukwayo alikuwa akifanya kazi katika Ubalozzi wa Marekani mjini Bujumbura, mji mkuu wa kiuchumi wa Burundi ambapo utawala mkuu, mabalozi, na mashirika kadhaa ya Umoja wa Mataifa yamejikusanya.

Igirukwayo alibaini kwamba siku hiyo inawakilisha wakati muhimu kwa wanawake. “Ni fursa kubwa kuja pamoja, kubadilishana mawazo, na kusherehekea jukumu la msingi ambalo wanawake huchukua katika jamii — ndani ya familia, jamii, na taasisi,” alisema. Alitafakari kuhusu tofauti kati ya sherehe nchini Burundi na anazozipata sasa Marekani. “Nchini Burundi, shughuli mara nyingi zinafanyika ndani ya taasisi au maeneo ya kazi. Hapa, ninaona kuwa kipengele cha jamii ni wazi zaidi. Wanawake kutoka asili mbalimbali hucusanyika pamoja, na utofauti huo unafanya tukio hilo kuwa la kibora zaidi.”

Akiwa analinganisha ushiriki wake wa kwanza na mkutano wa mwaka huu, pia aligundua mabadiliko kadhaa. “Mwaka uliopita nilikuwa nimetoka tu kujiunga na jamii na sikumjua mtu mwingi. Mwaka huu hali ya anga ilikuwa hai zaidi, na washiriki wengi zaidi na shughuli ambazo zilikuja na furaha nyingi usiku huo.” Kulingana na Igirukwayo, mikutano kama hii husaidia kuimarisha uhusiano kati ya wanawake na kukuza roho halisi ya mshikamano. Tofauti ya washiriki ilimvutia hasa. “Sikokuwa ni wanawake wa Burundi pekee. Kulikuwa pia na wanawake kutoka Rwanda [na] Jamhuri ya Kidemokrasia ya Kongo, pamoja na wanawake wa Marekani kutoka asili tofauti za kitamaduni. Hiyo inakisia kikamilifu roho ya Siku ya Wanawake Duniani,” alisema.

Igirukwayo pia aligusia baadhi ya dhana potofu kuhusu sherehe hiyo. “Watu wengine

hufikiria ni tu kisingizio kwa wanawake kutoka nje usiku au kuwasha sherehe. Lakini mtazamo huo ni rahisi sana. Wanaume badala yake wanapaswa kuelewa umuhimu wa siku hii na kuunga mkono wanawake kusherehekea.” Alionyesha kuwa mwaka una siku 365. “Kama siku moja tu imepewa wanawake, ni kawaida kwamba wachukue wakati huo kupumzika, kufurahia, na kujisikia kuthaminiwa,” alisema.

Hata hivyo, alisisitiza umuhimu wa kusawazisha sherehe na majukumu ya kifamilia.

“Wakati wanawake washiriki katika matukio haya kwa uwajibikaji, inaimarisha imani ndani ya familia na kuruhusu sherehe kufanyika katika hali ya heshima na ufa-hamu.”

Miongoni mwa wageni alikuwa Leah Hargrove, Mkurugenzi Mtendaji wa Mtandao wa Ladder to the Moon. Alisema alihisi kusogezwa sana na nishati chanya na mshikamano ulioonyeshwa ndani ya chumba.

“Kilichonishangaza zaidi ni kuona wanawake kutoka Burundi, Rwanda, Jamhuri ya Kidemokrasia ya Kongo, na pia wanawake wa Marekani wakiwa wamekusanyika pamoja kusherehekea utambulisho wao na nguvu yao,” alisema.

Alibaini kuwa katika baadhi ya tamaduni ni nadra kuona wanawake wa vizazi vyote wakiwa pamoja kwa namna hii. “Mara nyingine tunasherehekea hatua fulani katika maisha ya wasichana wadogo, lakini kuona wanawake wa rika zote wakishiriki nafasi moja ni kitu cha kipekee kweli,” alieleza. Uwepo wa wasichana wadogo, wake, wanawake wajawazito, na wanawake wazee ulimpa hisia kubwa ya matumaini. “Kuona vizazi vyote hivi pamoja kunathibitisha maana ya sherehe hii. Ilinipe moyo zaidi na fahari ya kuwa mwanamke.”

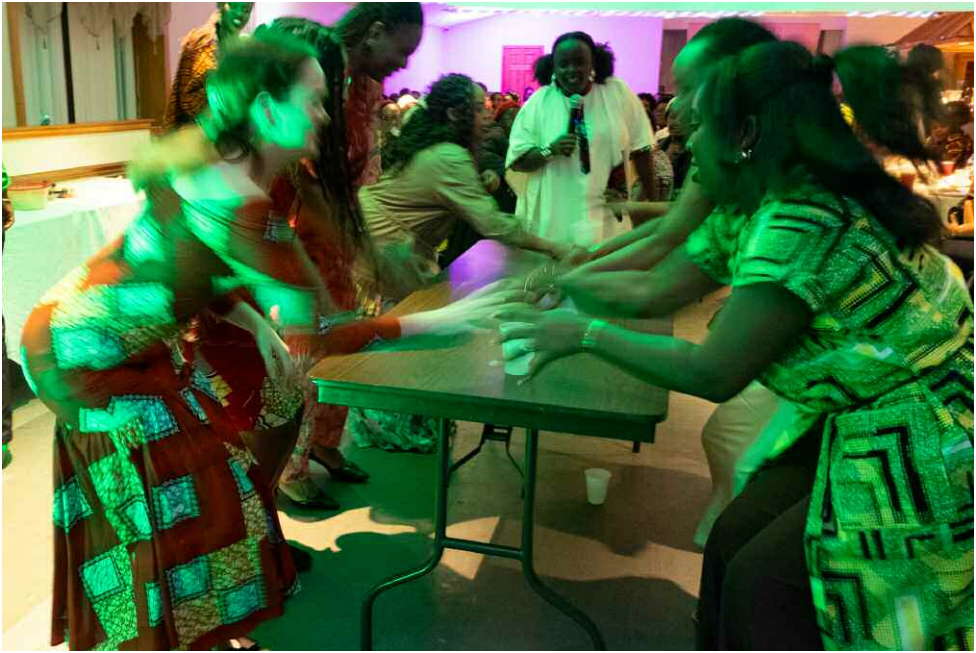
Hargrove alieleza shukrani kwa ustahimilivu wa wanawake wahamiaji waliokuwapo kwenye mkutano huo. “Wanawake hawa wameacha nchi zao ili kujenga maisha mapya nchini Marekani. Licha ya changamoto za uhamiaji, vizuizi vya lugha, na mabadiliko ya kitamaduni, wanaonyesha nguvu isiyo ya kawaida.” Kwa mujibu wake, jumuiya za wahamiaji huleta utajiri muhimu wa kitamaduni katika jamii ya Marekani. “Matukio kama haya yananipa matumaini kwa ajili ya siku za usoni za Marekani.”

Wasichana wadogo pia walionekana kwa wazi wakati wa sherehe hiyo. Miongoni mwao alikuwa Frista Akimana, ambaye mama yake ni mmoja wa waandaji. Kwa mshiriki mdogo, uzoefu huo ulikuwa wa kuhamasisha sana. “Ilikuwa ajabu kuona wanawake wengi wakikusanyika pamoja ili kusaidia jamii,” alisema. Uzoefu huo pia ulimsaidia kuelewa umuhimu wa kushiriki katika jamii. “Nitakapo kukuwa, nataka kusaidia wanawake wengine pia,” alisema Akimana.

Mama wa Akimana amekuwa akikufundisha kuwa wanawake mara nyingi hukutana na changamoto nyingi. “Ndiyo maana ni muhimu kila wakati kuunga mkono kila mmoja,” aliongeza. Ujumbe wake kwa wasichana wadogo ni rahisi. “Amini katika wewe mwenyewe, kuwa mwanamke mwenye nguvu, na kusaidia wanawake wengine.”

Mshiriki mwingine, Stephanie Endambo, asili yake kutoka Jamhuri ya Kidemokrasia ya Kongo, alikuwa akihudhuria tukio kama hilo Portland kwa mara ya kwanza. “Mara tu nilipokuwa ndani ya chumba, nilihisi hali ya joto na ya kukaribisha,” alisema.

Endambo alibaini kwamba si rahisi kila wakati kwa wanawake wakimbizi kupata nafasi ambapo wanaweza kukutana na kushiriki uzoefu wao kwa uhuru. “Lakini hapa, dakika chache tu baada ya kufika, wanawake kadhaa walikuja kunipokea na kunikaribisha. Hiyo ilinigusa sana.” Hali hiyo ilimkumbusha mikutano ya jamii katika nchi yake ya asili. “Kupata hali kama hii katika nchi ya kigeni ni hisia kubwa,”



alisema. Kulingana naye, mikutano kama hii ni muhimu kwa wanawake wakimbizi. “Inaturuhusu kuunda uhusiano, kushiriki hadithi zetu, na kusaidiana katika safari zetu nchini Marekani.”

Nyuma ya mpango huu ni Santiana Nzeye, mwanzilishi wa shirika la Women to Women na mpangaji mkuu wa tukio hilo. Mama wa watoto wawili ambaye amekuwa akiishi Marekani kwa miaka tisa, anafanya kazi kwa bidii kuunda nafasi za mshikamano kwa wanawake.

Nzeye alieleza kwamba kupanga tukio hilo haikuwa rahisi. “Jumuiya imekuwa ikipitia nyakati ngumu, na watu wengi bado wanabeba jeraha la kisaikolojia,” alisema. Mwanzoni, maandalizi yalikuwa yameanza mapema sana lakini yalisitishwa kwa sababu waandaji walihofia kwamba labda haku-takuwa na ushiriki wa kutosha. “Kisha, wiki chache kabla ya tukio, nilipokea simu nyingi kutoka kwa wanawake wakiniomba nisi-fute,” Nzeye alikumbuka. Wote walimwambia walihitaji muda wa kuungana tena na wanawake wengine baada ya vipindi vigumu.

Akiungwa mkono na ujumbe huu, aliamua kuendeleza tukio hilo. “Tulikuwa na wiki tatu tu kuandaa yote. Nilifikia marafiki, wajitoleaji, na wajasiriamali ndani ya jamii.” Shukrani kwa jitihada za pamoja na msaada wa wadhamini wa eneo hilo, tukio hilo liliwezekana kufanyika.

Miongoni mwa waandaji alikuwa Ninette Irabaruta, ambaye alisisitiza umuhimu wa mikutano kama hii katika muktadha wa sasa. “Leo, na kila kitu kinachoendelea kuhusiana na ICE na uhamiaji, tuliwona zaidi ya watu mia moja wakijitokeza. Kwangu mimi, hiyo ni ushahidi halisi wa mshikamano. Hata katika nyakati za mgogoro, watu wanaendelea kuungana. Watu wanahitaji jamii. Wanataka kuhisi wawe huru, kuwa pamoja, na kuungana kwa kila mmoja,” alisema. Irabaruta aliongeza kwamba uwepo wa wazee uliipa tukio hili maana zaidi. “Kuwa na uwezo wa kuwaleta wazee kulifanya wakati huu uwe na maana zaidi. Imenipa mkutano huu kipengele kikubwa zaidi kuliko tukio tu.”

Kwa midundo ya ngoma za asili za Burundi, washiriki walisherehekea tamaduni zao pamoja na mshikamano wao. Kabla ya kuondoka, washiriki wengi kutoka asili tofauti walieleza matumaini sawa: kuendelea kuimarisha uhusiano huu na kupanua miradi kama hii kwa jamii nyingine.

— IKINYARWANDA —
Umunsi mpuzamahanga w’Umugore muri Portland: Ubwuzuzanye, umuco n’ikizere mu mitima y’abatuye amahanga

Inkuru ya Rachel Ndjondjo

Buri mwaka ku itariki 8 z’ukwa Gatatu, isi yizihiza umunsi mpuzamahanga w’umugore. Umunsi wizihiwa kuwa mu 1910 hagendewe ku nsanganyamatsiko zitandukanye. Uyu munsi w’ikiruhuko utanga amahirwe yo gushima uruhare runini umugore agira mu muryango ari nako abantu batekereza ku rugamba ruhari mu birebana n’uburinganire. Uretse kwizihiza uyu munsi, unatanga amahirwe ku miryango yo guhura, bagasangira amakuru, ari nako baterana imbaraga ziganisha ku muryango ugenda urushaho gufashanya no kumvikana w’ahazaza.

Muri Portland, Maine, kwizihiza uyu munsi byafashe ishusho y’umuhuro witwa “ihuriro ry’umugore ku mugore,” umunsi wari ugamiye gushyiraho umwanya aho abagore baturutse mu mico itandukanye bashobora guhura, bagasangira ibitekerezo, bakishimira ubudasa bwabo.

Kuwa gatandatu tariki 07 z’ukwa gatatu, 2026, abagore barenga ijana b’abarundikazi bahuriye muri cyumba Eagles Banquet Hall kugirango bizihize uyu munsi. Ibi byari

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birenze kwizihiza gusa, kuko wabaye umunsi wo kumenyana, no gushyigikirana hagati y’abagore baturuka mu mico itandukanye, amateka atandukanye ndetse b’imyaka itandukanye.

Abantu bakimara kwinjira muri icyo cyumba, byahise bigaragara ko hahuriye imico itandukanye. Abitabiriye bari bambaye imyenda myiza gakondo mu mabara agaragara azwi muri Afurika n’ahandi. Imisatsi bari bayikoze neza, bashyizeho n’ibindi byinshi byo mu mico, imyambaro ikoze muburyo bw’ubuhanzi kandi bujyanye n’amabara yuzuzanya byatumye uyu mugoroba urushaho kwizihira ijisho. Ibitwenge ndetse n’ibiganiro biherekejwe n’umuziki byatumaga ibintu birushaho kuba byiza.

Uyu mugoroba kandi waranzwe n’imikino, umuziki, n’amahirwe yo kumenyana ku bitabiriye. Ku bagore benshi, uyu munsi wari urenze cyane ukwizihiza nk’ikimenyetso. Benshi mu bagore bakomoka mu Burundi batuye muri Maine bavuze ko uyu munsi ari ingenzi cyane. Kuri bo, bavuga ko ari amahirwe adasanze yo gusangira ubunararibonye ndetse no kwimakaza umubano hagati muri bo.

Mu bitabiriye harimo Caritas Igirukwaho, watuye muri Leta Zunze Ubumwe kuva mu kwa Kabiri tariki 18, 2025. Iyi yari inshuro ya kabiri yitabiriye uyu munsi. Yibuka ko inshuti yamutumiye muri uyu munsi mukuru umwaka ushize, bityo akahagirira ibihe byiza atazibagirwa. Yagize ati: “Umunsi mpuzamahanga w’umugore ni ingenzi cyane. Mu gihugu cyanyje, Burundi, uyu munsi wizihizanywa ibyishimo byinshi.”

Mbere yo kwimukira muri Amerika, Igirukwayo yakoraga muri ambasade ya Amerika i Bujumbura, umurwa mukuru w’ubukungu w’u Burundi aho ubuyobozi bukuru za ambasade, ndetse n’amashami menshi y’umuryango w’abibumbuye afite ibyicar.

Igirukwayo avuga ko uyu munsi ufiteye akamaro kanini umugore. Agira ati: “Ni amahirwe akomeye yo guhura, gusangira ibitekerezo, ndetse no kwishimira uruhare rw’ingenzi cyane umugore agira mu buzima bw’umuryango – haba mu muryango we, umuryango mugari, ndetse no mu bigo dukoramo.” Agaruka ku itandukanirwo hagati y’uburyo bizihizaga uyu munsi i Burundi, ndetse n’uko ubu ari kwizihiza muri Amerika. Agira ati: “I Burundi, akenshi ibikorwa bibera ku kazi aho umuntu akora. Hano, mbona ko umuryango mugari ufite imbaraga cyane. Abagore baturutse mu bice bitandukanye barahura, bityo ubwo budasa bugatuma umunsi urushaho kuba mwiza.”

Agererangije umwaka wambere yitabira ndetse n’uyu mwaka, avuga ko hari byinshi abona byahindutse. Agira ati: “Umwaka ushize nibwo nari nkiza ntaramenya abantu benshi. Uyu mwaka ibintu byabaye byiza cyane, abantu bariyongereye n’ibikorwa nabyo ni uko, bituma ibyishimo biba byinshi kugeza ku mugoroba.” Igirukwayo avuga ko amahuriro nkaya atuma abagore barushaho kunoza umubano kandi agateza imbere ubufatanye. Kuba hitabira abantu batandukanye avuga ko ari ibintu yashimye cyane. Ati: “Ntabwo bari abagore b’Abarundikazi gusa. Hari abagore b’Abanyarwandakazi, abaturuka muri Repubulika Iharanira Demokarasi ya Congo ndetse n’abagore b’Abanyamerika bakomoka mu mico itandukanye. Ibi bishimangira cyane ihame ry’umunsi mpuzamahanga w’umugore.”

Igirukwayo agira kandi icyo avuga ku makuru atari yo avugwa kuri uyu munsi. Ati: “Bamwe bakeka ko ari umunsi wo kwitwaza kugirango abagore bagende amajoro mu birori. Nyamara iyo myumvire yambura agaciro cyane uyu munsi. Abagabo bakwiye kumva akamaro k’uyu munsi bagashyigikira abagore ngo bawizihize.” Avuga ko umwaka ugira iminsi 365. Ati: “Niba umunsi umwe gusa ari wo wahariwe abagore, kuba bafata uwo mwanya bakaruhuka, bakishimana, bakumva ko bafite agaciro ni ibintu

byumvikana.”

Cyakora, ashimangira ko ari ngombwa ko abantu bashyira ku munzani bakagereranya akamaro ko kwizihiza uyu munsi ndetse n’inshingano z’umuryango. Ati: “Iyo abagore bitabiriye iyi minsi mu buryo bwiza, biza-mura icyizere mu miryango bigatuma gahunda zo kwizihiza zibaho mu bwubuhane n’ubwumvikane.”

Mu bashyitsi kandi hari Leah Hargrove, umuyobozi mukuru wa Ladder to the Moon Network. Avuga ko yashimishijwe cyane n’umwuka w’ibyishimo n’ubufatanye byahagaragaraga.

Agira ati: “Icyo nabonye kurusha ibindi ni uburyo abagore bakomoka i Burundi, Repubulika Iharanira Demokarasi ya Congo, ndetse n’abagore b’Abanyamerikakazi bahurira hamwe kugirango bizihize abo baribo ndtse n’imbaraga bafite.”

Yerekana ko mu mico imwe n’imwe ari gake wabona abagore bo mu myaka itandukanye bahurira hamwe muri ubu buryo. Abisobanura agira ati: “rimwe na rimwe twizihiza ibyagezweho n’abana b’abakobwa, cyakora kubona abagore bo mu myaka yose bahuriye hamwe ni ibintu byihariye”. Akomeza asobanura ko kuba hari abakobwa bato, abagore batwite, ndetse n’abagore bakuze byamweretse ho hari ikizere kinini. Agira ati: “kubona ibi byiciro by’abantu bitandukanye mu myaka bari kumwe byongeraga imbaraga n’igisobanuro cy’uyu munsi. Birushaho no kumpa imbaraga ndetse bikantera ishema ryo kuba umugore.”

Hargrove yavuze kandi ko ashima ukudacika intege kw’abagore b’abimukira bitabiriye uyu munsi mukuru. Ati: “Aba bagore bavuye mu bihugu byabo baza gutangira ubuzima bushya muri Leta Zunze Ubumwe. N’ubwo hari ingorane z’ubwimukira, imbogamizi z’ururimi, ndetse no kumenyera imico, berekana imbaraga zidasanzwe.” Kuri we, imiryango y’abimukira izana ubukungu bushingiye ku mico yabo mu muryango mugari wa Amerika. Ati: “Iminsi mikuru nk’iyi impa ikizere cy’ahazaza ha Amerika.”

Abakobwa bakiri bato nabo bari bitabiriye uyu munsi. Muri bo harimo Frista Akimana, ufite umubyeyi wabaye umwe mubateguye iki gikorwa. Ku bitabiriye bakiri bato, uyu munsi wabigishije byinshi. Agira ati: “Byari byiza cyane kubona abagore benshi bahuye ngo bashyigikirane nk’umuryango.” Iki gikorwa kandi cyabaye uburyo bwiza bwo gutuma arushaho gusobanukirwa akamaro ko kugira uruhare mu bikorwa by’umuryango mugari. Ati: “Nimara gukura, ndashaka kuzafasha abandi bagore nanjye.”

Nyina wa Akimana yakunze kumwigisha ko abagore akenshi bahura n’ibibazo byinshi. Ati: “Niyo mpamvu ari ingenzi ko iteka bashyigikirana.” Agenera kandi ubutumwa abakobwa bakiri bato agira ati: “mwigirire ikizere, mube abagore b’imbaraga, kandi mushyigikire abandi bagore.”



Claudette Ndayininahaze, cofounder of In Her Presence, interacting with another woman

Undi witabiriye uyu munsi Stephanie Endambo, ukomoka muri Repubulika Iharanira Demokarasi ya Congo, yitabiriye uyu munsi muri Portland ku nshuro ye yambere. Agira ati: “Nkimara kwinjira mu cyumba, numvise rwose ko hari umwuka mwiza kandi ho hari urugwiro.”

Endambo avuga kubona abagore b’abimukira babona umwanya wo guhura bisanzuye bakaganira ku buzima bwabo atari ibintu biboneka kenshi. Ati: “Ariko hano, iminota mike nyuma y’uko nza, abagore benshi baje kunsuhuza no kumpa ikaze. Ni ibintu byankozeho cyane.” Uyu mwuka wamwibukije uburyo abantu bahuraga mu gihugu akomokamo. Ati: “kubona ibintu nk’ibi mu gihugu cy’amahanga ni ibintu biteye amarangamutima menshi.” Kuri we, ibikorwa nk’ibi ni ingirakamaro ku bagore b’abimukira. Ati: “Bituma tumenyana, tukaganira ku mateka yacu, tukanashyigikirana mu rugendo rwacu muri iki gihugu cya Leta Zunze Ubumwe.”

Iki gitekerezo cyazanywe na Santiana Nzeze, washinze umuryango Women to Women Organization, ukaba uri ku isonga ry’abateguye iki gikorwa. Uyu mubyeyi w’abana babiri umaze imyaka icyenda atuye muri Leta Zunze Ubumwe, ashya imbaraga mu kubonera abagore amahirwe yo gushyira hamwe.

Nzeze asobanura ko gutegura iki gikorwa bitari byoroshye. Aragira ati: “uyu muryango wanyuze mu bihe bikomeye, ndetse benshi mu bantu baracyagendana ibikomere.” Avuga ko imyiteguro yatangiye mbere cyane, ariko ikaza guhagarara bitewe n’uko abateguraga igikorwa batinye ko hatazaboneka abitabira bahagije. Agira ati: “Ibyumweru bike mbere y’uyu munsi, nakiriye telefone nyinshi z’abagore bansaba kudahagarika igikorwa.” Bamwe bamubwiye ko bakeneye igihe cyo guhura n’abandi bagore ngo bamenyane nyuma y’ibihwe bikomeye banyuzemo.

Ubu butumwa bwamuteye imbaraga, butuma yiyemeza gukomeza igikorwa. Agira ati: “twari dufite ibyumweru bitatu gusa byo kwitegura. Negereye inshuti, abakorabushake, hamwe n’abashoramari muri uyu muryango.” Avuga ko bitewe n’ubufatanye bwa benshi ndetse no gushyigikirwa hamwe n’abaterankunga, uyu munsi wabashije kubaho.

Umwe mubateguye uyu munsi ni Ninette Irabaruta, washimangiye akamaro k’ibikorwa bihuza abantu nk’ibi. Agira ati: “Kuri ubu aho tuzi ibya ICE n’abimukira, twabonye abarenga igihumbi batugana. Kuri njye, ibi rwose ni igihamba cy’ubufatanye. Ndetse no mugihe cy’ibibazo, abantu bakomeza gushyigikirana. Abantu bakeneye umuryango. Bakeneye kumva bisanzuye, kuba hamwe, ndetse no gufatanya.” Irabaruta yongeraho ko kuba abakuze nabo barahabonetse byongereye ubusobanuro

bw’igikorwa. Ati: “Kuba abakuze barabashije kuboneka muri iki gikorwa bisobanuye ikintu kinini. Byahaye iki gikorwa imbaraga zirenze rwose kuba umunsi mukuru usanzwe.”

Mu nyuma yakondo y’i Burundi, abitabiriye uyu munsi mukuru bizihije umuco wabo n’ubufatanye. Mbere yo kugenda, benshi mubitabiriye bakomoka ahatandukanye bagaragaje ko bafite ikizere cy’ejo: mu gukomeza kunoza uyu mubano, ndetse no kwagura ibi bikorwa no mu bandi bakomoka ahandi.

— PORTUGUÊS —
Dia Internacional da Mulher em Portland: Solidariedade, cultura e esperança no coração da diáspora

Por Rachel Ndjondjo

Anualmente, a 8 de março, o mundo celebra o Dia Internacional da Mulher. Instituída em 1910, esta efeméride é mais do que uma comemoração; é um momento de reflexão sobre o papel fundamental das mulheres na sociedade e sobre a urgência da igualdade de gênero. Este dia convida-nos a partilhar experiências, fortalecer laços comunitários e renovar o compromisso com um futuro mais solidário, equitativo e inclusivo para todos.

Em Portland, Maine, as celebrações do Dia Internacional da Mulher ganharam vida através do ‘Women to Women Gathering’, um evento concebido para promover o intercâmbio cultural e celebrar a diversidade feminina na comunidade.

No sábado, 7 de março de 2026, o Portland Eagles Banquet Hall acolheu mais de uma centena de mulheres, maioritariamente da comunidade burundesa. Mais do que uma simples festividade, o encontro consolidou-se como um espaço de profunda ligação e solidariedade entre diferentes origens e gerações.

Ao entrar no salão, o vigor cultural era palpável. As participantes exibiam trajes tradicionais em cores vibrantes, representando a herança de África e de outras partes do mundo. Entre penteados elaborados e tecidos de padrões vivos, o ambiente tornou-se um reflexo de elegância e celebração, onde o riso e a música criaram uma atmosfera de calorosa alegria.

A noite foi marcada por uma atmosfera vibrante de jogos, música e, acima de tudo, conexão. Para muitas das presentes, o evento transcendeu o simbolismo da data, tornando-se um espaço vital de pertença. Diversas mulheres da comunidade burundesa residente no Maine destacaram a importância do encontro como um momento essencial para a partilha de vivências e o fortalecimento de redes de apoio feminino.

Entre as participantes estava Caritas Igirukwayo, residente nos Estados Unidos desde fevereiro de 2025. Pelo segundo ano consecutivo, Caritas fez questão de celebrar a data com o grupo, recordando com carinho o convite que recebeu de uma amiga no ano anterior, uma experiência que a marcou profundamente. “O Dia Internacional da Mulher é fundamental. No Burundi, meu país de origem, celebramos este dia com enorme entusiasmo e significado”, explicou.

Com uma trajetória profissional sólida, Caritas trabalhou na Embaixada dos EUA em Bujumbura — a capital económica do Burundi e o centro nevrálgico da administração e de agências internacionais — antes de iniciar o seu novo capítulo nos Estados Unidos.

Igirukwayo destacou que a data representa um marco fundamental para a afirmação feminina. “É uma oportunidade valiosa para

nos reunirmos, trocarmos ideias e celebrarmos o papel vital que as mulheres desempenham na sociedade — seja no seio das famílias, nas comunidades ou nas instituições", afirmou. Ao refletir sobre a transição entre as celebrações no Burundi e a sua experiência atual nos Estados Unidos, notou um contraste significativo: "No Burundi, as atividades ocorriam frequentemente em contextos institucionais ou corporativos. Aqui, percebo que o espírito comunitário é muito mais vibrante. A reunião de mulheres de origens tão diversas enriquece profundamente o evento."

Ao comparar a sua estreia no evento com o encontro deste ano, Igirukwayo observou uma evolução clara. "No ano passado, eu era recém-chegada e conhecia poucas pessoas. Este ano, o ambiente estava visivelmente

mais dinâmico, com uma adesão maior e atividades que trouxeram muita alegria à noite." Para ela, momentos como este são essenciais para fortalecer laços e fomentar uma solidariedade genuína. A pluralidade do grupo foi, a seu ver, o ponto alto: "Não estávamos apenas entre burundesas; havia mulheres do Ruanda, da República Democrática do Congo e americanas de várias heranças culturais. Isso traduz perfeitamente o verdadeiro espírito do Dia Internacional da Mulher."

Igirukwayo aproveitou a ocasião para desmistificar equívocos comuns sobre a data. "Alguns acreditam que o dia é apenas um pretexto para as mulheres saírem até tarde ou festejarem, mas essa é uma visão redutora", afirmou. "Pelo contrário, os homens devem compreender o significado profundo

deste dia e apoiar as mulheres na sua celebração." Ela recordou que, num ano de 365 dias, é legítimo que um deles seja inteiramente dedicado ao descanso e à valorização feminina.

No entanto, a oradora sublinhou que a celebração caminha lado a lado com a harmonia familiar. "Quando as mulheres participam de forma responsável, a confiança mútua é fortalecida, permitindo que a festa ocorra num ambiente de pleno respeito e compreensão."

O evento contou com a presença de Leah Hargrove, Diretora Executiva da Ladder to the Moon Network, que se disse emocionada com a rede de solidariedade presente. "O que mais me impressionou foi ver mulheres do Burundi, Ruanda, República Democrática do Congo e dos Estados Unidos unidas para celebrar a sua identidade e força", destacou Hargrove.

Ela observou que, em certas culturas, é raro ver mulheres de tantas gerações reunidas desta forma. "Por vezes, celebramos marcos específicos na vida das jovens, mas ver mulheres de todas as idades a partilhar o mesmo espaço é algo verdadeiramente especial", explicou. A presença de crianças, mães, grávidas e anciãs trouxe-lhe uma profunda esperança: "Ver todas estas gerações juntas reforça o significado desta celebração. Deu-me ainda mais coragem e orgulho na minha identidade feminina."

Hargrove expressou admiração pela resiliência das imigrantes presentes: "Estas mulheres deixaram os seus países para construir novas vidas nos Estados Unidos. Apesar dos desafios da imigração, das barreiras linguísticas e da adaptação cultural, demonstram uma força incrível." Segundo ela, estas comunidades trazem uma riqueza cultural valiosa à sociedade americana. "Eventos como este dão-me esperança no futuro do país."

As jovens também marcaram presença, entre as quais Frista Akimana, cuja mãe é uma das organizadoras. Para a jovem participante, a experiência foi profundamente inspiradora. "Foi incrível ver tantas mulheres unidas para apoiar a comunidade", afirmou. A vivência ajudou-a a compreender a importância do envolvimento cívico: "Quando crescer, também quero ajudar outras mulheres", concluiu Akimana.

A mãe de Akimana sempre lhe ensinou que as mulheres enfrentam frequentemente muitos desafios. "Por isso é importante que se apoiem sempre umas às outras", acrescentou. A mensagem dela para as raparigas é simples: "Acredita em ti, torna-te uma mulher forte e apoia outras mulheres."

Outra participante, Stephanie Endambo, natural da República Democrática do Congo, estava a participar num evento deste tipo em Portland pela primeira vez. "Assim que entrei na sala, senti um ambiente caloroso e acolhedor", afirmou.

Endambo salientou que nem sempre é fácil para as mulheres imigrantes encontrarem espaços onde possam reunir-se e partilhar livremente as suas experiências. "Mas aqui, apenas alguns minutos após a minha chegada, várias mulheres vieram cumprimentar-me e dar-me as boas-vindas. Isso tocou-me muito." A atmosfera fez com que recordasse os encontros comunitários no seu país de origem. "Encontrar este tipo de ambiente num país estrangeiro é muito emocionante", disse ela. Segundo Stephanie, encontros como este são essenciais: "Permitem-nos criar ligações, partilhar as nossas histórias e apoiar-nos mutuamente na nossa jornada nos Estados Unidos."

Por trás desta iniciativa está Santiana Nzeye, fundadora da organização Women to Women e principal mentora do evento. Residente nos Estados Unidos há nove anos e mãe de dois filhos, Santiana dedica-se ativa-



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Q What is the Office of Maine Refugee Services?

A The Office of Maine Refugee Services is designated by the federal government's Office of Refugee Resettlement to administer Maine's refugee resettlement services across the state.

While the Office does not work directly with clients, its role is to support the self-sufficiency and community integration of refugees by providing grants management, policy guidance, and program development to 20+ community partners in Maine who provide key services to refugees around resettlement, health, education, employment, legal services, and more.

Our Partners

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Maine Access Immigrant Network
New Mainers Public Health Initiative

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Maine Medical Center
The B Street Clinic of St Mary's Community Clinical Service
The Pediatric Associates
Maine General Family Practice

Education

Augusta School Department	RSU 34
Biddeford School Department	University of Maine, Augusta
Brunswick School Department	University of Southern Maine
Lewiston Public Schools	Westbrook School Department
Portland Adult Education	

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The federal HHS Administration of Children and Family
The Maine Department of Health and Human Services
The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
The Social Security Administration



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l. to r. *Amjambo Africa* reporter Rachel Ndjondjo, Santiana Nzeye, and Ninette Irabaruta

mente à criação de espaços de acolhimento e sororidade para mulheres.

A trajetória para concretizar o evento foi desafiadora. "A nossa comunidade tem enfrentado períodos complexos, e o peso dos traumas ainda é muito presente", explicou Nzeye. Embora o planeamento tenha começado meses antes, o projeto chegou a ser suspenso por receio de uma adesão reduzida. No entanto, a força da comunidade falou mais alto: "Semanas antes da data prevista, recebi inúmeras chamadas de mulheres a apelar para que não cancelasse", recorda. Muitas partilharam a necessidade vital de um momento de reconexão após tempos de isolamento e dificuldade.

Movida por este apelo, Santiana decidiu avançar. "Tivemos apenas três semanas para organizar tudo. Mobilizei amigos, voluntários e empreendedores locais." Foi este esforço coletivo, aliado ao apoio crucial de patrocinadores da região, que permitiu transformar a visão em realidade.

Entre os organizadores esteve Ninette Irabaruta, que enfatizou a relevância de encontros desta natureza no atual cenário social. "Diante de tudo o que tem ocorrido em relação ao ICE e às questões imigratórias, ver a adesão de mais de cem pessoas é um verdadeiro testemunho de solidariedade. Mesmo em tempos de crise, a comunidade continua a unir-se; as pessoas precisam desse senso de pertença. Elas desejam sentir-se livres e apoiar-se mutuamente", afirmou. Irabaruta ressaltou ainda que a participação dos anciãos conferiu ao evento um significado mais profundo: "A presença dos nossos mais velhos tornou este momento ainda mais especial, elevando o encontro para além de um simples evento comunitário."

Ao ritmo das danças tradicionais do Burundi, os presentes celebraram tanto a sua herança cultural quanto os laços de fraternidade. Ao final, participantes de diversas origens partilharam o mesmo desejo: continuar a fortalecer essas conexões e expandir iniciativas semelhantes para outras comunidades.

— ESPAÑOL —

Día Internacional de la Mujer en Portland: Solidaridad, cultura y esperanza en el corazón de la diáspora

Por Rachel Ndjondjo

Cada año, el 8 de marzo, el mundo conmemora el Día Internacional de la Mujer. Celebrado desde 1910 bajo diferentes temas, este día ofrece un momento para reconocer el papel fundamental que desempeñan las mujeres en la sociedad y para reflexionar

sobre la lucha continua por la igualdad de género. Más allá de la conmemoración, el día brinda una oportunidad para que las comunidades se reúnan, compartan experiencias y fomenten la esperanza de un futuro más solidario e inclusivo.

En Portland, Maine, la celebración tomó la forma de un encuentro comunitario llamado "Women to Women Gathering", un evento diseñado para crear un espacio donde mujeres de diferentes culturas puedan reunirse, intercambiar ideas y celebrar su diversidad.

El sábado 7 de marzo de 2026, más de cien mujeres se reunieron en el Portland Eagles Banquet Hall para participar en el evento. Más que una simple celebración, el encuentro se convirtió en un momento de conexión y solidaridad entre mujeres de distintos orígenes culturales y generaciones.

Desde que las invitadas entraron al salón, el ambiente reflejaba la riqueza cultural del evento. Las participantes vestían hermosos trajes tradicionales con colores vibrantes de África y de otros lugares. Peinados cuidadosamente elaborados, accesorios tradicionales y telas con estampados llamativos dieron a la velada un ambiente festivo y elegante. La risa y las conversaciones llenaban el espacio mientras la música creaba una atmósfera cálida y alegre.

La noche estuvo llena de juegos, música y oportunidades para que las participantes se conectaran entre sí. Para muchas mujeres, el evento representó mucho más que una celebración simbólica. Varias mujeres burundesas que viven en Maine afirmaron que este día es esencial. Para ellas, representa un momento valioso para compartir experiencias y fortalecer los lazos entre mujeres.

Entre las participantes se encontraba Caritas Igirukwayo, quien vive en Estados Unidos desde el 18 de febrero de 2025. Era la segunda vez que asistía al evento. Recordó que una amiga la invitó el año anterior y que

la experiencia la marcó profundamente. "El Día Internacional de la Mujer es muy importante. En mi país, Burundi, también se celebra con mucho entusiasmo", explicó.

Antes de mudarse a Estados Unidos, Igirukwayo trabajaba para la Embajada de Estados Unidos en Buyumbura, la capital económica de Burundi, donde se concentran la administración central, las embajadas y varias agencias de las Naciones Unidas.

Igirukwayo señaló que este día representa un momento importante para las mujeres. "Es una gran oportunidad para reunirse, intercambiar ideas y celebrar el papel fundamental que desempeñan las mujeres en la sociedad — dentro de las familias, comunidades e instituciones", afirmó. También reflexionó sobre las diferencias entre las celebraciones en Burundi y las que ahora vive en Estados Unidos. "En Burundi, las actividades se realizaban con frecuencia en instituciones o lugares de trabajo. Aquí veo que el aspecto comunitario es mucho más fuerte. Mujeres de diferentes orígenes se reúnen, y esa diversidad hace que el evento sea aún más enriquecedor."

Al comparar su primera participación con la de este año, también notó varios cambios. "El año pasado acababa de llegar y no conocía a muchas personas. Este año el ambiente fue aún más dinámico, con más participantes y actividades que llenaron la noche de alegría." Según Igirukwayo, encuentros como este ayudan a fortalecer las relaciones entre mujeres y fomentan un verdadero espíritu de solidaridad. La diversidad de participantes fue algo que le llamó especialmente la atención. "No solo había mujeres burundesas. También había mujeres de Ruanda, de la República Democrática del Congo, así como mujeres estadounidenses de distintos orígenes culturales. Eso refleja perfectamente el espíritu del Día Internacional de la Mujer", comentó.

Igirukwayo también abordó algunas ideas equivocadas sobre la celebración. "Algunas personas piensan que es solo una excusa para salir o para festejar, pero esa visión es demasiado simplista. Los hombres deberían comprender la importancia de este día y apoyar a las mujeres en su celebración." Señaló que el año tiene 365 días. "Si solo un día está dedicado a las mujeres, es normal que aprovechen ese momento para relajarse, disfrutar y sentirse valoradas", añadió.

Sin embargo, también destacó la importancia de mantener un equilibrio con las responsabilidades familiares. "Cuando las mujeres participan en estos eventos de manera responsable, se fortalece la confianza dentro de las familias y la celebración se desarrolla en un ambiente de respeto y comprensión."

Entre las invitadas estaba Leah Hargrove, directora ejecutiva de Ladder to the Moon Network. Ella expresó que se sintió profundamente conmovida por la energía positiva

y la solidaridad presentes en el lugar.

"Lo que más me impactó fue ver a mujeres de Burundi, Ruanda, la República Democrática del Congo, y también mujeres estadounidenses reunidas para celebrar su identidad y fortaleza", dijo.

Señaló que en algunas culturas no es común ver a mujeres de todas las generaciones reunidas de esta manera. "A veces celebramos ciertos momentos importantes en la vida de las niñas, pero ver a mujeres de todas las edades compartiendo el mismo espacio es realmente especial", explicó. La presencia de niñas, madres, mujeres embarazadas y mujeres mayores le dio una fuerte sensación de esperanza. "Ver a todas estas generaciones juntas refuerza el significado de esta celebración. Me dio aún más valor y orgullo de ser mujer."

Hargrove expresó su admiración por la resiliencia de las mujeres inmigrantes presentes en el evento. "Estas mujeres han dejado sus países para construir nuevas vidas en Estados Unidos. A pesar de los desafíos de la inmigración, las barreras del idioma y la adaptación cultural, muestran una fuerza increíble." Según ella, las comunidades inmigrantes aportan una riqueza cultural invaluable a la sociedad estadounidense. "Eventos como este me dan esperanza para el futuro de Estados Unidos."

Las niñas también tuvieron una presencia notable durante la celebración. Entre ellas estaba Frista Akimana, cuya madre es una de las organizadoras. Para ella, la experiencia fue profundamente inspiradora. "Fue increíble ver a tantas mujeres reunidas para apoyar a la comunidad", dijo. La experiencia también le ayudó a comprender la importancia de la participación comunitaria. "Cuando crezca, quiero ayudar a otras mujeres también", expresó.

La madre de Akimana siempre le ha enseñado que las mujeres enfrentan muchos desafíos. "Por eso es importante que siempre se apoyen entre ellas", añadió. Su mensaje para las niñas es claro: "Cree en ti misma, conviértete en una mujer fuerte y apoya a otras mujeres."

Otra participante, Stephanie Endambo, originaria de la República Democrática del Congo, asistía por primera vez a un evento así en Portland. "Desde que entré al salón, sentí un ambiente cálido y acogedor", comentó.

Endambo señaló que no siempre es fácil para las mujeres inmigrantes encontrar espacios donde puedan reunirse y compartir libremente sus experiencias. "Pero aquí, a los pocos minutos de llegar, varias mujeres vinieron a saludarme y darme la bienvenida. Eso realmente me conmovió." El ambiente le recordó a los encuentros comunitarios de su país. "Encontrar ese tipo de ambiente en un país extranjero es muy emotivo", dijo. Según ella, eventos como este son esenciales para las mujeres inmigrantes. "Nos permiten crear conexiones, compartir nuestras historias y apoyarnos mutuamente en nuestro camino en Estados Unidos."

Detrás de esta iniciativa está Santiana Nzeye, fundadora de la organización Women to Women y principal organizadora del evento. Madre de dos hijos y residente en Estados Unidos desde hace nueve años, trabaja activamente para crear espacios de solidaridad para las mujeres.

Nzeye explicó que organizar el evento no fue fácil. "La comunidad ha pasado por momentos difíciles y muchas personas aún cargan con traumas", señaló. Inicialmente, la preparación comenzó mucho antes, pero se detuvo por temor a que no hubiera suficiente participación. "Luego, unas semanas antes del evento, recibí muchas llamadas de mujeres pidiéndome que no lo cancelara", recordó. Algunas le dijeron que necesitaban un momento para reconectarse con otras mujeres después de tiempos difíciles.

Motivada por estos mensajes, decidió seguir adelante. "Tuvimos solo tres semanas



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para organizar todo. Contacté a amigos, voluntarios y emprendedores de la comunidad.” Gracias a este esfuerzo colectivo y al apoyo de patrocinadores locales, el evento pudo llevarse a cabo.

Entre las organizadoras estaba Ninette Irabaruta, quien destacó la importancia de este tipo de encuentros en el contexto actual. “Hoy, con todo lo que está pasando con ICE y la inmigración, ver a más de cien personas reunidas es una verdadera muestra de solidaridad. Incluso en tiempos de crisis, la gente sigue uniéndose. La gente necesita comunidad. Quiere sentirse libre, estar junta y apoyarse mutuamente”, afirmó. También agregó que la presencia de personas mayores le dio un significado aún más profundo al evento. “Poder incluir a los mayores hizo que este momento fuera aún más especial. Le dio una dimensión mucho más grande que la de un simple evento.”

Al ritmo de la danza tradicional burundesa, las participantes celebraron tanto su cultura como su solidaridad. Antes de irse, muchas participantes de distintos orígenes compartieron el mismo deseo: continuar fortaleciendo estos lazos y expandir este tipo de iniciativas a otras comunidades.

— FRANÇAIS —

Journée internationale des femmes à Portland : solidarité, culture et espoir au cœur de la diaspora

Par Rachel Ndjondjo

Chaque année, le 8 mars, le monde entier célèbre la Journée internationale des femmes. Célébrée depuis 1910 sous différents thèmes, cette journée offre l'occasion de reconnaître le rôle crucial que jouent les femmes dans la société et de réfléchir à la lutte permanente pour l'égalité des sexes. Au-delà de la commémoration, cette journée permet aux communautés de se rassembler, de partager leurs expériences et de nourrir l'espoir d'un avenir plus solidaire et plus inclusif.

À Portland, dans le Maine, la célébration a pris la forme d'un rassemblement communautaire intitulé « Women to Women Gathering », un événement conçu pour créer un espace où des femmes de différentes cultures peuvent se rencontrer, échanger des idées et célébrer leur diversité.

Le samedi 7 mars 2026, plus d'une centaine de femmes se sont réunies à la salle de banquet des Portland Eagles pour participer à l'événement. Plus qu'une simple célébration, ce rassemblement est devenu un moment de connexion et de solidarité entre des femmes issues de différents horizons culturels et de différentes générations.

Dès que les invités sont entrés dans la salle, l'atmosphère a révélé la richesse culturelle de ce rassemblement. Les participantes portaient de magnifiques robes traditionnelles aux couleurs vives, venues d'Afrique et d'ailleurs. Des coiffures soignées, des accessoires traditionnels et des tissus aux motifs éclatants ont donné à la soirée une ambiance à la fois festive et élégante. Les rires et les conversations ont rempli la salle tandis que la musique créait une atmosphère chaleureuse et joyeuse.

La soirée a été ponctuée de jeux, de musique et d'occasions pour les participantes de tisser des liens entre elles. Pour de nombreuses femmes, cet événement représentait bien plus qu'une simple célébration symbolique. Plusieurs Burundaises vivant dans le Maine ont déclaré que cette journée était essentielle.

Pour elles, c'est un moment précieux pour partager leurs expériences et renforcer les liens entre femmes.



Parmi les participantes figurait Caritas Igirukwayo, qui vit aux États-Unis depuis le 18 février 2025. C'était la deuxième fois qu'elle assistait à ce rassemblement. Elle s'est souvenue qu'une amie l'avait invitée à participer à l'événement l'année précédente et que cette expérience l'avait profondément marquée. « La Journée internationale des femmes est très importante. Dans mon pays, le Burundi, cette journée est également célébrée avec beaucoup d'enthousiasme », a-t-elle expliqué.

Avant de s'installer aux États-Unis, Igirukwayo travaillait pour l'ambassade américaine à Bujumbura, la capitale économique du Burundi où se concentrent l'administration centrale, les ambassades et plusieurs agences des Nations Unies.

Igirukwayo a souligné que cette journée constituait un moment important pour les femmes. « C'est une excellente occasion de se réunir, d'échanger des idées et de célébrer le rôle fondamental que jouent les femmes dans la société — au sein des familles, des communautés et des institutions », a-t-elle déclaré. Elle a évoqué les différences entre les célébrations au Burundi et ce qu'elle vit aujourd'hui aux États-Unis. « Au Burundi, les activités avaient souvent lieu au sein des institutions ou sur les lieux de travail. Ici, je constate que l'aspect communautaire est beaucoup plus fort. Des femmes d'horizons différents se rassemblent, et cette diversité enrichit encore davantage l'événement. »

En comparant sa première participation à celle de cette année, elle a également remarqué plusieurs changements. « L'année dernière, je venais d'arriver dans la communauté et je ne connaissais pas grand monde. Cette année, l'ambiance m'a semblé encore plus dynamique, avec davantage de participantes et d'activités qui ont apporté beaucoup de joie à la soirée. » Selon Igirukwayo, des rassemblements comme celui-ci contribuent à renforcer les liens entre les femmes et à favoriser un véritable esprit de solidarité. La diversité des participantes l'a particulièrement marquée. « Il n'y avait pas que des Burundaises. Il y avait aussi des femmes du Rwanda [et] de la République démocratique du Congo, ainsi que des Américaines issues de différents horizons culturels. Cela reflète parfaitement l'esprit de la Journée internationale des femmes », a-t-elle déclaré.

Igirukwayo a également abordé certaines idées reçues courantes concernant cette fête. « Certaines personnes pensent que ce n'est qu'un prétexte pour que les femmes rentrent tard ou fassent la fête. Mais cette vision est trop simpliste. Les hommes devraient plutôt comprendre l'importance de cette journée et

soutenir les femmes dans sa célébration. » Elle a souligné qu'une année compte 365 jours. « Si une seule journée est consacrée aux femmes, il est tout à fait naturel qu'elles profitent de ce moment pour se détendre, s'amuser et se sentir valorisées », a-t-elle déclaré.

Elle a toutefois insisté sur l'importance de trouver un équilibre entre la fête et les responsabilités familiales.

« Lorsque les femmes participent à ces événements de manière responsable, cela renforce la confiance au sein des familles et permet à la fête de se dérouler dans une atmosphère de respect et de compréhension. »

Parmi les invités figurait Leah Hargrove, directrice exécutive du réseau Ladder to the Moon. Elle s'est dite profondément émue par l'énergie positive et la solidarité qui régnaient dans la salle.

« Ce qui m'a le plus frappée, c'est de voir des femmes du Burundi, du Rwanda, de la République démocratique du Congo, ainsi que des Américaines, réunies pour célébrer leur identité et leur force », a-t-elle déclaré.

Elle a fait remarquer que, dans certaines cultures, il est rare de voir des femmes de toutes les générations se réunir ainsi. « Nous célébrons parfois certaines étapes importantes dans la vie des jeunes filles, mais voir des femmes de tous âges partager le même espace est vraiment spécial », a-t-elle expliqué. La présence de jeunes filles, de mères, de femmes enceintes et de femmes plus âgées lui a donné un profond sentiment d'espoir. « Voir toutes ces générations réunies renforce la signification de cette célébration. Cela m'a donné encore plus de courage et de fierté d'être une femme. »

Hargrove a exprimé son admiration pour la résilience des femmes immigrées présentes au rassemblement. « Ces femmes ont quitté leur pays pour se construire une nouvelle vie aux États-Unis. Malgré les défis liés à l'immigration, les barrières linguistiques et l'adaptation culturelle, elles font preuve d'une force incroyable. » Selon elle, les communautés immigrées apportent une richesse culturelle précieuse à la société américaine. « Des événements comme celui-ci me donnent de l'espoir pour l'avenir des États-Unis. »

Il y avait également des jeunes filles présentes lors de la célébration. Parmi elles se trouvait Frista Akimana, dont la mère est l'une des organisatrices. Pour la jeune participante, l'expérience a été profondément inspirante. « C'était incroyable de voir autant de femmes réunies pour soutenir la communauté », a-t-elle déclaré. Cette expérience l'a également aidée à comprendre l'importance de l'engagement communautaire. « Quand je

serai grande, je veux moi aussi aider d'autres femmes », a déclaré Akimana.

La mère d'Akimana lui a toujours appris que les femmes sont souvent confrontées à de nombreux défis. « C'est pourquoi il est important qu'elles se soutiennent mutuellement », a-t-elle ajouté. Son message aux jeunes filles est simple : « Crois en toi, deviens une femme forte et soutiens les autres femmes. »

Une autre participante, Stephanie Endambo, originaire de la République démocratique du Congo, assistait pour la première fois à un tel événement à Portland. « Dès que je suis entrée dans la salle, j'ai ressenti une atmosphère chaleureuse et accueillante », a-t-elle déclaré.

Stephanie Endambo a fait remarquer qu'il n'est pas toujours facile pour les femmes immigrées de trouver des espaces où elles peuvent se rencontrer et partager librement leurs expériences. « Mais ici, quelques minutes seulement après mon arrivée, plusieurs femmes sont venues me saluer et m'accueillir. Cela m'a vraiment touchée. » L'atmosphère lui a rappelé les rassemblements communautaires de son pays d'origine. « Retrouver ce genre d'atmosphère dans un pays étranger est très émouvant », a-t-elle déclaré. Selon elle, des rassemblements comme celui-ci sont essentiels pour les femmes immigrées. « Elles nous permettent de créer des liens, de partager nos histoires et de nous soutenir mutuellement dans notre parcours aux États-Unis. »

Derrière cette initiative se trouve Santiana Nzeye, fondatrice de l'organisation Women to Women et principale organisatrice de l'événement. Mère de deux enfants et résidant aux États-Unis depuis neuf ans, elle œuvre activement à la création d'espaces de solidarité pour les femmes.

Nzeye a expliqué que l'organisation de l'événement n'avait pas été facile. « La communauté traverse une période difficile, et beaucoup de gens sont encore marqués par des traumatismes », a-t-elle déclaré. Au départ, les préparatifs avaient commencé bien plus tôt, mais ils avaient été suspendus car les organisateurs craignaient un manque de participation. « Puis, quelques semaines avant l'événement, j'ai reçu de nombreux appels de femmes me demandant de ne pas l'annuler », se souvient Nzeye. Certaines lui ont dit qu'elles avaient besoin d'un moment pour renouer avec d'autres femmes après des périodes difficiles.

Encouragée par ces messages, elle a décidé de maintenir l'événement. « Nous n'avions que trois semaines pour tout préparer. J'ai fait appel à des amis, des bénévoles et des entrepreneurs au sein de la communauté. » Grâce à cet effort collectif et au soutien de sponsors locaux, l'événement a pu avoir lieu.

Parmi les organisatrices figurait Ninette Irabaruta, qui a souligné l'importance de rassemblements comme celui-ci dans le contexte actuel. « Aujourd'hui, avec tout ce qui se passe autour de l'ICE et de l'immigration, nous avons vu plus d'une centaine de personnes se présenter. Pour moi, c'est un véritable témoignage de solidarité. Même en temps de crise, les gens continuent de se rassembler. Les gens ont besoin d'une communauté. Ils veulent se sentir libres, être ensemble et se soutenir les uns les autres », a-t-elle déclaré. Ninette Irabaruta a ajouté que la présence des aînés avait donné à l'événement une signification plus profonde. « Le fait de pouvoir faire venir les aînés a rendu ce moment encore plus significatif. Cela a donné au rassemblement une dimension bien plus grande qu'un simple événement. »

Au rythme des danses traditionnelles burundaises, les participants ont célébré à la fois leur culture et leur solidarité. Avant de partir, de nombreux participants issus de divers horizons ont exprimé le même souhait : continuer à renforcer ces liens et étendre ce type d'initiatives à d'autres com-

munautés.

— SOMALI —

Maalinta Caalamiga ah ee Haweenka ee Portland: Wadajirka, dhaqanka, iyo rajada xudunta u ah qurba-joogta

Waxaa qoray Rachel Ndjondjo

Sannad kasta 8-da Maarso, adduunka ayaa laga xusaa maalinta caalamiga ah ee haweenka. Waxaa loo dabaaldegay ilaa 1910-kii iyadoo mowduucyo kala duwan lagu soo qaatay, fasaxa wuxuu bixiyaa waqti lagu aqoonsanayo doorka muhiimka ah ee haweenku ku leeyihiin bulshada iyo in dib loo eego halganka socda ee sinnaanta jinsiga. Xuska ka sakow, maalintani waxa ay fursad siisaa bulshooyinka si ay isu soo ururiyaan, u wadaagaan khibradaha, una kobciyaan rajada mustaqbal taageero iyo midaysan.

Magaalada Portland, Maine, dabaaldeggu waxa uu u dhacay qaab kulan bulsho oo loogu magac daray "Isku imaatinka Haweenka ilaa Haweenka," munaasabad loogu talagalay in lagu abuur meel ay ku kulmaan haweenka dhaqamada kala duwan ka yimid, fikrado isku weydaarsan karaan, kuna dabaaldegayaan kala duwanaansha-hooda.

Sabtidii, Maarso 7, 2026, in ka badan boqol haween reer Burundi ah ayaa isugu soo baxay hoolka Portland Eagles Banquet Hall si ay uga qayb qaataan munaasabadda. In ka badan dabbaaldeggu, isu imaatinka waxa uu noqday xilli xidhiidh iyo midnimo dhexmartay haweenka ka soo jeeda asal dhaqameed iyo jiil kala duwan.

Isla markii ay martidu soo galeen hoolka, jawigu waxa uu daaha ka rogay dhaqanka hodanka ah ee kulanka. Ka qaybgalayaashu waxay soo xidheen dhar dhaqameed qurux badan oo midabyo firfircoon leh oo ka yimid Afrika iyo meelo ka baxsan. Timaha si taxadar leh loo habeeyey, qalab dhaqameed, iyo maro qaabaysan oo dha-laalaya ayaa siisay fiidkii labadaba dareen farxadeed iyo xarrago leh. Qosol iyo sheeko ayaa qolka ka buuxsamay iyadoo muusiggu abuuray jawi diiran oo farxad leh.

Fiidnimadii waxaa ka buuxsamay ciyaaro, muusig, iyo fursado ay ka qaybgalayaashu isku xidhi lahaayeen midba midka kale. Dumar badan, dhacdadani waxay u ahayd wax ka badan dabbaaldeg astaan ah. Dhowr haween ah oo reer Burundi ah oo ku nool Maine ayaa sheegay in maalintani ay lama huraan tahay.

Iyaga, waxay u taagan tahay waqti qiimo leh oo la wadaago waayo-aragnimada iyo xoojinta curaarta haweenka dhexdooda.

Ka qaybgalayaasha waxa ka mid ahaa Caritas Igirukwayo, oo ku noolayd Maraykanka ilaa February 18, 2025. Tani waxay ahayd markii labaad oo ay ka soo qaybgasho kulanka. Waxay xasuusatay in saaxiibkeed uu ku casuumay inay ka soo qaybgasho xafladda sannadkii hore iyo in khibradaha ay si qoto dheer u calaamadisay. "Maalinta haweenka caalamiga ah waa mid aad muhiim u ah, dalkayga, Burundi, maalintan sidoo kale waxaa looga dabaaldega si xamaasad leh," ayay sharaxday.

Ka hor inta uusan u wareegin Mareykanka, Igirukwayo wuxuu u shaqeeyay safaaradda Mareykanka ee Bu-jumbura, oo ah caasimadda dhaqaalaha Burundi halkaas oo ay ku badan yihiin maamulka dhexe, safaaradaha, iyo dhowr hay'adood oo Qaramada Midoobay ah.

Igirukwayo ayaa xusay in maalinta ay u taagan tahay waqti muhiim u ah haweenka. "Waa fursad weyn in la isu keeno, la isku dhaafsado fikrado, iyo in la xuso doorka aasaasiga ah ee haweenku ku leeyihiin bul-

shada - qoysaska, bulshooyinka, iyo hay'adaha dhexdooda," ayay tiri. Waxay dib u milicsatay farqiga u dhexeeya dabaaldegyada Burundi iyo waxa ay hadda kala kulantay Mareykanka. "Burundi, inta badan dhaqdhaqaaqyada ayaa ka dhici jiray hay'adaha ama goobaha shaqada, halkan, waxaan ku arkayaa in dhinaca bulshada ay aad u xoog badan yihiin, haween ka kala yimid meelo kala duwan ayaa isu soo baxa, kala duwanaanshuhuna wuxuu ka dhigayaa munaasabadda xitaa mid hodan ah."

Isbarbardhigga ka-qaybgalkeedii ugu horreeyay iyo isu-ururinta sannadkan, waxay sidoo kale dareentay isbeddello dhowr ah. "Sannadkii hore waxaan imid bulshada oo aan aqoon dad badan, sanadkan jawigu wuxuu dareemay xamaasad aad u badan, oo ay ka soo qaybgaleen dad badan iyo wax-qabadyo farxad badan u keenay fiidkii." Sida laga soo xigtay Igirukwayo, isu imaatinka sidan oo kale ah waxay caawiyaan xoojinta xiriirka haweenka iyo kobcinta ruuxa dhabta ah ee wadajirka. Kala duwanaanshaha ka qaybgalayaasha ayaa si gaar ah ugu soo muuqday iyada. "Ma ahayn kaliya haweenka Burundi, waxaa sidoo kale jiray haween ka yimid Rwanda [iyo] Jamhuuriyadda Dimuqraadiga ah ee Kongo, iyo sidoo kale haween Mareykanka ah oo ka soo jeeda dhaqamo kala duwan. Taasi waxay si fiican u muujineysaa ruuxa Maalinta Caalamiga ah ee Haweenka," ayay tiri.

Igirukwayo ayaa sidoo kale ka hadlay fikrado khalidan oo caadi ah oo ku saabsan dabaaldega. "Dadka qaar ayaa u haysta inay marmarsiyo u tahay haweenka inay daahdaan ama ay xafladaha tagaan. Laakiin aragtidaas waa mid aad u fudud, taas beddelkeeda ragga waa inay fahmaan muhiimadda ay leedahay maalintan oo ay haweenka ku taageeraan inay u dabaaldegaan." Waxay tilmaantay in sanadku leeyahay 365 maalmood. "Haddii hal maalin kaliya loo qoondeeyo haweenka, waa wax iska caadi ah inay ku qaataan wakhtigaas si ay u nastaan, ugu raaxaystaan, oo ay dareemaan in la qiimeeyo," ayay tidhi.

Si kastaba ha ahaatee, waxay ku nuuxnuuxsatay muhiimada ay leedahay in la isku dheel tiro dabaaldega iyo mas'uuliyadda qoyska.

"Markii haweenku ay si mas'uuliyad ku jirto uga qaybqaataan dhacdooyinkan, waxay xoojisaa kalsoonida qoysaska waxayna u ogolaataa dabaal-deggu inuu ku dhaco jawi ixtiraam iyo isfaham."

Martida waxaa ka mid ahaa Leah Hargrove, oo ah Agaasimaha Fulinta ee Ladder to the Moon Network. Waxay sheegtay inay si qoto dheer u dareentay tamarta togan iyo wadajirka qolka.

"Waxa iigu yaabka badnaa waxay ahayd inaan arkay dumar ka yimid Burundi, Rwanda, Jamhuuriyadda Dimuqraadiga ah ee Kongo, iyo sidoo kale haweenka Maraykanka ah oo isugu soo baxay si ay ugu dabaaldegaan aqoonsigooda iyo xoogooda," ayay tidhi.

Waxa ay xustay in dhaqamada qaar ay naadir tahay in la arko dumar ka abtirsada jiilal walba oo sidan oo kale isugu yimaada. "Mararka qaar waxaan u dabaaldegnaa marxalado gaar ah oo laga gaaray nolosha gabdhaha da'da yar, laakiin in la arko haweenka da' kasta leh oo wadaaga meel isku mid ah runtii waa mid gaar ah," ayay sharaxday. Joogitaanka gabdhaha da'da yar, hooyooyinka, haweenka uurka leh, iyo haweenka da'da weyn waxay siisay dareen xooggan oo rajo ah. "Inaan arko jiilalkan oo dhan oo wadajira waxay xoojinayaan macnaha dabbaaldeggan, waxay i siisay geesimo dheeraad ah oo aan ku faano inaan ahay qof dumar ah."

Hargrove ayaa muujiyay sida uu ula dhacsan yahay adkeysiga haweenka soogalootiga ah ee goobjooga ka ahaa kulanka. "Haweenkani waxay ka tageen dalalkooda si ay nolol cusub uga dhistaan Maraykanka, inkastoo caqabadaha socdaalka, caqabadaha

luqadda, iyo la qabsiga dhaqanka, waxay muujinayaan awood cajiib ah." Sida ay sheegtay, bulshooyinka soogalootiga ahi waxay hodannimo dhaqameed u keenaan bulshada Maraykanka. "Dhacdooyinka noocan oo kale ah waxay i siinayaan rajo mustaqbalka Mareykanka."

Gabdhaha da'da yar ayaa sidoo kale ahaa goob muuqata intii lagu jiray dabaaldega. Waxaa ka mid ahaa Frista Akimana, oo hooyadeed ay ka mid tahay abaabulayaasha. Ka qaybgalayaasha da'da yar, waayo-aragnimadu waxay ahayd mid si qoto-dheer u dhiirri-gelinaysa. "Waxay ahayd wax cajiib ah in la arko dumar badan oo isu soo baxay si ay u taageeraan bulshada," ayay tidhi. Waayo-aragnimadu waxay sidoo kale ka caawisay inay fahamto muhiimadda ka-qaybgalka bulshada. "Markaan weynaado, waxaan rabaa inaan caawiyo haweenka kale," Akimana ayaa tiri.

Akimana hooyadeed waxay had iyo jeer baratay in haweenku inta badan la kulmaan caqabado badan. "Taasi waa sababta ay muhiim u tahay inay mar walba is taageeraan," ayay raacisay. Farriinta ay u dirayso gabdhaha yaryar waa mid fudud. "Naftaada rumayso, noqo naag adag, oo dumarka kale taageer."

Ka qaybgale kale, Stephanie Endambo, oo asal ahaan ka soo jeeda Jamhuuriyadda Dimuqraadiga ah ee Congo, ayaa markii ugu horreysay ka qaybgashay munaasabad noocan oo kale ah oo ka dhacday Portland. "Isla markii aan qolka soo galay, waxaan dareemay jawi diiran oo soo dhawayn leh," ayay tidhi.

Endambo waxa ay xustay in aanay mar walba u fududayn dumarka soo galootiga ah in ay helaan meelo ay ku kulmaan oo ay si xor ah u wadaagaan khibradahooda. "Laakin halkan, daqiiqado yar ka dib markii aan imid, dhowr dumar ah ayaa ii yimid si ay ii soo dhaweeyaan, runtiina taasi way i

taabatay." Jawigu waxa uu xasuusiyay shirkii bulshada ee dalkeeda hooyo. "Helitaanka jawiga noocaas ah ee waddan shisheeye waa mid aad u qiiro badan," ayay tiri. Sida ay sheegtay, isu imaatinka noocan oo kale ah ayaa lama huraan u ah haweenka soo-galootiga ah. "Waxay noo ogolaadaan inaan abuurno xiriiro, wadaagno sheekooyinkeena, oo aan isku taageerno sa-farradayada Mareykanka."

Hindisaha waxaa ka dambeeya Santiana Nzeze, oo ah aasaasaha ururka haweenka ilaa haweenka iyo qabanqaabiyaha ugu weyn ee dhacdada. Hooyo leh laba carruur ah oo ku noolayd Maraykanka sagaal sano, waxay si firfircoon uga shaqeysaa abuurista meelo ay ku midoobaan haweenka.

Nzeze ayaa sharaxay in qabanqaabada xaflada aysan ahayn mid fudud. "Bulshadu waxay soo martay waqtiyo adag, dad badanna weli waxay wataan dhaawacyo," ayay tiri. Markii hore, diyaargarowgu waxa uu bilaabmay wakhti hore laakiin waa la hakiyay sababtoo ah qabanqaabiyeyaasha ayaa ka baqay in laga yaabo in ka qaybqaadashadu aanay ku filnayn. "Kadib, dhowr toddobaad ka hor dhacdada, waxaan helay telefoonno badan oo ka yimid haween oo iga codsanaya inaan burin," Nzeze ayaa xusuustay. Qaarkood waxay u sheegeen inay u baahan yihiin wakhti ay dib ula xidhiidhaan dumarka kale ka dib xilliyo adag.

Farriimahaas oo ku dhiirri-geliyay, ayay go'aansatay inay hore u sii waddo munaasabadda. "Waxaan haysanay kaliya seddex toddobaad si aan wax walba ugu diyaarino. Waxaan la xiriiray asxaabta, mutadawiciinta, iyo ganacsatada gudaha bulshada." Waad ku mahadsan tahay dadaalkan wadajirka ah iyo taageerada kafaala-qaa-dayaasha maxalliga ah, munaasabaddu waxay u suurtagashay inay qabsoonto.

Qabanqaabiyeyaasha waxaa ka mid ahaa Ninette Irabaruta, oo ku nuuxnuuxsatay

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muhiimadda isu imaatinka noocan oo kale ah ee hadda jira. "Maanta, iyada oo wax kasta oo ka dhacaya agagaarka ICE iyo socdaalka, waxaan aragnay in ka badan boqol qof oo soo baxay. Aniga ahaan, taasi waa markhaati dhab ah oo ku saabsan midnimada, xitaa waqtiyada dhibaatooyinka, dadku waxay sii wadaan inay isu yimaadaan. Dadku waxay u baahan yihiin bulsho. Waxay rabaan inay dareemaan xoriyad, inay wada joogaan, iyo inay is taageeraan," ayay tiri. Irabaruta ayaa intaa ku daray in joogitaanka odayaasha ay dhacdada siisay macno qoto dheer. "In la keeno odayaasha ayaa xiligan ka dhigtay mid macno badan leh. Waxay siisay isu imaatinka cabbir aad uga weyn munaasabad."

Sida laxanka ciyaar dhaqameedka Burundi, ka qaybgalayaashu waxay u dhabaaldeegen dhaqankooda iyo wadajirkooda labadaba. Ka hor intaysan bixin, ka qaybgalayaal badan oo ka kala yimid meelo kala duwan ayaa muujiyay rajo isku mid ah: in la sii wado xoojinta xiriirkan iyo in la ballaariyo hindisayaashan oo kale bulshooyinka kale.

— ENGLISH —

International Women's Day in Portland: Solidarity, culture, and hope at the heart of the diaspora

By Rachel Ndjondjo

Every year on March 8, the world marks International Women's Day. Celebrated since 1910 under different themes, the holiday offers a moment to recognize the crucial role women play in society and to reflect on the ongoing struggle for gender equality. Beyond commemoration, the day provides an opportunity for communities to gather, share experiences, and nurture hope for a more supportive and inclusive future.

In Portland, Maine, the celebration took the form of a community gathering called "Women to Women Gathering," an event designed to create a space where women from different cultures can meet, exchange ideas, and celebrate their diversity.

On Saturday, March 7, 2026, more than one hundred women gathered at the Portland Eagles Banquet Hall to take part in the event. More than just a celebration, the gathering

became a moment of connection and solidarity among women from different cultural backgrounds and generations.

As soon as guests entered the hall, the atmosphere revealed the rich cultural spirit of the gathering. Participants wore beautiful traditional dresses in vibrant colors from Africa and beyond. Carefully styled hair, traditional accessories, and bright patterned fabrics gave the evening both a festive and elegant feel. Laughter and conversation filled the room as music created a warm and joyful atmosphere.

The evening was filled with games, music, and opportunities for participants to connect with one another. For many women, the event represented much more than a symbolic celebration. Several Burundian women living in Maine said the day is essential.

For them, it represents a valuable moment to share experiences and strengthen bonds among women.

Among the participants was Caritas Igirukwayo, who has lived in the United States since February 18, 2025. This was her second time attending the gathering. She recalled that a friend had invited her to attend the event the previous year and that the experience had deeply marked her. "International Women's Day is very important. In my country, Burundi, this day is also celebrated with great enthusiasm," she explained.

Before moving to the United States, Igirukwayo worked for the U.S. Embassy in Bujumbura, the economic capital of Burundi where the central administration, embassies, and several United Nations agencies are concentrated.

Igirukwayo noted that the day represents an important moment for women. "It is a great opportunity to come together, to exchange ideas, and to celebrate the fundamental role women play in society — within families, communities, and institutions," she said. She reflected on the differences between celebrations in Burundi and what she now experiences in the United States. "In Burundi, activities often took place within institutions or workplaces. Here, I see that the community aspect is much stronger. Women from different backgrounds gather together, and that diversity makes the event even richer."

Comparing her first participation with this year's gathering, she also noticed several

changes. "Last year I had just arrived in the community and didn't know many people. This year the atmosphere felt even more dynamic, with more participants and activities that brought a lot of joy to the evening." According to Igirukwayo, gatherings like this help strengthen relationships among women and foster a true spirit of solidarity. The diversity of participants particularly stood out to her. "It wasn't only Burundian women. There were also women from Rwanda [and] the Democratic Republic of [the] Congo, as well as American women from different cultural backgrounds. That perfectly reflects the spirit of International Women's Day," she said.

Igirukwayo also addressed some common misconceptions about the celebration. "Some people think it is simply an excuse for women to go out late or to party. But that view is too simplistic. Men should instead understand the importance of this day and support women in celebrating it." She pointed out that a year has 365 days. "If only one day is dedicated to women, it is normal that they take that moment to relax, enjoy themselves, and feel valued," she said.

However, she emphasized the importance of balancing celebration with family responsibilities.

"When women participate in these events responsibly, it strengthens trust within families and allows the celebration to take place in an atmosphere of respect and understanding."

Among the guests was Leah Hargrove, Executive Director of Ladder to the Moon Network. She said she was deeply moved by the positive energy and solidarity present in the room.

"What struck me most was seeing women from Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of [the] Congo, and also American women gathered together to celebrate their identity and strength," she said.

She noted that in some cultures it is rare to see women of all generations gather together in this way. "Sometimes we celebrate certain milestones in young girls' lives, but seeing women of all ages sharing the same space is truly special," she explained. The presence of young girls, mothers, pregnant women, and older women gave her a strong sense of hope. "Seeing all these generations together reinforces the meaning of this celebration. It gave me even more courage and pride in being a woman."

Hargrove expressed admiration for the resilience of immigrant women present at the gathering. "These women have left their countries to build new lives in the United States. Despite the challenges of immigration, language barriers, and cultural adaptation, they show incredible strength." She noted the valuable cultural richness immigrant communities bring to American society. "Events like this give me hope for the future of the United States."

Young girls were also a visible presence during the celebration. Among them was Frista Akimana, whose mother is one of the organizers. For the young participant, the experience was deeply inspiring. "It was incredible to see so many women gathered together to support the community," she said. The experience also helped her understand the importance of community engagement. "When I grow up, I want to help other women too," Akimana said.

Akimana's mother has always taught her that women often face many challenges. "That's why it's important for them to always support one another," she added. Her message to young girls is simple. "Believe in yourself, become a strong woman, and support other women."

Another participant, Stephanie Endambo, originally from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, was attending such an event in Portland for the first time. "As soon as I entered

the room, I felt a warm and welcoming atmosphere," she said.

Endambo noted that it is not always easy for immigrant women to find spaces where they can meet and freely share their experiences. "But here, only a few minutes after I arrived, several women came to greet me and welcome me. That really touched me." The atmosphere reminded her of community gatherings in her home country. "Finding that kind of atmosphere in a foreign country is very emotional," she said. According to her, gatherings like this are essential for immigrant women. "They allow us to create connections, share our stories, and support one another in our journeys in the United States."

Behind the initiative is Santiana Nzeze, founder of the Women to Women organization and the main organizer of the event. A mother of two who has lived in the United States for nine years, she actively works to create spaces of solidarity for women.

Nzeze explained that organizing the event was not easy. "The community has been going through difficult moments, and many people are still carrying trauma," she said. Initially, preparations had begun much earlier but were paused because organizers feared there might not be enough participation. "Then, a few weeks before the event, I received many calls from women asking me not to cancel it," Nzeze recalled. Some told her they needed a moment to reconnect with other women after difficult periods.

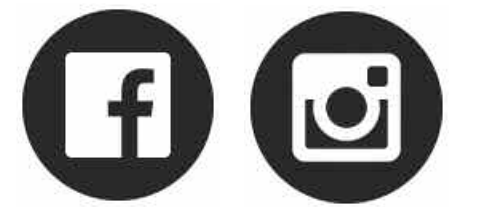
Encouraged by these messages, she decided to move forward with the event. "We only had three weeks to prepare everything. I reached out to friends, volunteers, and entrepreneurs within the community." Thanks to this collective effort and the support of local sponsors, the event was able to take place.

Among the organizers was Ninette Irabaruta, who emphasized the importance of gatherings like this in the current context. "Today, with everything happening around ICE and immigration, we saw more than a hundred people show up. For me, that is a real testament to solidarity. Even in times of crisis, people continue to come together. People need community. They want to feel free, to be together, and to support one another," she said. Irabaruta added that the presence of elders gave the event a deeper meaning. "Being able to bring the elders made this moment even more meaningful. It gave the gathering a dimension much bigger than just an event."

To the rhythm of traditional Burundian dance, participants celebrated both their culture and their solidarity. Before leaving, many participants from different backgrounds expressed the same hope: to continue strengthening these connections and to expand such initiatives to other communities.



Follow Amjambo on...



Portland protesters confront Senator Collins over ICE operations, Epstein files, and local concerns

By Raymond P. Diamond

On Friday, February 6, after 4:00 p.m., eight protesters attended a rally that gathered in the lobby of Senator Susan Collins’ Portland office at 1 Canal Plaza. The group met in the lobby before moving to the entrance of Collins’ office several floors above.

The protest was organized by the Blue Anchor Project, which describes itself as “a grassroots movement dedicated to amplifying voices, reclaiming citizen power, and holding leaders accountable through truth, transparency, and action.” The organization has previously endorsed Matt Dunlap, the Maine state auditor running for the Second Congressional District in 2026, and partners with the organizers of the national No Kings Protests. The Blue Anchor Project operates throughout the Northeast.

Facilitated by the group’s chairman, Liam Kent, the protest included residents of Portland and Hallowell. Once the group arrived at Collins’ office, the atmosphere intensified. Kent brought a condensed document containing over 15,000 physical, emailed, and mailed complaints regarding Collins’ service to deliver to her office.

Protesters knocked on the senator’s door for several minutes while awaiting a response, and were eventually greeted by one of Collins’ staffers. Collins’ Portland office is one of six throughout Maine, and the office typically has three staffers on site, according to staffer Val Kapothanasis.

During a heated 30-minute discussion, constituents raised several concerns, including Collins receiving praise from President Donald Trump, her response to the Epstein files, and her handling of Maine’s collaboration with Immigration and Customs En-

forcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP).

Amara Young criticized Collins directly: “It seems like she doesn’t care at all about the people of Maine. She refuses to answer questions from her constituents and instead has staffers write things down as opposed to having a town hall.”

Theresa Bravo shared similar concerns, expressing extreme worry about the closure of facilities such as the York County Shelter Programs and Northern Light Inland Hospital in May 2025 due to lack of funding. She also highlighted the prevalence of sexual assault in Maine, noting that while 19,000 Mainers experience sexual assault annually, only 514 cases were reported to law enforcement in 2019, according to the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

Another constituent referenced a recent ICE encounter, sharing her fear of leaving home: “I am a first-generation child of Mexican immigrant parents. I have my passport, my disabled veterans ID, and my Maine state license because I can’t walk two blocks from my house without worrying that I am going to be shot, kidnapped, or never see my husband or family in California.”

The protesters expressed frustration that, despite Collins’ January 29 tweet stating, “There are currently no ongoing or planned large-scale ICE operations [in Maine],” ICE operations and personnel remain active across the state. The meaning of “large-scale” was not explicitly clarified.

The two recurring concerns among the group were Collins’ handling of ICE and CBP operations, and the perception that she has not sufficiently advocated for the release



of the Epstein files.

When asked whether Collins’ offices across Maine have received recurring concerns from constituents, Kapothanasis responded: “All her constituents are the same in her eyes. That’s why she’s working hard every day in D.C. to take care of all our state’s issues. I’m taking these notes and relaying these messages and issues to the senator. If another person has a different issue, that is important to that person. Every single constituent is important to us.”

After the protest concluded, Young said she did not feel the group’s questions were fully addressed and referenced Kapothanasis’ statement that Collins is proud of her legacy: “If she’s so proud of her legacy, then she needs to come tell us what she’s accomplished.”

Bravo noted that attending with a group, however small, was encouraging: “A small amount of people can make a difference.” She reiterated her frustrations with hospital closures and the underreporting of sexual violence, particularly in the context of the ongoing release of the Epstein files. Overall, she felt her concerns were minimized.

Protestor David Morrill expressed disappointment that Collins was not personally present to speak with constituents, though he said he was heartened that Mainers are voicing their concerns.

Kent, reflecting on the protest, described the experience as confrontational and said he learned much about how Collins’ office responds to these types of encounters.



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— ESPAÑOL —

“¿Debería seguir usando MaineCare?”: Respuestas sobre atención médica y privacidad de datos bajo la administración Trump

Por Alex Carter

MaineCare (el programa Medicaid de Maine) ofrece atención médica gratuita y de bajo costo a los residentes de Maine. Muchos inmigrantes son elegibles para MaineCare, según sus ingresos, estatus migratorio, edad y si están embarazadas.

Los estados siempre han estado obligados a compartir ciertos datos con los Centros de Servicios de Medicare y Medicaid (CMS), la agencia federal que supervisa Medicaid (MaineCare). Estos datos incluyen información como nombres, direcciones, números de teléfono, números de Seguro Social, fecha de nacimiento, raza/etnia, categoría de cobertura de Medicaid y estatus de ciudadanía.

Anteriormente, CMS no compartía datos con el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional (DHS), que se encarga de hacer cumplir las leyes de inmigración. Sin embargo, un nuevo acuerdo de intercambio de datos entre CMS y DHS permite que algunos datos de Medicaid de personas que no residen legalmente en Estados Unidos se compartan con el Servicio de Inmigración y Control de Aduanas (ICE). Todavía hay datos que no se pueden compartir legalmente, como la información sobre ciudadanos estadounidenses, personas que residen legalmente en Estados Unidos o historiales médicos confidenciales.

Las familias necesitan evaluar obtener cobertura médica frente al posible riesgo de que su información pueda ser compartida para otros fines, incluyendo la aplicación de leyes de inmigración.

Las circunstancias de cada familia son diferentes, por lo que es importante considerar lo siguiente al tomar decisiones sobre el riesgo.

¿Ya cuenta con MaineCare?

Si ya tiene MaineCare y no se ha mudado, no hay razón para darse de baja o dejar de utilizar esos beneficios en este momento. Darse de baja no borrará sus datos de los registros de los CMS ni afectará su caso de inmigración.

¿Está pensando en solicitar MaineCare?

Si el gobierno federal aún no conoce su identidad ni su ubicación, y alguien de su familia necesita asistencia, el riesgo de presentar una solicitud podría ser diferente. Si tiene inquietudes sobre las repercusiones de su estatus migratorio, por favor comuníquese con un abogado de inmigración.

¿Pertenece a un hogar de "estatus mixto"?

Solo las personas que solicitan MaineCare deben compartir su estatus migratorio. Al completar una solicitud para MaineCare —

u otros beneficios como la Asistencia Temporal para Familias Necesitadas (TANF) o el Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria (SNAP) — usted no está obligado a proporcionar el número de Seguro Social ni el estatus migratorio de los familiares que no solicitan beneficios para sí mismos; por lo tanto, no debe incluir dicha información.

Por ejemplo, si un padre o madre solicita MaineCare para su hijo, pero no para sí mismo, no se requiere el estatus migratorio del padre o madre para la solicitud. Sin embargo, si el padre o madre (o cualquier otro miembro del hogar que no sea elegible) solicita también el programa MaineCare de Emergencia, sí deberá verificar su estatus migratorio ante el DHS.

¿Ha solicitado algún tipo de alivio migratorio?

Si el DHS ya tiene conocimiento de su presencia en los Estados Unidos y cuenta con su dirección (por ejemplo, a través de un proceso o solicitud relacionada con la inmigración), es posible que no exista un riesgo adicional al solicitar o recibir beneficios públicos como MaineCare.

¿Qué sucede si no cumpla los requisitos para recibir la cobertura completa de MaineCare?

Emergency MaineCare ayuda a los hospitales a cubrir los costos de atención médica de emergencia para aquellas personas que no cumplen los requisitos para recibir la cobertura completa de MaineCare debido a su estatus migratorio. Esto incluye a estudiantes extranjeros, titulares de visas temporales, solicitantes de asilo, titulares de la tarjeta de residencia permanente (Green Card) sujetos a la restricción de los cinco años, y personas que no se encuentran legalmente presentes en los Estados Unidos. La información que se comparte con el gobierno federal incluye el hecho de que una persona es elegible únicamente para Emergency MaineCare, pero no revela el estatus migratorio exacto de dicha persona.

No es necesario que revele su estatus migratorio en la solicitud de Emergency MaineCare. Usted tiene derecho a negarse a solicitar Emergency Medicaid y, aun así, recibir tratamiento; sin embargo, podría recibir facturas por cualquier atención médica que reciba sin cobertura.

Elección individual y evaluación de riesgos

Solo usted puede decidir qué es lo mejor para usted y su familia en lo que respecta a compartir su información con el gobierno.

Recuerde: el DHHS de Maine no realiza visitas domiciliarias sin previo aviso. Si necesita ponerse en contacto con el DHHS

en relación con su cobertura de MaineCare, llame al 1-855-797-4357.

Nuestro sistema médico se fundamenta en el principio de "no hacer daño". Esto implica brindar atención a las personas enfermas, independientemente de su lugar de nacimiento o de su capacidad de pago, así como salvaguardar la seguridad y la privacidad de los pacientes. No podemos permitir que nuestro sistema de salud ni nuestros programas esenciales de beneficios públicos sean utilizados indebidamente en el marco de la peligrosa y caótica agenda migratoria de la administración Trump.

— IKINYARWANDA —

“Ese nshobora gukomeza gukoresha MaineCare?": ibisubizo by'ibibazo birebana n'ubufasha mu buvuzi no kurinda amakuru mu buyobozi bwa Trump

Inkuru ya Alex Carter

MaineCare (gahunda y'ubufasha mu buvuzi ya Maine) itanga ubuvuzi bw'ubuntu cyangwa se buhendutse ku bantu muri Maine. Benshi mu bimukira bemerewe MaineCare, hagendewe ku mutungo binjiza, sitati yabo y'ubwimukira, ndetse no kuba wenda umuntu atwite.

Za Leta zakomeje gusabwa gusangiza amwe mu makuru urwego rushinzwe serivise za Medicaid na Medicare (CMS), urwego rw'igihugu rushinzwe kureberera Medicaid (MaineCare). Muri ayo makuru twavugaga nk'amazina, aho umuntu atuye, numero ya telefone, umubare uranga umuntu, itariki y'amavuko, ubwoko, ikiciro cy'ubwishingizi bwa Medicaid, ndetse na sitati y'ubwenegihugu.

Mu bihe byashize, CMS ntabwo yasangizaga amakuru minisiteri ishinzwe umutekano mu gihugu (DHS), urwego rukurikirana iyubahirizwa ry'amategako agenga abimukira. Cyakora, amasezerano mashya ajyanye no guhererekanya amakuru hagati ya CMS na DHS yemera ko amwe mu makuru ya Medicaid y'abantu batuye muri Amerika mu buryo butemewe n'amategako yasangizwa urwego rushinzwe abimukira n'umutekano w'imipaka (ICE). Kugeza ubu hari amwe mu makuru atasangizwa mu buryo bwemewe n'amategako, nk'amakuru y'abenegihugu ba Amerika, abantu batuye muri U.S. mu buryo bwemewe n'amategako, cyangwa se amakuru y'ibanga mu by'ubuzima.

Imiryango igomba gushyira kumunzani ikagereranya ingaruka ziri mu gufata ub-

wishingizi bw'ubuzima ndetse n'ibyago byo kuba amakuru yabo ashobora gutangwa ku zindi mpamvu, harimo n'iz'iyubahirizwa ry'amategako agenga abimukira.

Buri muyango ubayeho bitandukanye n'undi. Niyo mpamvu umuntu akwiye kwita ku bikurikira igihe afata icyemezo:

Ese usanzwe ufite MaineCare?

Niba usanzwe ufite MaineCare kandi ukaba utarimutse, nta mpamvu yo guhagarika cyangwa ngo ureke gukoresha ubwo bufasha muri iki gihe. Guhagarika kubukoresha ntabwo bizasiba amakuru mu bubiko bwa CMS cyangwa ngo agire ingaruka kuri disoye yawe y'ubwimukira.

Waba uteganya gusaba MaineCare?

Niba guverinoma y'igihugu idasanzwe izi umwirondoro wawe ndetse n'aho utuye kandi umwe mu bagize umuryango wawe akaba akeneye ubufasha, ingaruka zo gusaba zabitandukanye. Niba ufite impungenge kuri sitati yawe y'ubwimukira, twakugira inama yo kuvugana n'impuguke mu mategeko areba abimukira.

Ese uri mu muyango ufite "sitati zivanze"?

Abantu bari gusaba MaineCare ni bo gusa basabwa kugaragaza sitati zabo z'ubwimukira. Igihe wuzura ifishi isaba MaineCare, cyangwa se ubundi bufasha nk'ubw'igihe gito buhabwa imiryango ibukeneye (TANF) cyangwa se inkunga y'inyongera mu mirire (SNAP), ntabwo usabwa kugaragaza umubare ukuranga, cyangwa sitati yawe y'ubwimukira y'abagize umuryango batari gushaka ubufasha ku bwabo, ndetse ntabwo ukwiye gushyiramo ayo makuru.

Urugero, nk'igihe umubyeyi ari gusaba MaineCare ayisabira umwana ariko we ntayo yisabira, sitati y'umubyeyi ntabwo ikenewe mu busabe. Cyakora igihe umubyeyi cyangwa undi ugize umuryango ariko utabyemerewe nawe ari gusaba nka MaineCare y'ingoboka, nabo bazasabwa kugaragaza sitati yabo y'ubwimukira muri DHS.

Ese wasabye ubufasha mu by'ubwimukira?

Niba DHS isanzwe izi ko uri muri U.S. ndetse ikaba ifite aderese yawe (wenda bayikuye mu rugendo rwo gushaka ibyangombwa byo gutura cyangwa mu busabe), birashoboka ko nta ngaruka zindi zaturuka mu gusaba cyangwa kwakira ubufasha nka MaineCare.

Bizagenda gute niba ntemerewe MaineCare mu buryo bwuzuye?

MaineCare y'ingoboka ifasha ibitaro kwishyura ubuvuzi bwihutirwa ku bantu batemerewe MaineCare mu buryo bwuzuye, bitewe na sitati zabo z'ubwimukira. Muri aba harimo abanyeshuri b'abanyamahanga, abafite viza z'igihe kidahoraho, abashaka ubuhungiro, abafite green cards zimara imyaka itanu, ndetse n'abantu bari muri U.S. mu buryo butemewe n'amategako. Amakuru asangizwa ubuyobozi bw'igihugu akubiyemo ibyerekana ko umuntu yemerewe gusa MaineCare y'ingoboka, ariko ntabwo harimo arebana na sitati y'ubwimukira y'umuntu.

Ntabwo ukeneye kugaragaza sitati yawe y'ubwimukira igihe usaba MaineCare y'ingoboka. Ufite uburenganzira bwo guhakana gusaba Medicaid y'ingoboka kandi ukavurwa, cyakora ushobora kuzoherezwa fagitire ku



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buvuzi bwose wakorewe udafite ubwishingizi.

Amahitamo ya muntu no kugenzura ingaruka

Ni wowe gusa wahitamo ikikubereye yaba wowe cyangwa umuryango wawe igihe utekereza ku bijyanye no gusangiza amakuru yawe guverinoma.

Ibuka: DHHS ya MaineCare ntabwo bahamagara abantu batabamenyesheje mbere. Niba ushaka kuvugana na DHHS ku bijyanye na MaineCare, hamagara 1-855-797-4357.

Sisiteme y’ubuvuzi yacu ishingiyeye ku ihame ry’uko tutagomba “guhungabanya.” Ibi bivuze kwita ku bantu barwaye, hatitawe aho bavukiye ndetse n’ubushobozi bwabo bwo kwishyura, ndetse no kurindira umutekano n’ibanga abarwayi. Ntabwo twakwemera ko urwego rw’ubuzima ndetse n’inzego z’ingenzi zitanga ubufasha gukore-shwa nabi ububasha muri gahunda ziteje akaga n’imidugararo zireba abimukira muri iki gihe cy’ubuyobozi bwa Trump.

— KISWAHILI —
“Je, Bado Ninapaswa Kutumia MaineCare?": Kujibu maswali kuhusu huduma za afya na faragha ya data chini ya utawala wa Trump

Na Alex Carter

MaineCare (mpango wa Medicaid wa Maine) hutoa huduma za afya kwa bure na kwa gharama nafuu kwa watu wa Maine. Wahamiaji wengi wanastahiki MaineCare, kulingana na mapato yao, hali ya uhamiaji, umri, na kama wako wajawazito.

Majimbo yamekuwa yakihitajika kila mara kushiriki takwimu au taarafa fulani na Kituo cha Medicare na Medicaid Services (CMS), shirika la shirikisho linalosimamia Medicaid (MaineCare). Data hii inajumuisha taarifa kama jina, anuani, nambari za simu, nambari za Social Security, tarehe ya kuza-liwa, rangi/utamaaji, daraja la bima ya Medicaid, na hali ya uraia.

Hapo awali, CMS haikushiriki taarifa na Idara ya Usalama wa Nyumbani (DHS), ambayo inatekeleza sheria za uhamiaji. Hata hivyo, makubaliano mapya ya kushiriki data kati ya CMS na DHS yanaruhusu baadhi ya taarifa za Medicaid kutoka kwa watu ambao hawako kwa Sheria za kisheria Marekani kushirikishwa na Idara ya Uhamiaji na Usimamizi wa Vifaa (ICE). Baadhi ya taarifa bado haiwezi kushirikishwa kisheria, ikijumuisha taarifa kuhusu raia wa Marekani, watu ambao wako kwa Sheria za kisheria Marekani, au rekodi nyeti za matibabu.

Familia zinapaswa kuzingatia kupata bima ya afya dhidi ya hatari inayowezekana kwamba taarifa zao sasa zinaweza kushirikishwa kwa madhumuni mengine, ikiwemo utekelezaji wa sheria za uhamiaji.

Hali za kila familia ni tofauti, kwa hivyo ni muhimu kuzingatia yafuatayo wakati wa kuamua kuhusu hatari.

Je, tayari una MaineCare?

Kama tayari una MaineCare na huja-hamia, hakuna sababu ya kuondoa au kuacha kutumia faida hizo kwa sasa. Kuondoa hakutaondoa data zako kutoka kwenye rekodi za CMS au kuathiri kesi yako ya uraia.

Je, unafikiria kuomba MaineCare?

Kama serikali ya shirikisho bado haijui utambulisho wako na eneo ulipo na mtu kutoka familia yako anahitaji msaada, hatari ya kuomba inaweza kuwa tofauti. Ikiwa una wasiwasi kuhusu athari za hali yako ya uraia, tafadhali wasiliana na wakili wa uraia.

Je, unaishi katika nyumba yenye 'hali mchanganyiko'?

Ni watu pekee wanaoiomba MaineCare ndio wanahitaji kuwashirikisha hali yao ya uhamiaji. Wakati wa kujaza maombi ya MaineCare, au faida nyingine kama Msaada wa Muda kwa Familia Zenye Mahitaji (TANF) au Mpango wa Nyongeza ya Lishe (SNAP), huna wajibu wa kutoa Nambari ya Usalama wa Jamii au hali ya uhamiaji ya wanachama wa familia ambao hawatai faida kwao wenyewe, na haupaswi kujumuisha taarifa hiyo.

Kwa mfano, ikiwa mzazi anaiomba MaineCare kwa ajili ya mtoto wake lakini si kwa ajili yake, hali ya uhamiaji ya mzazi haidingwi kwa maombi. Hata hivyo, ikiwa mzazi au mwanakaya ambaye hawezi kupata faida pia anaomba MaineCare ya Dharura, wanapaswa kuthibitisha hali yao ya uhamiaji na DHS.

Je, umekuwa umeomba msaada wa uhamiaji?

Ikiwa DHS tayari inafahamu uwepo wako Marekani na ina anwani yako (kama ilivyo kutokana na mchakato au maombi yanayohusiana na uhamiaji), huenda hakiweki hatari zaidi kwa kuomba au kupokea manufaa ya umma kama MaineCare.

Je, nitakuwa na nini kama sifikii vigezo vya MaineCare ya kikamilifu?

MaineCare ya Dharura husaidia hospitali kulipia huduma za dharura kwa watu ambao hawafiki vigezo vya MaineCare ya kikamilifu kutokana na hali yao ya uhamiaji. Hii inajumuisha wanafunzi wa kigeni,

wamiliki wa visa za muda mfupi, wanaotafuta hifadhi, wamiliki wa kadi ya kijani walio chini ya kizuizi cha miaka mitano, na watu ambao si wa kisheria nchini Marekani. Mlolongo wa habari ulioshirikiwa na serikali ya shirikisho unajumuisha kwamba mtu anastahiki MaineCare ya Dharura tu, lakini haujumuishi hali halisi ya uhamiaji ya mtu huyo.

Huhitaji kufichua hali yako ya uhamiaji kwenye maombi ya MaineCare ya Dharura. Una haki ya kukataa kuomba Medicaid ya Dharura na bado upate matibabu, lakini unaweza kupokea ankara kwa huduma yoyote ya matibabu unayopokea bila bima.

Uchaguzi wa kibinafsi na tathmini ya hatari

Wewe pekee ndio unaweza kuamua ni nini ni bora kwako na kwa familia yako linapokuja suala la kushiriki taarifa zako na serikali.

Kumbuka: Maine DHHS haiundi ziara za makazi bila kutangazwa. Ikiwa unahitaji kuwasiliana na DHHS kuhusu MaineCare yako, piga 1-855-797-4357.

Mfumo wetu wa tiba umejengwa kuzunguka wazo la kwamba tunapaswa “kusiweke mtu hatarini.” Hii inamaanisha kutunza watu wagonjwa, bila kujali walizaliwa wapi au uwezo wao wa kulipia, na kulinda usalama na faragha ya wagonjwa. Hatuwezi kuruhusu mfumo wetu wa afya au pro-

gramu muhimu za manufaa ya umma kutumika vibaya katika sera hatari na zisizo na mpangilio za uhamiaji za utawala wa Trump.

— PORTUGUÊS —
"Devo continuar a usar o MaineCare?": Responder a perguntas sobre cuidados de saúde e privacidade de dados durante a administração Trump

Por Alex Carter

O MaineCare (programa de Medicaid do Maine) oferece cobertura de saúde gratuita ou de baixo custo para residentes do estado. Muitos imigrantes são elegíveis para o MaineCare, dependendo da sua renda, estatuto migratório, idade ou estado de gravidez.

Os estados têm a obrigatoriedade de partilhar dados específicos com os Centros de Serviços de Medicare e Medicaid (CMS), a agência federal responsável pela supervisão do Medicaid (conhecido no Maine como MaineCare). Estes dados abrangem informações sensíveis, tais como: nome completo, morada, contactos telefónicos, número de Segurança Social, data de nascimento, raça/etnia, categoria de elegibilidade e estatuto de cidadania.

Historicamente, o CMS (Centros de Serviços Medicare e Medicaid) não partilhava informações com o Departamento de Segurança Interna (DHS), órgão responsável pela aplicação das leis de imigração. Contudo, um novo acordo de partilha de dados entre ambas as agências permite agora que determinados dados do Medicaid, relativos a indivíduos em situação irregular nos Estados Unidos, sejam facultados ao Serviço de Imigração e Alfândega (ICE). É importante ressaltar que permanecem salvaguardados por lei os dados de cidadãos norte-americanos e de residentes legais, bem como registos médicos confidenciais, que não podem ser partilhados.

Ao procurar cobertura de saúde, as famílias devem avaliar cuidadosamente a proteção dos seus dados, perante o receio de que as informações possam ser partilhadas para fins de fiscalização migratória.

Como a situação de cada núcleo familiar é única, é fundamental considerar os seguintes fatores ao avaliar potenciais riscos: **Já tens o MaineCare?**

Se você já tem o MaineCare e continua a residir no estado, não há motivo para cancelar ou deixar de utilizar os seus benefícios. O cancelamento não apagará o seu histórico nos registos do CMS (Centros de Serviços Medicare e Medicaid), nem terá qualquer impacto no seu processo de imigração.

Está a pensar candidatar-se ao MaineCare?

Caso o governo federal ainda não tenha conhecimento da sua identidade ou localização, e algum membro da sua família necessite de assistência, os riscos ao solicitar apoio podem variar. Se tiver dúvidas sobre como o seu estatuto migratório pode ser afetado, recomendamos que contacte um advogado especializado em imigração.

Vives num agregado familiar de "estatuto misto"?

Apenas as pessoas que solicitam a cobertura do MaineCare precisam de declarar o seu estatuto de imigração. Ao candidatar-se ao MaineCare, TANF ou SNAP, não é obrigatório (e não deve) fornecer o Número de Segurança Social ou o estatuto de imigração de familiares que não estejam a solicitar benefícios para si próprios. A sua privacidade é protegida por lei.

Por exemplo, se um progenitor estiver a solicitar o MaineCare para um filho, mas não para si próprio, não é necessário declarar o seu estatuto migratório no formulário. Contudo, se esse progenitor ou outro membro do agregado familiar (ainda que inelegível para o plano completo) solicitar o Emergency MaineCare, o seu estatuto de imigração terá de ser verificado junto do DHS.

Já pediste alívio de imigração?

Caso o Departamento de Segurança Interna (DHS) já tenha conhecimento da sua presença nos Estados Unidos e possua o seu endereço atualizado (devido a um processo ou petição de imigração em curso), a solicitação ou o recebimento de benefícios públicos, como o MaineCare, poderá não acarretar riscos adicionais à sua situação migratória.

E se eu não tiver direito ao MaineCare completo?

O Emergency MaineCare auxilia os hospitais no custeio de cuidados médicos de emergência para indivíduos que não se qualificam para a cobertura completa do MaineCare devido ao seu estatuto migratório. Esta assistência abrange estudantes internacionais, portadores de vistos temporários, requerentes de asilo, detentores de "Green Card" sujeitos ao período de carência de cinco anos e pessoas indocumentadas. É importante ressaltar que as informações partilhadas com o governo federal confirmam apenas a elegibilidade para o serviço de emergência, sem divulgar o estatuto migratório específico do paciente.

Não é necessário declarar o seu estatuto de imigração ao solicitar o MaineCare de Emergência. Tem o direito de recusar a cobertura do Medicaid de Emergência e receber tratamento; no entanto, sem essa cobertura, será responsável pelo pagamento de quaisquer faturas médicas resultantes dos cuidados recebidos.

Escolha individual e avaliação de risco

A decisão de partilhar informações com as autoridades cabe exclusivamente a si, visando o que é melhor para a sua família.

É fundamental saber que o DHHS do Maine não realiza visitas domiciliárias sem aviso prévio. Caso necessite de tratar de assuntos relacionados com o seu MaineCare, utilize apenas o canal oficial: 1-855-797-4357.

O nosso sistema de saúde rege-se pelo princípio de "não causar dano". Isto significa prestar assistência a todos, independentemente da origem ou capacidade financeira, protegendo sempre a privacidade do paciente. Rejeitamos qualquer tentativa de utilizar programas de benefícios públicos como ferramentas de políticas de imigração que ponham em risco a segurança da nossa comunidade.

— SOMALI —
"Miyaan wali isticmaalaa MaineCare?": Ka jawaabista su'aalaha ku saabsan daryeelka caafimaadka iyo xogta gaarka ah ee hoos timaada maamulka Trump

Waxaa qoray Alex Carter

MaineCare (barnaamijka Medicaid ee Maine) waxa uu dadka Maine siiya daryeel caafimaad oo bilaash ah oo jaban. Soo galooti badan ayaa xaq u leh MaineCare, iyadoo ku xiran dakhligooda, xaaladda socdaalka, da'da, iyo haddii ay uur leeyihiin.

Dawladda ayaa had iyo jeer looga baahan yahay inay xogta qaar la wadaagaan Xarumaha Medicare iyo Adeegyada Medicaid (CMS), wakaalada federaalka ee kormeerta Medicaid (MaineCare). Xogtan waxaa ku jira macluumaadka sida magacyada, ciwaanada, nambarada telefoonka, nambarada Social Security, taariikhda dhalashada, jinsiyadda, nooca caymiska Medicaid, iyo heerka dha-

lashada.

Waagii hore, CMS lama wadaagin xogta Waaxda Amniga Gudaha (DHS), taasoo fulisa sharciyada socdaalka. Si kastaba ha ahaatee, heshiiska xog wadaagga cusub ee u dhexeeya CMS iyo DHS waxa uu ogo-laanaayaa in qaar ka mid ah xogta Medicaid ee dadka aan si sharci ah u degaanaayn Maraykanka in lala wadaago Socdaalka iyo Dhaqangelinta Kastamada (ICE). Xogta qaar wali si sharci ah looma wadaagi karo, oo ay ku jiraan macluumaadka ku saabsan muwaadiniinta Mareykanka, dadka sida sharciga ah u degan Mareykanka, ama diiwaannada caafimaadka xasaasiga ah.

Qoysasku waxay u baahan yihiin inay miisaamiyaan helitaanka caymiska daryeelka caafimaadka khatarta suurtagalka ah ee laga yaabo in macluumaadkooda hadda loo wadaago ujeedooyin kale, oo ay ku jirto xoojinta socdaalka.

Qoys kasta xaaladiisu way kala duwan tahay, markaa waa muhiim inaad tixgeliso kuwan soo socda markaad go'aansanayso khatarta.

Horay ma u haysataa MaineCare?

Haddii aad hore u lahayd MaineCare oo aanad guurin, ma jirto sabab aad uga noqoto ama aad u joojiso isticmaalka faa'iidooyinkaas markan. Ka-saariddu kama tirtiri doonto xogtaada diiwaannada CMS ama saamayn kuma yeelanayso kiiskaaga socdaalka.

Ma ku fakaraysaa inaad codsato MaineCare?

Haddi dawlada federaalku aanay hore u garanayn aqoonsigaaga iyo goobtaada oo qof qoyskaaga ka tirsan uu u baahan yahay caawimo, khatarta dalbashada way ka duwanaan kartaa. Haddii aad walaac ka qabto saamaynta xaaladdaada socdaalka, fadlan la xidhiidh qareen socdaalka.

Ma ku jirtaa guri "isku dhaf ah"?

Kaliya dadka codsanaya MaineCare ayaa u baahan inay wadaagaan xaaladdooda socdaalka. Markaad buuxinayso codsiga MaineCare, ama faa'iidooyinka kale sida Kaalmada Ku-meel-gaadhka ah ee Qoysaska Baahan (TANF) ama Barnaamijka Kaalmada Nafaqada ee Dheeraadka ah (SNAP), lagaagama baahna inaad bixiso Lambarka Bulshada ama xaaladda socdaalka ee xubnaha qoyska ee aan naftooda u raadin dheefaha, waana inaad ku darin macluumaadkaas.

Tusaale ahaan, haddii waalidku u codsanayo MaineCare ilmahooda balse aanu naftooda u codsanayn, xaaladda socdaalka waalidka looma baahna codsiga. Si kastaba ha ahaatee, haddii waalidka ama xubinta qoyska ee aan u qalmin uu sidoo kale codsanayo Emergency MaineCare, waxay u baahan yihiin inay DHS ku caddeeyaan xaaladdooda socdaalka.

Ma codsatay gargaarka socdaalka?

Haddii DHS ay horeba uga warqabtay joogitaankaaga Maraykanka oo ay haysato ciwaankaaga (sida habka socdaalka ama codsiga), waxaa laga yaabaa inaanay jirin khatar dheeraad ah oo lagu codsado ama lagu helo dheefaha dadweynaha sida MaineCare.

Maxaa dhacaya haddii aanan u qalmin MaineCare buuxa?

Emergency MaineCare waxay ka caawisaa isbitaalada inay bixiyaan kharashka daryeelka caafimaadka degdega ah ee loogu ta-

lagalay dadka aan u qalmin MaineCare baaxadda weyn sababtoo ah xaaladdooda socdaalka. Tan waxa ku jira ardayda ajnabiga ah, kuwa haysta fiisaha ku meel gaadhka ah, magangalyo doonka, dadka haysta kaarka cagaaran ee shanta sano ah, iyo dadka aan si sharci ah u joogin Maraykanka. Macluumaadka lala wadaago dawladda dhexe waxaa ka mid ah xaqiiqda ah in qof uu xaq u leeyahay oo keliya Gurmadka MaineCare, laakiin kuma jiraan xaaladda socdaalka ee qofka.

Uma baahnid inaad ku shaaciso xaaladaada socdaalka codsiga Emergency MaineCare. Waxaad xaq u leedahay inaad diido inaad codsato Medicaid degdeg ah oo aad weli hesho daawayn, laakiin waxa laga yaabaa inaad hesho biilasha daryeel kasta oo caafimaad oo aad hesho caymis la'aan.

Doorashada shakhsi ahaaneed iyo qiimeynta khatarta

Adiga kaliya ayaa go'aamin kara waxa adiga iyo qoyskaaga u fiican marka ay timaaddo la wadaagida macluumaadkaaga dawladda.

Xasuusnoow: Maine DHHS ma sameysyo wicitaano guri oo aan la ogeysiin. Haddii aad u baahan tahay inaad kala xidhiidho DHHS wixii ku saabsan MaineCare, wac 1-855-797-4357.

Nidaamkeena caafimaad waxaa lagu dhisay fikradda ah inaan "wax dhib ah u geysan." Tani waxay ka dhigan tahay daryeelka dadka buka, iyada oo aan loo eegayn meesha ay ku dhasheen ama waxa ay awood u leeyihiin in ay bixiyaan, iyo ilaalinta badbaadada iyo sirnimada bukaanka. Ma ogo laan karno nidaamkayaga daryeelka caafimaadka ama barnaamijyada faa'iidada dadweynaha ee muhiimka ah in si khaldan loogu isticmaalo ajendaha socdaalka ee khatarta iyo qaska leh ee maamulka Trump.

— FRANÇAIS —

« Dois-je continuer à utiliser MaineCare ? » : Réponses aux questions sur les soins de santé et la confidentialité des données sous l'administration Trump

Par Alex Carter

MaineCare (le programme Medicaid du Maine) offre des soins de santé gratuits ou à faible coût aux habitants du Maine. De nombreux immigrants peuvent bénéficier de MaineCare, en fonction de leurs revenus, de leur statut d'immigration, de leur âge et selon le fait que les femmes soient enceintes ou non.

Les États ont toujours été tenus de communiquer certaines données aux Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), l'agence fédérale chargée de superviser Medicaid (MaineCare). Ces données comprennent des informations telles que les noms, adresses, numéros de téléphone, numéros de sécurité sociale, dates de naissance, origines ethniques, catégorie de couverture Medicaid et statut de citoyen neté.

Par le passé, les CMS ne partageaient pas de données avec le Département de la sécurité intérieure (DHS), qui est chargé de faire respecter les lois sur l'immigration. Cepen-

dant, un nouvel accord de partage de données entre les CMS et le DHS permet de transmettre certaines données Medicaid concernant des personnes qui ne résident pas légalement aux États-Unis à l'Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Certaines données ne peuvent toujours pas être légalement partagées, notamment les informations concernant les citoyens américains, les personnes résidant légalement aux États-Unis ou les dossiers médicaux sensibles.

Les familles doivent mettre en balance l'accès à une couverture santé et le risque éventuel que leurs données soient désormais partagées à d'autres fins, notamment dans le cadre de l'application des lois sur l'immigration.

La situation de chaque famille étant différente, il est important de tenir compte des éléments suivants avant de se prononcer sur ce risque.

Bénéficiez-vous déjà du programme MaineCare ?

Si vous bénéficiez déjà de MaineCare et que vous n'avez pas déménagé, il n'y a aucune raison de vous désinscrire ou de cesser d'utiliser ces services à ce stade. Une désinscription n'effacera pas vos données des registres du CMS et n'aura aucune incidence sur votre dossier d'immigration.

Envisagez-vous de faire une demande d'adhésion à MaineCare ?

Si le gouvernement fédéral ne connaît pas encore votre identité ni votre lieu de résidence et qu'un membre de votre famille a besoin d'aide, les risques liés à une demande peuvent être différents. Si vous vous inquiétez à propos des conséquences de votre statut d'immigration, veuillez contacter un avocat spécialisé en droit de l'immigration.

Faites-vous partie d'un foyer à « statuts mixtes » ?

Seules les personnes qui font une demande de MaineCare doivent indiquer leur statut d'immigration. Lorsque vous remplissez une demande pour MaineCare ou pour autres services tels que l'aide temporaire aux familles dans le besoin (TANF) ou le programme d'aide alimentaire supplémentaire (SNAP), vous n'êtes pas tenu de fournir le numéro de sécurité sociale ou le statut d'immigration des membres de votre famille qui ne demandent pas de prestations pour eux-mêmes, et vous ne devez pas inclure ces informations.

Par exemple, si un parent fait une demande de MaineCare pour son enfant mais pas pour lui-même, son statut d'immigration n'est pas nécessaire pour la demande. Cependant, si le parent ou le membre du foyer non éligible fait également une demande d'Emergency MaineCare, il doit alors faire vérifier son statut d'immigration auprès du DHS.

Avez-vous déposé une demande d'aide en matière d'immigration ?

Si le DHS a déjà connaissance de votre présence aux États-Unis et dispose de votre adresse (par exemple, à la suite d'une procédure ou d'une demande liée à l'immigration), le fait de demander ou de bénéficier de prestations sociales telles que MaineCare ne devrait pas présenter de risque supplémentaire.

Que se passe-t-il si je ne remplis pas les conditions requises pour bénéficier du programme complet de MaineCare ?

Le programme Emergency MaineCare aide les hôpitaux à prendre en charge les soins médicaux d'urgence pour les person-

nes qui ne sont pas éligibles au programme MaineCare complet en raison de leur statut d'immigration. Cela inclut les étudiants étrangers, les titulaires de visas temporaires, les demandeurs d'asile, les titulaires de carte verte soumis à l'interdiction de cinq ans et les personnes qui ne sont pas en situation régulière aux États-Unis. Les informations communiquées au gouvernement fédéral indiquent qu'une personne n'est éligible qu'au programme Emergency MaineCare, mais ne précisent pas son statut d'immigration exact.

Vous n'êtes pas tenu de divulguer votre statut d'immigration dans une demande d'aide d'urgence MaineCare. Vous avez le droit de refuser de faire une demande d'aide d'urgence Medicaid tout en bénéficiant d'un traitement, mais vous risquez de recevoir des factures pour les soins médicaux reçus sans couverture.

Choix individuel et évaluation des risques

Vous seul pouvez décider de ce qui est le mieux pour vous et votre famille en matière de partage de vos informations avec les autorités.

N'oubliez pas : le DHHS du Maine n'effectue pas de visites à domicile sans prévenir. Si vous devez contacter le DHHS au sujet de votre MaineCare, appelez le 1-855-797-4357.

Notre système médical repose sur le principe de « ne pas nuire ». Cela signifie prendre soin des personnes malades, quel que soit leur lieu de naissance ou leur capacité à payer, et garantir la sécurité et la confidentialité des patients. Nous ne pouvons pas permettre que notre système de santé ou nos programmes publics essentiels soient détournés au profit du programme d'immigration dangereux et chaotique de l'administration Trump.

— ENGLISH —

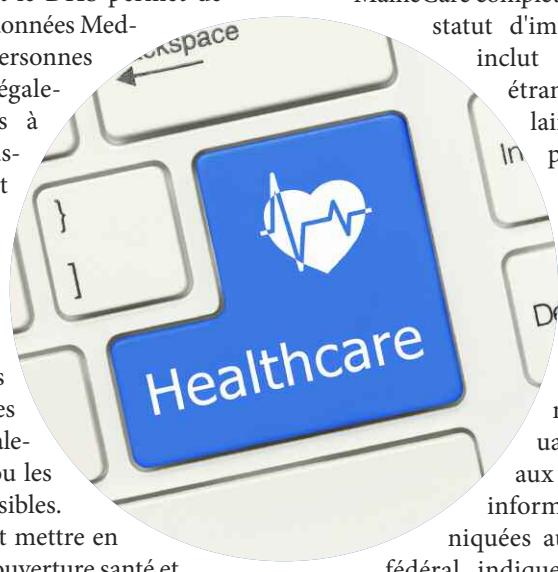
“Should I still use MaineCare?”: Answering questions about health care and data privacy under the Trump administration

By Alex Carter

MaineCare (Maine's Medicaid program) provides free and low-cost healthcare to people in Maine. Many immigrants are eligible for MaineCare, depending on their income, immigration status, age, and whether they are pregnant.

States have always been required to share certain data with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency that oversees Medicaid (MaineCare). This data includes information like names, addresses, phone numbers, Social Security numbers, date of birth, race/ethnicity, Medicaid coverage category, and citizenship status.

In the past, CMS did not share data with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), which enforces immigration laws. However, a new data-sharing agreement between CMS and DHS allows some Medicaid data from people who are not lawfully resid-



ing in the United States to be shared with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Some data still cannot lawfully be shared, including information about U.S. citizens, people who are lawfully residing in the United States, or sensitive medical records.

Families need to weigh getting healthcare coverage against the possible risk that their information may now be shared for other purposes, including immigration enforcement.

Every family’s circumstances are different, so it’s important to consider the following when deciding about risk.

Do you already have MaineCare?

If you already have MaineCare and have not moved, there is no reason to withdraw or stop using those benefits at this point. Withdrawing will not erase your data from CMS records or impact your immigration case.

Are you thinking of applying for MaineCare?

If the federal government does not already know your identity and location and someone in your family needs assistance, the risk of applying may be different. If you have concerns about the impacts of your immigration status, please contact an immigration attorney.

Are you in a “mixed status” household?

Only people who are applying for

MaineCare need to share their immigration status. When completing an application for MaineCare, or other benefits like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), you are not required to provide the Social Security Number or immigration status of family members who are not seeking benefits for themselves, and you should not include that information.

For example, if a parent is applying for MaineCare for their child but not for themselves, the parent’s immigration status is not needed for the application. However, if the parent or ineligible household member is also applying for Emergency MaineCare, they do need to verify their immigration status with DHS.

Have you applied for immigration relief?

If DHS is already aware of your presence

in the United States and has your address (such as from an immigration-related process or application), there may not be an additional risk to applying for or receiving public benefits like MaineCare.

What if I don’t qualify for full MaineCare?

Emergency MaineCare helps hospitals pay for emergency medical care for people who do not qualify for full-scope MaineCare due to their immigration status. This includes foreign students, temporary visa holders, asylum seekers, green card holders subject to the five-year bar, and people who are not lawfully present in the United States. Information shared with the federal government does include the fact that someone is only eligible for Emergency MaineCare, but does not include a person’s exact immigration status.

You do not need to disclose your immigration status on an Emergency MaineCare application. You have the right to decline to apply for Emergency Medicaid and still get treatment, but you may receive bills for any medical care you receive without coverage.

Individual choice and risk assessment

Only you can decide what’s best for you

and your family when it comes to sharing your information with the government.

Remember: Maine DHHS does not make house calls unannounced. If you need to get in touch with DHHS about your MaineCare, call 1-855-797-4357.

Our medical system is built around the idea that we should “do no harm.” This means caring for people who are sick, no matter where they were born or what their ability is to pay, and safeguarding patients’ safety and privacy. We cannot allow our healthcare system or essential public benefit programs to be misused in the Trump administration’s dangerous and chaotic immigration agenda.

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Bringing healthcare to Maine’s fields and waters: *How the Maine Mobile Health Program supports seasonal workers* By Amy Harris

For 40 years, the Maine Mobile Health Program (MMHP) has brought healthcare directly to Maine’s agriculture and aquaculture workers and their families. Describing themselves as a “community healthcare center on wheels,” MMHP provides care at a time and place that is convenient for its patients. According to Medical Director Dr. Demetri Blanas, MMHP is “truly the way healthcare should be,” because it meets people where they are.

Providing care to seasonal workers is challenging. The World Health Organization notes that migrant and seasonal workers often experience isolation, frequent relocations, and limited access to consistent health care. These experiences make it difficult to maintain medical records or follow treatment plans. MMHP addresses these challenges with four mobile medical units, three behavioral health vans, and a multispecialty team of providers, traveling across Maine to support workers during blueberry, apple, egg, Christmas tree, tree-planting, and broccoli harvests, as well as year-round dairy, aquaculture, and seafood processing jobs.

CEO Amelia Rukema highlighted the program’s impact: “The model we have works wonders. It is really the closest thing to health equity in action that I have seen in this country. We meet people’s needs where they are, eliminate barriers, and provide quality care at low or no cost.”

Eligibility is simple: patients must currently work — or have worked in the past 24 months — in agriculture or seafood processing. MMHP is federally funded as a federally qualified health care center. Workers interested in care can contact MMHP or ask their employers whether the program visits their worksites.

Healthcare services include treatment for workplace injuries, vaccinations, screenings, and management of chronic conditions such

as diabetes and hypertension. The backbone of MMHP consists of 40 part-time doctors, eight nurses, one full-time nurse clinical coordinator, and eight year-round community health workers. During peak seasons, the program hires six additional community health workers to support its operations. As clinical coordinator Harden Wisebram noted, “Community health workers are integral to our work — providing transportation, coordination, translation, and, most importantly, care and respect for patients.”

Trust and relationships are central to MMHP’s success. Workers often notify MMHP when they arrive in Maine, eager to schedule visits. “We usually hear from migrant patients as soon as they arrive at a farm and want to know when we can come out,” Rukema explained.

Dr. Blanas, who has been with MMHP since 2019, said he values being part of a “dedicated team of passionate healthcare providers who make it all possible.”

Beyond mobile medical care, MMHP helps patients access specialists, coordinates care at future worksites, and helps secure prescriptions. Partnering with more than 50 local providers, the program ensures clients receive care at low or no cost. MMHP also collaborates with the Migrant Clinicians Network to manage ongoing healthcare needs.

MMHP’s holistic approach extends beyond medicine. Staff assist clients with access to healthy food, safe housing, and winter clothing. Coordinating “warm hand-offs” to organizations such as Mano en Mano, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Immigrant Legal Advocacy Project, Preble Street,



and Maine Needs, MMHP integrates interpreters and community health workers to meet broader needs.

Health education is a cornerstone of MMHP’s model. Workers learn about heat stress, pesticide safety, and disease management. Behavioral health services are also available through three specialized vans staffed by four bilingual social workers, offering private counseling in Spanish, Haitian Creole, and Jamaican Patois. These services are often unavailable in communal living situations.

Rukema emphasized the program’s wider impact: “We frequently hear from patients that MMHP providers treated them with the most dignity and respect they have ever received. The healthier our farm workers are, the more fresh fruits, vegetables, fish, and seafood there are for our communities. Our entire community benefits when MMHP’s clients are healthy.”

By bringing comprehensive healthcare directly to Maine’s agricultural and aquaculture workers, MMHP demonstrates how accessibility, trust, and equity can transform lives — one farm, one harvest, and one patient at a time.





— PORTUGUÊS —

Preso Entre Estados: A Jornada de um Sobrevivente durante a Detenção do ICE

Por equipa da *Amjambo Africa*

Ao visitarmos Gihozo — pseudónimo de uma mulher congolesa na casa dos trinta anos, residente nos Estados Unidos há quatro — ficámos imediatamente impressionados com a profundidade do seu olhar, transbordante de emoção. Embora estivesse fisicamente presente, parecia que uma parte dela permanecia aprisionada às memórias do passado. Com uma coragem admirável, decidiu partilhar connosco a sua história.

Tudo começou numa noite, num parque de estacionamento. A presença insistente de um veículo preto, que passava e regressava sucessivamente, despertou-lhe um desconforto imediato. Após aguardar alguns minutos, Gihozo decidiu partir, mas percebeu que estava a ser seguida por um carro com os faróis apagados. Pouco depois, o grito de uma mulher ecoou: tinha acabado de ser seguida pelo ICE. Foi nesse instante que Gihozo compreendeu o perigo iminente. Tentou acelerar, mas a buzina estridente do veículo perseguidor confirmou que não havia saída. Ao abordá-la, os agentes já detinham todas as suas informações: o visto de turista, a entrada pelo Illinois e outros detalhes pessoais. Sem oferecer resistência, Gihozo cooperou de imediato, uma atitude que os próprios agentes chegaram a elogiar.

Foi então colocada numa viatura, onde viajou durante cerca de duas horas sem qualquer informação sobre o seu destino. A aparente desorientação do condutor intensificou a sua ansiedade: "Ele conduzia como se não soubesse para onde ia", recordou. Perante a recusa inicial dos agentes ao seu pedido para ir à casa de banho, Gihozo teve de insistir até obter permissão. Ao longo do percurso, outros detidos foram recolhidos, totalizando cinco pessoas confinadas ao veículo naquela noite de incerteza.

Em Scarborough, os detidos permaneciam algemados nos pulsos, tornozelos e cintura. Ao chegarem ao centro de detenção, as algemas eram removidas para que fossem fotografados, revistados e processados.

Naquele momento, Gihozo sentiu-se completamente desamparada; ela não tinha representação legal. Foi então que outra detida lhe sussurrou um conselho vital: contactar Patrick Mulonda, presidente da comunidade congolesa, conhecido por auxiliar inúmeras pessoas detidas pelo ICE. Com o apoio de Mulonda, Gihozo conseguiu um advogado que assumiu o seu caso. A transferência estava agendada para as 16h. Enquanto uma das mulheres foi libertada após realizar a sua chamada, as restantes foram transferidas para Boston.

Durante cada deslocação, as algemas eram apertadas de tal forma que caminhar se tor-

nava um suplício. Em Boston, após novas revistas, foram amontoados num cubículo exíguo, sem condições para dormir. O ar era pesado e sufocante, num ambiente de total insalubridade. O acesso ao básico era negado por omissão; era necessário bater à porta e insistir repetidamente para obter qualquer auxílio. Certo dia, os detidos foram sumariamente informados de que não teriam direito ao banho.

Não segundo dia de detenção, ela foi convocada para uma audiência sobre o seu caso. Um agente apresentou-lhe documentos redigidos em inglês, exigindo a sua assinatura. Foi então que descobriu, com choque, que o seu período de permanência autorizado nos EUA seria de apenas um mês, e não os três que lhe haviam garantido anteriormente. Demonstrando coragem, recusou-se a assinar documentos que não compreendia e solicitou a presença de um advogado. A resposta foi implacável: a decisão já tinha sido tomada.

Graças à intervenção estratégica de Mulonda, um advogado assumiu o caso. Durante uma noite, enquanto lhe recolhiam as impressões digitais, ela pressentiu que uma transferência era iminente. Num momento de lucidez, conseguiu alertar o seu defensor de que poderia ser enviada para um destino desconhecido.

Na manhã seguinte, ao amanhecer — após vários dias sem acesso a alimentação adequada ou higiene básica — ela e outros detidos foram algemados e conduzidos ao aeroporto. O grupo, composto majoritariamente por sul-americanos, incluía também mulheres de Angola, do Haiti e de outros países africanos. O destino final para a maioria era o estado da Louisiana.

À chegada, foram confinados numa sala com indivíduos que aguardavam a deportação imediata para a Colômbia, México ou Venezuela. O pânico instalou-se. Ela protestou desesperadamente, reiterando que era congolesa e que não poderia ser enviada para aqueles países. No entanto, o silêncio das autoridades foi a única resposta.

Mais tarde, foi transferida para um centro de detenção no Louisiana, onde foi informada de que os processos não eram processados naquela unidade e que deveria continuar a aguardar. Durante mais de dois dias e meio, foi privada de acesso a chuveiros e a mudas de roupa limpa. Foi submetida a exames médicos de rotina, incluindo o rastreamento de tuberculose.

Seguiu-se uma nova transferência, desta vez para o Texas. Embora o tratamento durante o trajeto tenha tido uma ligeira melhoria, o pânico instalou-se à chegada, quando os agentes anunciaram a deportação iminente de todos os detidos. No dia seguinte, todos os nomes foram convocados, à exceção do dela e de outra mulher africana. Explicaram-lhes que aquela instalação se destinava apenas a indivíduos com ordens finais de expulsão, o que implicaria uma nova transferência para Gihozo.

No novo centro, as condições eram severas: o ar condicionado era mantido a temperaturas gélidas, levando os detidos a bater às portas suplicando por agasalhos e mantas. O ambiente era prisional e o acesso a comunicações telefônicas extremamente restrito. Apesar da distância, a audiência permaneceu agendada em Boston. Graças à intervenção de Mulonda e de uma organização parceira, Gihozo obteve representação legal. O advogado logrou reunir provas e negociar com o juiz, garantindo a concessão de uma fiança (bond) de imigração sem que ela precisasse de comparecer pessoalmente, argumentando que o seu estado emocional era de extrema fragilidade.

A organização de apoio de Mulonda pagou a fiança, e ela aguardou, suspensa na ansiedade, pela liberdade. Os dias passaram sem qualquer explicação. Finalmente, numa madrugada por volta das cinco horas, foi despertada e devolveram-lhe as roupas antigas — ainda marcadas pela sujidade do dia

— IKINYARWANDA —

Igihirahiro hagati muri za leta: Urugendo rw'uwarokotse muri gereza za ICE

Inkuru y'umukozi wa *Amjambo Africa*

Ubwu twasuraga Gihozo, izina twise uyumugore ukomoka muri Congo uri mu myaka 30 akaba amaze imyaka ine atuye muri Amerika, twamubonanye agahinda mu maso, aremerewe kandi afite amarangamutima y'umubabaro. N'ubwo mubigariyari ahari, igice kimwe cyeyasagank'igifungiraniye mu mateka ye. Yagize imbaraga maze atubwira amateka ye.

Byose byatangiye umugoroba umwe muri

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parikingi, ubwo yabonaga imodoka y’u-mukara icyeho igeze hirya iragaruka, maze ubuzima bwe butangira guhura n’akaga. Nyuma yo gutegereza iminota mike, yahisemo kugenda. Gusa ubwo yasohokaga, yabonye imodoka imukurikiye yazimije am-atara. Imbere hafi aho, hari umugore wa-rimo ataka avuga ko amaze gutabwa muri yombi na ICE. Muri ako kanya, Gihozo yahise amenya ko ari mukaga. Yagerageje kwihuta, gusa imodoka yari imuri inyuma ivuza amahoni cyane. Yamenye ko nta yandi mahitamo yari afite. Umuntu yaramweger-eye maze arivuga, gusa yari yamaze ku-menya uwo ari we. Bari bazi ibintu byose: Viza ye y’ubukerarugendo, uburyo yinjiriye muri Illinois, ndetse n’ibindi. Ntabwo yago-ranye, yakoze buri cyose bamutegekaga. Abamufashe bavuze ko bashimye uburyo yitwaye.

Yinjiye mumodoka yabo maze batwara amasaha nk’abiri, nta makuru na make y’aho bari bamujyanye. Umushoferi yari ameze nk’uwayobye, ibintu byarushagaho ku-mutera ubwoba. Agira ati: “yaratwaye nk’u-tazi aho yari agiye.” Hari ubwo yasabye ko yakoresha ubwiherero maze uwari umur-inze aranga, gusa akomeza kubasaba kugeza ubwo bamwemereye. Ubwo bari bamu-jiyanye bagiye bafata abandi bantu, maze bi-rangira bafite abantu nka bane cyangwa batanu mu modoka.

Muri Scarborough, abafatwaga bambik-waga amapingu – ku maboko, kumaguru no mu rukenyerero. Aho bari bafungiyе bakur-wagaho amapingu, bagafatwa amafoto, bagasakwa, bakanandikwa.

Muri ako kanya, Gihozo yahise yumva yibuze neza. Nta munyamategeko yari afite. Undi muntu bari bafunganywe yamwongor-eye amakuru make ariko y’ingenzi cyane: Hamagara Patrick Mulonda, Perezida w’u-muryango w’abanyekongo, umuntu wafashije cyane benshi mu bafashwe na ICE. Afashijwe na Mulonda, yabashije kubona umunyamategeko watangiye kwita ku kibazo cye. Yabwiwe ko agomba koherezwa ahandi saa 4 p.m. Umugore umwe yararekuwe ubwo yari amaze guhamagara, mu gihe abandi boherejwe Boston.

Igihe cyose abafashwe bakoreshwaga uru-gendo, bashyirwagaho amapingu kandi bakayakomeza cyane kuburyo kugenda byababazaga. Muri Boston, barongeye barasakwa bashyirwa mu kumba gato kuburyo kuryama bitashobokaga. Umwuka wari muke, kuburyo umuntu yendaga guhera umwuka, ndetse n’uburyo bari bafashwe byari bibabaje cyane. Nta kintu na kimwe umuntu yahabwaga atagisabye; umuntu yagombaga gukomanga agasaba avugira hejuru kandi ashyizemo imbaraga kugirango ahabwe n’iby’ibanze. Umunsi umwe, abafunzwe babwiwe ko batari bwoye.

Ku munsu wa kabiri yarahamagawe ngo bavugane kuri dosiye ye. Umuntu yaraje azana impapuro ziri mu cyongereza amus-aba gusinya. Aho niho yamenyeye ko yemerewe kuguma muri U.S. mu gihe cy’uk-wezi kumwe, atari atatu, nk’uko yabyizeraga. Yanze gusinya atazi ibikubiye mu nyandiko maze asaba umunyamategeko, gusa abwirwa ko icyemezo cyamaze gufatwa.

Ku bufasha bwa Mulonda, umunya-mategeko yatangiye gukurikirana disoye ye. Umugoroba umwe, ubwo barimo bamufata ibimenyetso by’intoki, yamenye ko agomba koherezwa ahandi maze yihutira guhita amenyesha umunyamategeko we ko ashob-ora koherezwa kure cyane.

Bukeye bwaho, hakiri mugitondo kare cyane, bamaze iminsi nta kintu barya cyangwa ngo bakarabe, benshi mu bafashwe bambitswe amapingu, maze bajyanwa ku kibuga cy’indege. Buriye indege bacyambaye amapingu, barikumwe n’abagore bake b’a-banyafurika – umunya Angola n’umunya Haiti n’abandi benshi bakomoka muri Amerika y’Amajyepfo. Benshi mubafashwe

boherejwe muri Louisiana.

Bagezeyo, bashyizwe mu cyumba cyo gute-gererezamo bari kumwe n’a-bantu bategereje gusubizwa muri Colombia, Mexico, cyangwa Venezuela. Ub-woba bwabaye bwinshi. Yarabyanze asobanura ko akomoka muri Congo bityo ko adashobora koherezwa ahandi. Nta gisubizo cyumvikana yahaboneye.

Nyuma, yaje koherezwa aho bafungira abantu muri Louisiana, abwirwa ko aho hantu nta dosiye zihigirwa, ahubwo ko agomba gukomeza agategereza. Nta myenda imeshe yari ihari nta bwogero mu gihe kingana n’iminsi ibiri n’ig-ice. Abakoraga ibizamini by’ubuzima bafashe ibipimo harimo n’icy’igituntu.

Nyuma yaje kongera yoherezwa ahandi, ubu noneho bamujyana Texas. Mu rugendo, ibintu byasaga nk’aho ari byiza mo gake. Akimara kugerayo, abakozi batangaje ko buri wese uri aho agomba guhita yoherezwa aho akomoka. Ubwoba burongera buba bwinshi. Umunsi wakurikiyeho, amazina yose yarahamagawe uretse irye n’iry’undi mugore w’umunya Afurika. Yabwiwe ko aho hafungirwa abo ibyemezo byemeje ko bagomba gusubizwa iyo bakomoka bya burundu, bivuze ko agomba kongera akimurwa.

Aho yajyanywe, ibyuma bikonjesha bisa n’ibitarakoraga, abafunzwe barakomangaga bagasaba amakote ndetse n’ibiringiti. Aha hantu hari hameze nka gereza, ndetse no guterefona byari gake cyane. N’ubwo ha-rimo urugendo runini, urubanza rwe rwag-ombaga kubera Boston. Ku bufasha bwa Mulonda, n’umuryango bakorana, yabonye umuhagararira mu rukiko maze babasha gukusanya ibimenyetso, basaba umuca-manza maze yemererwa gufungurwa hatanzwe amadolari, maze agakurikiranwa adafunze. Umunyamategeko we yavuze ko yari mu bihe bigoye cyane amarangamutima ye.

Mulonda hamwe n’umuryango bakorana bishyuye amadolari yasabwaga, maze ate-gereza irekurwa rye. Iminsi yarashize nta bisobanuro ahabwa. Kera kabaye, igitondo kimwe ahagana zaa kumi n’imwe z’igitondo, yarakanguwe maze ahabwa imyenda ye isanzwe, icyanduye nka mbere. Cyakora mbere y’uko agenda, yarabanje yoherezwa ahandi hantu. Hari ubwo ababashinzwe ba-musobanuriye ko n’ubwo arekuwe adahita yemererwa gukora, gutwara cyangwa gusubira mu buzima busanzwe. Ntabwo ba-mubwiye iminsi ibi bizamara. Ni ibintu bya-mubabaje cyane. Yatekereje ko birangiye arekuwe, nyamara asanga ibyo abujijwe bira-cyariho.

Ku bindi biro, yasabwe gusinya igipapuro cyo kwemera ko yambikwa icyuma ku kaguru kigaragaza aho aherereye. Yabanje kwanga, kuko atumvaga neza icyo ibyo bivuze. Umwe mubayobozi yamusobanuriye ko nabyanga asubizwa muri gereza. Hamwe n’igitutu yaje gusinya. Yambitswe icyo cyuma kukaguru. Yararize kuko yumvaga ateshejwe agaciro ndetse afashwe nk’umun-yabyaha bikomeye. Byarangiye ba-murekuriye aho bategera imodoka. Aho, ni naho bamuhereye telephone ye abasha guhamagara abo mu muryango we.

Kugeza ubu, aracyafite ikibazo cyo gu-sinzira. Ibitekerezo byo kwambikwa amapingu, guhora yimurwa, kubwirwa ko agiye koherezwa aho akomoka, imbeho nyinshi, ndetse n’icyuma bamwambitse kuk-aguru byose biracyamuremereye. Umubiri we uridegembya, ariko imbere aracya-



hanganye no kureba uko yakiranuka n’ibihe bibi byo gufungwa bigikomeza.

— KISWAHILI —

Kushikiliwa Kati ya Nchi: Sa-fari ya aliyeokoka kutoka Gereza la ICE

Na Wafanyakazi wa *Amjambo Africa*

Tulipomtembelea Gihozo, jina la utani la mwanamke Mkongole aliye katika umri wa miaka thelathini na umeishi Marekani kwa miaka minne, tulivutiwa na kina kilicho kwenye macho yake—kilichojaa hisia. In-gawa alikuwa pale kimwili, sehemu yake bado ilionekana imefungwa na yaliyopita yake. Alichagua kwa ujasiri kutueleza ha-dithi yake.

Yote yalianza jioni moja kwenye sehemu ya maegesho, alipogundua gari giza likipita kisha kurudi, jambo lililomfanya ahisi wasi-wasi. Baada ya kusubiri dakika chache, alia-mua kuondoka. Lakini alipotoka, aliiona gari likimfuata bila taa zake za mbele kushangaza. Pembeni kidogo, mwanamke alilia kwamba amekamatwa na ICE. Hapo ndipo Gihozo alipotambua kwamba alikuwa katika hatari. Alijaribu kuongeza mwendo, lakini gari lililokuwa nyuma yake ligongaye kengele kwa sauti kubwa. Alijua hakukuwa na njia ya kutoka. Mawakala walimkaribia na kujitambulisha, lakini tayari walijua yeye ni nani. Walijua kila kitu: visa yake ya utalii, kuingia kwake kupitia Illinois, na zaidi. Hakukabiliana, bali alishirikiana mara moja. Mawakala hata walimwambia wanathamini mtazamo wake.

Alikanyaga kwenye gari yao na wakaen-desha kwa takriban masaa mawili, bila ku-

pata taarifa kuhusu mahali alipochukuliwa. Dereva alionekana kupotea, jambo ambalo liliongeza wasiwasi wake. “Aliendesha kama hajui anaenda wapi,” alikumbuka. Wakati mmoja, aliomba kupumzika bafuni na maofisa walikataa mwanzoni, lakini alisisi-tiza na hatimaye akapata idhini yao. Wakati wa safari, walikusanya wafungwa wengine na hatimaye walifika kuwa na wanne au watano ndani ya gari.

Katika Scarborough, wafungwa waliwekewa mnyororo—mikono, miguu, na kiuno. Kwenye kituo cha kizuizi, minyororo ilion-dolewa, waliopigwa picha, kuulizwa, na kusajiliwa.

Wakati huo, Gihozo alihisi amepotea kabisa. Hatukuwa na wakili. Mwanamke mwingine aliyekamatwa alibisha ushauri muhimu: piga Patrick Mulonda, rais wa ju-muiya ya Kongo, ambaye alikuwa amesaidia watu wengi waliokamatwa na ICE. Kwa msaada wa Mulonda, aliweza kufikia wakili ambaye alianza kushughulikia kesi yake. Aliripotiwa kuwa uhamisho umepangwa saa 10 jioni. Mwanamke mmoja aliruhusiwa baada ya kupiga simu yake, wakati wengine walipelekwa Boston.

Kila wakati wakiwa wanahamishwa, pingu walishikiliwa kwa nguvu kiasi kwamba kutembea kulikuwa na maumivu. Boston, walikaguliwa tena na kufungwa ndani ya chumba kidogo sana cha kulala. Mvuto wa hewa ulikuwa mzito, karibu kufaisha, na hali ilikuwa mbaya. Hakuna kitu kilichotolewa bila kuuliza; mtu lazima afgubuzie na kushinikiza ili kupokea hata ya msingi. Siku moja, wakamatwa walisemwa kuwa hangekuwa na kuoga.

Katika siku ya pili, aliitwa kujadili kesi yake. Wakala alionyesha hati kwa Kiingereza



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na kumuomba asaini. Aligundua kwamba aliruhusiwa kukaa Marekani kwa mwezi mmoja tu, si miezi mitatu kama alivyodhani. Alikataa kusaini bila kuelewa hati hizo na akaomba wakili, lakini aliiambiwa kuwa uamuzi tayari ulikuwa umefanywa.

Shukrani kwa msaada wa Mulonda, wakili alianza kufanya kazi kwenye kesi yake. Usiku mmoja wakati alipopigwa alama za vidole, aligundua kuwa uhamisho ulikuwa karibu na aliweza kumjulisha wakili wake kuwa anaweza kutumwa mbali.

Asubuhi iliyofuata, mapema sana, bila kula au kuoga kwa siku kadhaa, wafungwa kadhaa walifungwa pingu shingoni na kupeleka uwanja wa ndege. Walipaa ndege wakiwa bado wamefungwa pingu shingoni, pamoja na wanawake wachache wa Ki-afrika—Mwaangola na Mhaiti—katika kundi la watu wengi kutoka America Kusini. Wingi wa wafungwa walitumwa Louisiana.

Walipofika, waliwekwa kwenye chumba cha kusubiri pamoja na watu waliokuwa wakiwasubiri kurudishwa nyuma kwenda Colombia, Mexiko, au Venezuela. Hofu ilimkumbatia. Alipinga, akieleza kuwa alitoka Kongo na kuwa haingeweza kutumwa sehemu nyingine. Hakukuwapo jibu la wazi.

Baadaye, alihamishiwa kwenye kituo cha kizuizi huko Louisiana na akaambiwa kesi hazishughulikiwi hapo na lazima aendelee kusubiri. Hakukuwa na nguo safi na hakukuwa na vyoo vya kuoga kwa zaidi ya siku mbili na nusu. Wachunguzi wa matibabu walifanya vipimo, ikiwemo kimoja cha ugongwa wa kifua kikuu.

Kisha alihamishiwa tena, wakati huu kwenda Texas. Wakati wa safari, matibabu yalionekana kuwa bora kidogo. Lakini alipo wasili, maofisa walitangaza kuwa kila mtu aliye tayari angekimbizwa nchi yake. Hofu ikarejea. Siku iliyofuata, majina yote yanapigiwa isipokuwa yeye na mwanamke

mwingine Mwarabu. Wakaambiwa kuwa kituo hicho kilihifadhi watu walio na amri za kimsingi za kutokolewa, ikimaanisha lazima ahamishwe tena.

Kwenye kituo kipya, hewa ya baridi ilikuwa kali. Wazuilwa walibisha milango kuomba koti na blanketi. Mahali hapo yalionekana kama gereza, na simu zilikuwa na mipaka sana. Licha ya umbali, kusikiza kwake kulibaki kupanga huko Boston. Shukrani kwa Mulonda na shirika la mshirika, alikuwa na mwakilishi wa kisheria na wakili wake aliweza kukusanya ushahidi, kujadiliana na hakimu, na kupata dhamana ya uhamiaji bila Gihozo kuonekana kwa mtu. Mwakili wake alisema alikuwa katika hali ya kihisia dhaifu sana.

Mulonda na shirika lake la kusaidia walimlipa dhamana, na yeye alisubiri kwa wasiwasi kuachiliwa kwake. Siku zilipita bila ufafanuzi. Hatimaye, asubuhi moja karibu na saa kumi asubuhi, aliamshwa na kuliwawekwa nguo zake za zamani, bado zikiwa na uchafu kutoka kabla. Lakini kabla ya kuondoka milele, alihamishiwa tena kwenye kituo kingine. Wakati fulani, maafisa walieleza kwamba hata baada ya kuachiliwa kwake hataruhusiwa mara moja kufanya kazi, kuendesha gari, au kurudi kwenye maisha ya kawaida. Hawakusema ni muda gani masharti haya yangedumu. Habari hiyo ilimuumiza sana. Alidhani hatimaye alikuwa huru, lakini akaelewa kwamba masharti hayo yangeendelea.

Katika kituo kingine, aliombwa kusaini hati inayokubali kuvaa kipimo cha kielektroniki cha goti. Alisita, bila kuelewa kikamilifu kilichomaanisha. Afisa mkuu alimkemea kwamba ikiwa atakataa, atarudishwa kwenye kizuizi. Chini ya shinikizo, aliisaini. Kipimo cha goti kiliambatishwa kwenye kiwiko chake cha mguu. Alilia, akihisi kudharauliwa na kutendewa kama

mhalifu. Mwishowe, alialiwa kwenye kituo cha basi. Ni hapo tu alipopata tena simu yake na kuweza kuwasiliana na wapendwa wake.

Leo, bado anapata shida kulala. Kumbukumbu za mikanda, uhamisho usio na mwisho, matangazo ya kuhamishwa, baridi kali, na kipimo cha goti bado zinamhangaika. Yuko huru kimwili, lakini ndani bado anapigana kuondokana na maisha mabaya ya kizuizi yanayobaki.

— ESPAÑOL —
Atrapada entre estados: el recorrido de una sobreviviente en detención de ICE

Por el equipo de *Amjambo África*

Cuando visitamos a Gihozo, un seudónimo para una mujer congoleña de unos treinta años que ha vivido en Estados Unidos durante cuatro años, nos impactó la profundidad de su mirada, cargada de emoción. Aunque estaba físicamente presente, una parte de ella parecía aún prisionera de su pasado. Valientemente, decidió contarnos su historia.

Todo comenzó una tarde en un estacionamiento, cuando notó un carro negro que pasaba y luego regresaba, lo que la hizo sentir incómoda. Después de esperar unos minutos, decidió irse. Pero al salir, vio que un vehículo la seguía con las luces apagadas. Un poco más adelante, una mujer gritó que acababa de ser arrestada por ICE. En ese momento, Gihozo se dio cuenta de que estaba en peligro. Intentó acelerar, pero el auto detrás de ella tocó la bocina fuertemente. Sabía que no había salida. Los agentes se acercaron, se identificaron, pero ya sabían quién era. Lo sabían todo: su visa de turista,

su entrada por Illinois y más. Ella no resistió y cooperó de inmediato. Los agentes incluso le dijeron que apreciaban su actitud.

Subió al vehículo y condujeron durante aproximadamente dos horas, sin información sobre a dónde la llevaban. El conductor parecía perdido, lo que aumentaba su ansiedad. “Conducía como si no supiera a dónde iba”, recordó. En un momento, pidió ir al baño y los agentes inicialmente se negaron, pero ella insistió y finalmente accedieron. Durante el trayecto, recogieron a otros detenidos y terminaron siendo cuatro o cinco en el vehículo.

En Scarborough, los detenidos fueron esposados; manos, pies y cintura. En el centro de detención, les quitaron las esposas, los fotografiaron, los registraron y procesaron.

En ese momento, Gihozo se sintió completamente perdida. No tenía abogado. Otra mujer detenida le susurró un consejo vital: llamar a Patrick Mulonda, el presidente de la comunidad congoleña, quien había ayudado a muchas personas detenidas por ICE. Con la ayuda de Mulonda, logró contactar a un abogado que comenzó a manejar su caso. Le informaron que un traslado estaba programado para las 4 p.m. Una mujer fue liberada después de hacer su llamada, mientras que las otras fueron enviadas a Boston.

Cada vez que los detenidos eran trasladados, las esposas estaban tan apretadas que caminar era doloroso. En Boston, los registraron nuevamente y los metieron en una habitación demasiado pequeña para dormir. El aire era pesado, casi sofocante, y las condiciones eran deplorables. Nada se daba sin pedirlo; había que tocar e insistir incluso para lo más básico. Un día, les dijeron que no habría duchas.

El segundo día, la llamaron para hablar sobre su caso. Un agente le presentó documentos en inglés y le pidió que firmara. Se



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Georgina Andre, 12, sprays water at her friends in Deering Oaks Park in Portland. Photo by Derek Davis/Maine Trust for Local News

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enteró de que solo se le permitía quedarse en Estados Unidos por un mes, no tres como ella creía. Se negó a firmar sin entender los documentos y pidió un abogado, pero le dijeron que ya se había tomado una decisión.

Gracias a la ayuda de Mulonda, un abogado comenzó a trabajar en su caso. Una tarde, mientras le tomaban las huellas digitales, se dio cuenta de que un traslado era inminente y logró avisar a su abogado de que podría ser enviada lejos.

A la mañana siguiente, muy temprano, sin haber comido ni haberse duchado durante varios días, varios detenidos fueron esposados y llevados al aeropuerto. Abordaron el avión aún esposados, junto con algunas mujeres africanas (una angoleña y una haitiana) entre una mayoría de personas de América del Sur. La mayoría de los detenidos fueron enviados a Luisiana.

Al llegar, fueron colocados en una sala de espera junto a personas que esperaban ser deportadas a Colombia, México o Venezuela. El pánico la invadió. Protestó, explicando que era del Congo y que no podía ser enviada a otro lugar. No recibió una respuesta clara.

Más tarde, fue trasladada a un centro de detención en Luisiana, donde le dijeron que los casos no se manejaban allí y que debía seguir esperando. No había ropa limpia ni duchas durante más de dos días y medio. Personal médico realizó exámenes, incluyendo una prueba de tuberculosis.

Luego vino otro traslado, esta vez a Texas. Durante el viaje, el trato pareció un poco mejor. Pero al llegar, los agentes anunciaron que todos los presentes serían deportados. El pánico regresó. Al día siguiente, llamaron a todos los nombres excepto el suyo y el de otra mujer africana. Les dijeron que ese centro sólo albergaba a personas con órdenes finales de deportación, lo que significaba que debía ser trasladada nuevamente.

En el nuevo centro, el aire acondicionado estaba extremadamente frío. Los detenidos golpeaban las puertas para pedir chaquetas y mantas. El lugar parecía una prisión, y las llamadas telefónicas eran muy limitadas. A pesar de la distancia, su audiencia seguía programada en Boston. Gracias a Mulonda y a una organización asociada, tenía representación legal, y su abogado pudo reunir pruebas, negociar con el juez y obtener una fianza migratoria sin que Gihozo tuviera que presentarse en persona. Su abogado argumentó que ella se encontraba en un estado emocional muy frágil.

Mulonda y la organización que la apoyaba pagaron su fianza, y ella esperó con ansiedad su liberación. Pasaron días sin explicación. Finalmente, una mañana alrededor de las cinco, la despertaron y le devolvieron su ropa vieja, aún sucia. Pero antes de ser liberada definitivamente, fue trasladada nuevamente a otro centro. En un momento, los agentes le explicaron que incluso después de su liberación no podría trabajar, conducir ni regresar a una vida normal de inmediato. No le dijeron cuánto tiempo durarían estas restricciones. La noticia la devastó. Pensó que finalmente era libre, solo para darse cuenta de que las restricciones continuarían.

En otro centro, le pidieron que firmara un documento aceptando usar una tobillera electrónica. Dudó, ya que no entendía completamente lo que significaba. Un agente superior le advirtió que si se negaba, sería enviada nuevamente a detención. Bajo presión, firmó. Le colocaron la tobillera en el tobillo. Lloró, sintiéndose humillada y tratada como un criminal.

Finalmente, la dejaron en una estación de autobuses. Solo entonces recuperó su teléfono y logró contactar a sus seres queridos.

Hoy en día, todavía tiene dificultades para dormir. Los recuerdos de las esposas, los traslados interminables, los anuncios de deportación, el frío extremo y la tobillera electrónica aún la persiguen. Está físicamente libre, pero por dentro sigue luchando por es-

capar de las pesadillas de la detención que aún perduran.

— SOMALI —

Ku xayiran inta u dhaxaysa Gobolada: Safarka Bad-baadiyaha ee ku xayiran ICE

Waxaa qoray *Amjambo Africa* Staff

Markii aan booqanay Gihozo, magac been abuur ah oo loogu yeero haweeney Congolese ah oo da'deeda soddonaad ah oo ku noolayd Mareykanka afar sano, waxaa nagu dhacay qoto dheer oo indhaheeda - oo dareen culus leh. In kasta oo ay jir ahaan joogtay, qayb ka mid ah iyada ayaa weli u ekayd mid la xidhay iyada oo hore. Waxay si geesinimo leh u dooratay inay sheekadeeda noo sheegto.

Waxaa oo dhami waxa ay ka bilowdeen xilli fiid ah meel baabuurta la dhigto, waxa ay dareentay gaadhi madow oo meesha maraya ka dibna soo laabanaya, taas oo dhib ku keentay. Dhawr daqiiqo markii ay sugtay ayay go'aansatay in ay baxdo. Laakiin markii ay soo baxday, waxay aragtay baabuur daba socda oo nalka hore ka maqan yahay. Wax yar ka hor, qof dumar ah ayaa ku qeylisay in hadda ay xireen ICE. Waxay ahayd isla markaas Gihozo waxay xaqi-iqsatay inay khatar ku jirto. Waxay isku dayday in ay dardar galiso, balse gaadhigii ka danbeeyay ayaa kor u garaacay. Waa garanaysay in aanay jirin meel ay ka baxdo. Wakiilada ayaa u soo dhawaaday oo is aqoonsaday, laakiin mar hore way garanayeen cidda ay tahay. Wax walba way garanayeen: fiisaha dalxiiska, geli-taankeeda Illinois, iyo in ka badan. Ma aysan iska caabin, iyadoo isla markiiba la kaashatay. Wakiiladu xitaa waxay u sheegeen inay ku qanacsan yihiin hab-dhaqankeeda.

Waxay u raacday gaarigii ay wateen, waxayna wateen ku dhawaad ​​labo saacadood, iyadoo aan la ogeyn halka loo kaxeeyay. Darawalka ayaa u muuqday mid lunsan, taasoo sii kordhisay walwalkeeda. "Wuxuu u kaxeeyey sidii isagoo aan garanayn meel uu u socdo," ayay dib u soo xusuusatay. Hal mar, waxay codsatay nasasho musqusha, wakiilladuna markii hore way diideen, laakiin way ku adkaysatay oo ugu dambeyntii waxay heshay oggolaan. Intii ay safarka ku jireen, waxa ay soo qaadeen maxaabiis kale, waxa ayna ku dhamaadeen afar ama shan baabuur.

Scarborough, maxaabiista waa la katiinadeeyay, lugaha waa laga xiray, waana la xabagsaday. Xaruntii xabsiga lagu hayay ayaa lagu xiray katiinado, sawiro laga qaaday, katiinado lagu xiray, laguna farsameeyay.

Waqtigaas, Gihozo wuxuu dareemay lumay gebi ahaanba. Wax qareen ah ma ay lahayn. Haweeney kale oo xabsiga ku jirta ayaa lahayd talo muhiim ah: wac Patrick Mulonda, madaxweynaha bulshada Congo, kaasoo caawiyay dad badan oo ay xirtay ICE. Caawinta Mulonda, waxay awooday inay gaadho qareen bilaabay inuu ka shaqeeyo kiiskeeda. Waxaa loo sheegay in xil wareejinta la qorsheeyay 4-ta galabnimo. Hal qof oo dumar ah ayaa la sii daayay ka dib markii ay wacday, halka kuwa kale loo diray Boston.

Mar kasta oo maxaabiista la raro, waxaa la adkeeyay katiinadaha, socodkuna wuxuu ahaa mid xanuun badan. Boston, mar kale ayaa lagu xidhay oo la geliyay qol aad u yar oo lagu seexan karo. Hawadu waxay ahayd mid culus, oo ku dhow inay neef qabato, xaaladduna waxay ahayd mid laga xumaado. Waxba lama siin iyadoon la is weydiin; mid ayaa ku qasbanaaday inuu garaaco oo ku adkeysto helitaanka xitaa aasaaska. Maalin maalmaha ka mid ah ayaa maxaabiistii loo sheegay in aan la qubaysan doonin.

Maalintii labaad ayaa loo yeedhay si ay arinteeda ugala hadasho. Wakiil ayaa u dhiibay dukumeenti ku qoran Ingiriis wuxuuna ka codsaday inay saxiixdo. Waxay ogaatay in loo oggolaaday inay sii joogto Mareykanka hal bil oo keliya, oo aan ahayn saddex, sida ay rumaysatay. Way diiday inay saxeexo, iyadoo fahmi wayday waraaqaha, waxaanay waydiisatay qareen, laakiin waxa loo sheegay in go'aan hore loo gaadhay.

Waad ku mahadsan tahay caawimada Mulonda, qareen ayaa bilaabay inuu ka shaqeeyo kiiskeeda. Goor fiid ah, iyadoo faraha laga qaadayo, ayay garwaaqsatay in wareejintu soo dhowdahay, waxayna u suurtagashay inay qareenkeeda u sheegto in laga yaabo in meel fog loo diro.

Subixii xigay, markii waagu baryay, maalmo badan oo la soomay oo la maydhay, ayaa tiro maxaabiis ah la soo ururiyay oo la geeyey madaarka. Waxay ku ha-

reen katiinado, iyadoo ay la socdaan dhowr haween Afrikaan ah - Angola iyo Haitian - kuwaas oo ka mid ahaa inta badan dadka Koonfurta Ameerika yimid. Inta badan maxaabiista waxaa loo diray Louisiana.

Markii ay yimaadeen, waxaa la dhigay qol lagu hayo dad sugaya in loo tarxiilo Colombia, Mexico, ama Venezuela.

Argagax ayaa qabsaday. Waxay ka mudaaharaadday, iyadoo ku macnaysay inay ka timid Congo oo aan meel kale loo diri karin. Jawaab cad lagama bixin. Ka dib, waxaa loo wareejiyay xarun lagu hayo oo ku taal Louisiana waxaana loo sheegay in kiisaska aan halkaas lagu qaban oo ay tahay inay sii wado sugitaanka. Laba maalmood iyo bar ka badan ma jirin dhar nadiif ah iyo qubeys toona. Baarayaasha caafimaadku waxay sameeyeen baaritaanno uu ku jiro mid qaaxada.

Kadib waxaa yimid wareejin kale, markan Texas. Inta lagu jiro safarka, daawaynta ayaa u muuqatay wax yar ka wanaagsan. Laakiin markii ay yimaadeen, wakiiladu waxay ku dhawaaqeen in qof kasta oo jooga la masaa-furin doono. Argagax ayaa soo noqday. Maalintii xigtay, dhammaan magacyadii waa la wada yeedhay iyada iyo mid kale oo Afrikaan ah mooyee. Waxaa loo sheegay in xarunta kaliya ay degan yihiin dadka leh amarkii masaa-furinta ee ugu dambeeyay, taasoo la macno ah inay tahay in mar kale la raro.

Xarunta cusub, qaboobjiyayaashu waxay ahayd baraf. Maxaabiista ayaa garaacay al-baabada si ay u weydiyaan jaakood iyo bus-tayaal. Meeshu waxay u ekayd xabsi, taleefoonkuna aad buu u koobnaa. In kasta oo ay fogaatay, haddana dhegaysigeedu waxa uu ahaa mid ballansan Boston. Mahad waxaa leh Mulonda iyo hay'ad la-hawlgal ah, waxay lahayd wakiil sharci, la-taliyuhuna wuxuu awooday inuu soo ururiyo cad-daynta, la xaajoodo garsooraha, oo uu helo curaarta socdaalka oo la siiyay iyada oo Gihozo uusan shakhsi ahaan u soo bixin. Qareenkeeda ayaa ku doodday inay ku jirto

xaalad shucuureed oo aad u jilicsan.

Mulonda iyo hay'addiisa caawisay waxay bixiyeen debaajiga, waxayna si walaac leh u sugaysay siidaynteeda. Maalmo ayaa ka soo wareegay iyada oo aan sharraxaad laga bixin. Ugu dambayntii, subax abaaro shantii galabnimo, ayaa la toosiyeey oo loo soo celiyeey dharkeedii hore, iyadoo weli wasakhaysan sidii hore. Laakiin ka hor inta aysan si wanaagsan u bixin, waxaa mar kale loo wareejiyay xarun kale. Hal mar, wakiiladu waxay sharxeen in xitaa ka dib markii la sii daayay aan isla markiiba loo oggolaan doonin inay shaqeyso, baabuur wado, ama ku soo laabato nolol caadi ah. Ma aysan sheegin inta ay xayiraadahani socon doonaan. Warkaas aad bay uga xumaadeen. Waxay u malaynaysay inay ugu dambeyntii xor tahay, kaliya waxay ogaatay in xanni-baadaha ay sii socon doonaan.

Xarun kale, waxaa la weydiistay inay saxiixdo dukumeenti ku heshiyeey inay xirato jijin anqawga elegtarooniga ah. Way ka labalabaysay, iyada oo aan si buuxda u fahmin waxa ay ka dhigan tahay. Wakiil sare ayaa ka digay in haddii ay diiddo, dib loogu celin doono xabsiga. Cadaadis, ayay saxiixday. Gacanka ayaa ku dheggaan canqowga. Way ooyday iyadoo dareentay in la bahdilay oo loola dhaqmay sidii dambiile.

Ugu dambayntii, waxa lagu soo dajiyay goob basaska laga raaco. Kaliya markaas ayay dib u soo ceshatay taleefankeedii oo ay ku guuleysatay inay la xiriirto ehelkeeda.

Maanta, wali dhib ayey ku haysataa hurdada. Xusuusta gacan-ku-taabashada, wareejinta aan dhammaadka lahayn, ogeysiisyada masaa-furinta, qabowga qaboojinta, iyo gacanka canqowga ayaa weli ku sii hagar-baxaysa. Jir ahaan waa xor, laakiin gudaha wali way u dagaalantaa si ay uga baddaado riyooyinka xidhitaanka ee ku sii jira.

— FRANÇAIS —

Pris au piège entre deux États : le parcours d'un survivant dans un centre de détention de l'ICE

Par l'équipe d'*Amjambo Africa*

Lorsque nous avons rendu visite à Gihozo, pseudonyme d'une Congolaise d'une trentaine d'années vivant aux États-Unis depuis quatre ans, nous avons été frappés par la profondeur de son regard, chargé d'émotion. Bien qu'elle fût physiquement présente, une partie d'elle semblait encore prisonnière de son passé. Elle a courageusement choisi de nous raconter son histoire.

Tout a commencé un soir dans un parking, lorsqu'elle a remarqué une voiture noire qui passait puis faisait demi-tour, ce qui l'a mise mal à l'aise. Après avoir attendu quelques minutes, elle a décidé de partir. Mais alors qu'elle sortait, elle a vu une voiture la suivre, phares éteints. Juste devant elle, une femme a crié qu'elle venait d'être arrêtée par l'ICE. C'est à ce moment-là que Gihozo a compris qu'elle était en danger. Elle a essayé d'accélérer, mais la voiture derrière elle a klaxonné bruyamment. Elle savait qu'il n'y avait pas d'issue. Les agents se sont approchés d'elle et se sont identifiés, mais ils savaient déjà qui elle était. Ils savaient tout : son visa touristique, son entrée par l'Illinois, et bien plus encore. Elle n'a pas résisté, coopérant immédiatement. Les agents lui ont même dit qu'ils appréciaient son attitude.

Elle est montée dans leur véhicule et ils ont roulé pendant environ deux heures, sans qu'elle sache où on l'emmenait. Le conducteur semblait perdu, ce qui ne faisait qu'accroître son anxiété. « Il conduisait comme s'il ne savait pas où il allait », se souvient-elle. À un moment donné, elle a demandé à faire une pause pour aller aux toilettes et les agents ont d'abord refusé, mais elle a insisté

et a fini par obtenir leur accord. Pendant le trajet, ils ont pris d’autres détenus à bord et ils se sont retrouvés à quatre

À Scarborough, les détenus ont été menotés aux mains, aux pieds et à la taille. Au centre de détention, on leur a retiré les menottes ; ils ont été photographiés, fouillés et enregistrés.

À ce moment-là, Gihozo s’est sentie complètement perdue. Elle n’avait pas d’avocat. Une autre femme détenue lui a chuchoté un conseil crucial : appeler Patrick Mulonda, le président de la communauté congolaise, qui avait déjà aidé de nombreuses personnes détenues par l’ICE. Avec l’aide de Mulonda, elle a réussi à joindre un avocat qui a commencé à s’occuper de son dossier. On lui a dit qu’un transfert était prévu à 16 h. Une femme a été libérée après avoir passé son appel, tandis que les autres ont été envoyées à Boston.

À chaque fois que les détenus étaient déplacés, les menottes étaient si serrées que marcher était douloureux. À Boston, elles ont été fouillées à nouveau et entassées dans une pièce trop petite pour y dormir. L’air était lourd, presque suffocant, et les conditions étaient déplorables. On ne recevait rien sans le demander ; il fallait frapper et insister pour obtenir même le strict minimum. Un jour, on a dit aux détenues qu’il n’y aurait pas de douche.

Le deuxième jour, elle a été convoquée pour discuter de son cas. Un agent lui a présenté des documents en anglais et lui a demandé de les signer. Elle a appris qu’elle n’était autorisée à rester aux États-Unis que pendant un mois, et non trois, comme elle le croyait. Elle a refusé de signer sans comprendre les documents et a demandé un avocat, mais on lui a répondu qu’une décision avait déjà été prise.

Grâce à l’aide de Mulonda, un avocat a commencé à s’occuper de son dossier. Un soir, alors qu’on prenait ses empreintes digitales, elle a compris qu’un transfert était imminent et a réussi à prévenir son avocat qu’elle risquait d’être envoyée loin.

Le lendemain matin, très tôt, sans avoir mangé ni pris de douche depuis plusieurs jours, plusieurs détenus ont été menottés et emmenés à l’aéroport. Ils sont montés à bord toujours menottés, en compagnie de quelques femmes africaines – une Anglaise et une Haïtienne – parmi une majorité de personnes originaires d’Amérique du Sud. La plupart des détenus ont été envoyés en Louisiane.

À leur arrivée, ils ont été placés dans une salle d’attente avec des personnes en attente d’expulsion vers la Colombie, le Mexique ou le Venezuela. La panique s’est emparée d’elle. Elle a protesté, expliquant qu’elle venait du Congo et qu’elle ne pouvait pas être envoyée ailleurs. Aucune réponse claire ne lui a été donnée.

Plus tard, elle a été transférée dans un centre de détention en Louisiane où on lui a dit que les dossiers n’étaient pas traités là-bas et qu’elle devait continuer à attendre. Il n’y avait ni vêtements propres ni douches pendant plus de deux jours et demi. Des médecins légistes ont effectué des tests, dont un pour la tuberculose.

Puis vint un autre transfert, cette fois vers le Texas. Pendant le trajet, les conditions semblaient légèrement meilleures. Mais à l’arrivée, les agents ont annoncé que toutes les personnes présentes seraient expulsées. La panique l’a de nouveau envahie. Le lendemain, tous les noms ont été appelés sauf le sien et celui d’une autre femme africaine. On leur a dit que le centre n’accueillait que les personnes faisant l’objet d’une décision d’expulsion définitive, ce qui signifiait qu’elle devait être transférée à nouveau.

Dans ce nouveau centre, la climatisation était glaciale. Les détenus frappaient aux portes pour demander des vestes et des couvertures. L’endroit ressemblait à une prison, et les appels téléphoniques étaient très lim-



ités. Malgré la distance, son audience était toujours prévue à Boston. Grâce à Mulonda et à une organisation partenaire, elle bénéficiait d’une représentation juridique ; son avocat a pu rassembler des preuves, négocier avec le juge et obtenir une caution d’immigration sans que Gihozo ait à se présenter en personne. Son avocat a fait valoir qu’elle était dans un état émotionnel trop fragile.

Mulonda et son organisation partenaire ont payé sa caution, et elle a attendu avec anxiété sa libération. Les jours se sont écoulés sans aucune explication. Finalement, un matin vers cinq heures, elle a été réveillée et on lui a rendu ses vieux vêtements, encore sales. Mais avant de partir définitivement, elle a été transférée une nouvelle fois vers un autre centre. À un moment donné, les agents lui ont expliqué que même après sa libération, elle ne serait pas immédiatement autorisée à travailler, à conduire ou à reprendre une vie normale. Ils n’ont pas précisé combien de temps ces restrictions dureraient. La nouvelle l’a anéantie. Elle pensait être enfin libre, pour se rendre compte que les restrictions allaient perdurer.

Dans un autre centre, on lui a demandé de signer un document par lequel elle acceptait de porter un bracelet électronique à la cheville. Elle a hésité, ne comprenant pas tout à fait ce que cela impliquait. Un agent supérieur l’a avertie que si elle refusait, elle serait renvoyée en détention. Sous la pression, elle a signé. Le bracelet lui a été fixé à la cheville. Elle a pleuré, se sentant humiliée et traitée comme une criminelle.

Finalement, on l’a déposée à une gare routière. Ce n’est qu’alors qu’elle a récupéré son téléphone et réussi à contacter ses proches.

Aujourd’hui, elle a encore du mal à dormir. Les souvenirs des menottes, des transferts interminables, des annonces d’expulsion, du froid glacial et du bracelet électronique la hantent toujours. Elle est libre physiquement, mais à l’intérieur, elle lutte encore pour échapper aux cauchemars de la détention qui persistent.

— ENGLISH —

Trapped Between States: A Survivor’s Journey Through ICE Detention

By Amjambo Africa Staff

When we visited Gihozo, a pseudonym for a Congolese woman in her thirties who has lived in the United States for four years, we were struck by the depth in her eyes — heavy with emotion. Though she was physically present, a part of her still seemed imprisoned by her past. She bravely chose to tell us her story.

It all began one evening in a parking lot, when she noticed a black car passing by and then returning, which made her uneasy. After waiting a few minutes, she decided to

leave. But as she stepped out, she saw a car following her with its headlights off. Just ahead, a woman screamed that she had just been arrested by ICE. It was in that moment Gihozo realized she was in danger. She tried to accelerate, but the car behind her honked loudly. She knew there was no way out. The agents approached her and identified themselves, but already knew who she was. They knew everything: her tourist visa, her entry through Illinois, and more. She did not resist, cooperating immediately. The agents even told her they appreciated her attitude.

She got into their vehicle and they drove for about two hours, with no information about where she was being taken. The driver seemed lost, which only heightened her anxiety. “He drove as if he didn’t know where he was going,” she recalled. At one point, she asked for a bathroom break and the agents initially refused, but she insisted and eventually got their approval. During the ride, they picked up other detainees and they ended up with four or five in the vehicle.

In Scarborough, detainees were handcuffed — hands, feet, and waist. At the detention center, the handcuffs were removed, they were photographed, frisked, and processed.

At that moment, Gihozo felt completely lost. She had no lawyer, but she was allowed to make a phone call. Another detained woman whispered a vital piece of advice: call Patrick Mulonda, the president of the Congolese Community of Maine (COCOMaine) who had helped many people detained by ICE. With Mulonda’s assistance, Gihozo managed to reach a lawyer, who began handling her case. She was told a transfer was scheduled for 4 p.m. One woman was released after making her call, while the others were sent to Boston.

Every time the detainees were moved, the handcuffs were shackled so tightly that walking was painful. In Boston, they were frisked again and packed into a room too small to sleep in. The air was heavy, almost suffocating, and conditions were deplorable. Nothing was given without asking; one must knock and insist to receive even the basics. One day, detainees were told there would be no shower.

On the second day, Gihozo was called to discuss her case. An agent presented documents in English and asked her to sign. She learned she was only allowed to stay in the U.S. for one month, not three, as she had believed. She refused to sign without understanding the documents and asked for a lawyer, but was told a decision had already been made.

Thanks to Mulonda’s help, a lawyer began working on her case. One evening while her fingerprints were being taken, she realized a transfer was imminent and managed to alert

her attorney that she may be sent far away.

The next morning, very early, without having eaten or showered for several days, a number of detainees were handcuffed and taken to the airport. They boarded still in handcuffs, along with a few African women — an Angolan and a Haitian — among a majority of people from South America. A majority of detainees were sent to Louisiana.

Upon arrival, the detainees were placed in a holding room with people awaiting deportation to Colombia, Mexico, or Venezuela. Panic gripped Gihozo. She protested, explaining that she was from Congo and could not be sent elsewhere. No clear answer was given.

Later, she was transferred to a detention center in Louisiana and told cases are not handled there and she must continue waiting. There were no clean clothes and no showers for more than two and a half days. Medical examiners conducted tests, including one for tuberculosis.

Then came another transfer, this time to Texas. During the journey, the treatment seemed slightly better. But upon arrival, agents announced that everyone present would be deported. Panic returned. The next day, all the names were called except hers and that of another African woman. They were told the facility only housed people with final deportation orders, meaning she must be moved again.

In the new facility, the air conditioning was freezing. Detainees knocked on the doors to ask for jackets and blankets. The place resembled a prison, and phone calls were very limited. Despite the distance, her hearing remained scheduled in Boston. Thanks to Mulonda and a partner organization, she had legal representation and counsel was able to gather evidence, negotiate with the judge, and get an immigration bond granted without Gihozo appearing in person. Her lawyer argued she was in too fragile an emotional state.

Mulonda and his assisting organization paid her bond, and she waited anxiously for her release. Days passed without explanation. Finally, one morning around five o’clock, she was awakened and given back her old clothes, still dirty from before. But before leaving for good, she was transferred again to another facility. At one point, agents explained that even after her release

she would not immediately be allowed to work, drive, or return to a normal life. They did not say how long these restrictions would last. The news devastated her. She thought she was finally free, only to realize that the restrictions would continue.

In another center, she was asked to sign a document agreeing to wear an electronic ankle bracelet. She hesitated, not fully understanding what it meant. A senior agent warned that if she refused, she would be sent back to detention. Under pressure, she signed. The bracelet was attached to her ankle. She cried, feeling humiliated and treated like a criminal.

Finally, she was dropped off at a bus station. Only then did she recover her phone and manage to contact her loved ones.

Today, she still has trouble sleeping. The memories of the handcuffs, the endless transfers, the deportation announcements, the freezing cold, and the ankle bracelet still haunt her. She is physically free, but inside still fights to escape the nightmares of detention that linger.



By Raymond P. Diamond



Beth Schultz spoke on February 7, saying that justice is deferred and denied by ICE practices. “We should not forget the nameless, faceless individuals locked up in ICE detention centers,” Schultz added. She also discussed the Epstein files, noting the many victims who have waited decades for justice, asking, “Why do these men ... continue to go about their lives without experiencing any accountability?”

Eric Sharpe, a retired firefighter and singer/songwriter from Cape Elizabeth, also spoke to the crowd. He sang a rendition of a church hymn, chanting that, "This day is

February 21 attendee Alicia Luna shared

Tinsman noted that in his social circles, "... nobody jokes about [the murders in Minneapolis]. Nobody wants to see people die, you know? I don't like it when either side gets hyperbolic."



Maine delegation reacts after Trump dismisses DHS Secretary Kristi Noem

President Donald Trump dismissed Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem on March 5, following a series of controversies surrounding her handling of the administration's immigration crackdown and a \$220 million border security advertising campaign awarded to close political allies.

In a statement posted on Truth Social, Trump announced that he intends to nominate Oklahoma Senator and former mixed martial arts fighter Markwayne Mullin (R-Ga.) to replace her. "The current Secretary, Kristi Noem, who has served us well and has had numerous and spectacular results (especially on the Border!), will be moving to be Special Envoy for the Shield of the Americas, our new Security Initiative in the Western Hemisphere we are announcing on Saturday in Doral, Florida," Trump wrote. "I thank Kristi for her service at 'Homeland.'"

The move came after heated congressional hearings a week before, during which Republicans questioned Noem about the costly advertising campaign that prominently featured her image. A ProPublica investigation last year found that the company awarded the \$220 million contract is run by the husband of Noem's chief DHS spokesman, who has personal and business ties to Noem and her aides.

While Noem insisted the bidding process was conducted properly, Senator John Kennedy (R-La.) countered that his own research suggested otherwise. Trump also denied Noem's claim that he had been aware of the campaign's expenditures.

Noem also faced scrutiny over allegations that she had an affair with her chief advisor, Corey Lewandowski. During testimony before Congress, she did not deny the allegations.

Both Democrats and Republicans also criticized Noem for her handling of a large immigration enforcement surge in Min-



neapolis, Minnesota, as well as the deaths of U.S. citizens Renée Good and Alex Pretti during encounters with immigration agents in January. Under Noem's leadership, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has faced criticism for using aggressive, militarized tactics, surveilling anti-ICE activists, and making arrests without judicial warrants, raising concerns about possible violations of constitutional rights.

In late January, ICE launched "Operation Catch of the Day" in Maine, detaining more than 200 people, many of whom were lawfully present in the United States. In February, the acting assistant director of Boston's ICE field office — which oversees Maine — acknowledged that the agency submitted falsified documents in court regarding immigration arrests that he had previously sworn were accurate. Four federal judges later ordered ICE to immediately release detainees who had been held in Portland after discovering the agency had either submitted falsified documents or ignored judicial orders.

At least 47 immigrants — about a quarter of those arrested during the enforcement surge in Maine — have challenged their detentions and demanded either release or a bond hearing, according to *The Bangor Daily News*. *The Portland Press Herald* confirmed that 35 people who were detained during the operation and who challenged the constitutionality of their arrests in federal court have since been released from ICE custody.

A federal judge in Maine also ordered the Trump administration in early March to "immediately" release a Chinese man who had been detained by immigration agents after the man attempted to prevent someone from committing suicide. Meanwhile, the nonprofit Protect Democracy recently filed a lawsuit against DHS alleging the agency violated the First Amendment rights of two Maine women when an ICE agent filmed them and claimed they were being added to a "domestic terrorist" database simply for lawfully observing immigration arrests in January.

Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Dist. 1) welcomed Noem's dismissal, calling it "long overdue" and describing her tenure as "one of the most corrupt, reckless and disgraceful chapters in the department's history."

"Under Noem's leadership, DHS abandoned its core mission of protecting the American people and instead became a political weapon. Families were torn apart. Communities — including in Maine — were terrorized by violent enforcement tactics," Pingree said. "Lawful residents and American citizens were swept up in operations that too often operated outside the bounds of accountability and basic decency. At the same time, Noem treated the department as a vehicle for her own self-promotion and political ambitions, relying on cynical PR stunts and constant misinformation to obscure the damage being done." Pingree added that the "real architect" behind the administration's immigration policy is Stephen Miller and called for major reforms within DHS.

Rep. Jared Golden (D-Dist. 2) said the decision to remove Noem was "the right decision" and expressed hope that Sen. Mullin "is prepared to do a better job."

Sen. Susan Collins (R) did not release a statement regarding Noem's dismissal. In January 2025, Collins voted to confirm Noem, citing the "need to secure our borders and stem the flow of fentanyl that is destroying lives across our country."

At the time, Collins declined to join two Republican Senate colleagues who had called for Noem's resignation, noting that the DHS secretary had been willing to listen to her concerns about ICE activities. Collins later said Noem agreed to end the ICE enforcement surge in Maine after Collins contacted her directly on her personal cell phone to express concerns about the agency's aggressive tactics.

Maine senators split on resolution to halt U.S. strikes on Iran

By Andy O'Brien

In early March 2026, Maine's congressional delegation split on a resolution that would have required President Donald Trump to halt military strikes on Iran until receiving congressional authorization.

Feb. 28 — Strikes begin

On Feb. 28, the Trump administration and Israel launched large-scale attacks targeting Iranian military installations, killing the country's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The stated aim of the operation was to eliminate Iran's missile and nuclear capabilities. An Iranian elementary school next to a naval facility was also bombed, killing 175 people, many of them schoolgirls, according to Iranian health officials.

Early March — Trump comments and senate hearing

In the first week of March, Trump told Politico that he intends to help determine Iran's next leader. "I'm going to have a big impact, or they're not going to have any settlement, because we're not going to have to go do this again," he said.

During a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on March 3, Maine Sen. Angus King (I) questioned Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Elbridge Colby about the strikes, noting that Iran had not presented an imminent threat to U.S. interests. Colby replied that there was only a "perception" of a threat.

King emphasized that "going to war is the most solemn step that any country can make" and reinforced that the Constitution grants Congress — not the president — the authority to declare war.



Early March — Criticism from Janet Mills

Maine Governor and U.S. Senate candidate Janet Mills criticized the president for launching the strikes without seeking congressional authorization. "He can't simply go out on his own and engage in a dangerous, reckless, unilateral war with another nation or series of nations now without at least consulting and getting authorization from Congress," she told WGME in the first week of March. "There are three branches of government, not one."

March 5 — Congressional resolution vote

On March 5, the Senate voted 53–47 to reject the war powers resolution. Maine Sen.

Susan Collins (R) voted against the resolution, while King voted in favor. In the House, the resolution failed 212–219, with Maine Rep. Chellie Pingree (D-Dist. 1) supporting it and Maine Rep. Jared Golden (D-Dist. 2) opposing it.

Collins defended her vote, arguing the U.S. and Israeli strikes were necessary to stop Iran from pursuing nuclear arms. "Passing this resolution now would send the wrong message to Iran and to our troops," she said. "At this juncture, providing unequivocal support to our service members is critically important, as is ongoing consultation by the administration with Congress."

King, however, questioned the president's legal authority to launch the strikes and ex-

pressed concern about the potential for a ground invasion. "The framers of our Constitution explicitly said that Congress, not the president, declares war," he said.

Public opinion and Maine politics

Polling in early March showed widespread opposition to the strikes. A *Reuters/Ipsos* poll found 27 percent approval among Americans, while a CNN/SSRS poll reported 59 percent opposed. *The Economist/YouGov* poll released on March 4 showed just 32 percent support.

The strikes have also become a focal point in Maine's Democratic Senate primary. Candidate Graham Platner held an anti-war rally in Brewer, criticizing the intervention as influenced by foreign interests. "Nobody wants this war. Absolutely no one thinks this is a good idea, and the reason they don't is because they know what it is actually about," Platner said.

Maine's congressional divide

The resolution highlighted a clear division within Maine's delegation. Collins emphasized military support and deterrence, while King and Democrats prioritized legal authority, congressional oversight, and caution against unilateral action. Pingree criticized the administration's approach and stressed the importance of checks and balances on presidential war powers.



Conservative Anglicans form rival council, challenge Archbishop of Canterbury over same-sex unions

By Ignatius Ssuuna

Conservative Anglicans meeting in Nigeria's capital, Abuja, on Thursday, March 5, established what will be known as the Global Anglican Council, a direct challenge to the first female Archbishop of Canterbury, Sarah Mullally. The move comes as deepening rifts over same-sex unions and theological matters continue to divide the worldwide Anglican Church.

The group, known as Gafcon (Global Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans), said it will now recognize a new leadership council headed by Rwanda's Archbishop Laurent Mbanda, rather than the Archbishop of Canterbury, whom they accuse of supporting same-sex marriage — a departure from what they consider true biblical teaching.

Currently, there are an estimated 95 million Anglicans worldwide, with the Archbishop of Canterbury traditionally serving as their spiritual figurehead.

The appointment of Mullally last year provoked divided opinion, particularly among conservative Christians in Africa and Asia, many of whom believe that only men should be consecrated as bishops. Archbishop Mullally was formally installed in Canterbury March 25, 2026.

Conservative opposition and doctrinal concerns

Gafcon has consistently opposed LGBTQ+ inclusion within the church, demanding "repentance" by liberal congregations that have adopted inclusive policies. Mbanda told *Amjambo Africa* that support for same-sex marriage violates biblical teachings.

"The Bible teaches us that it should be man and wife; anything else is a sin," Archbishop

Mbanda said. He emphasized that Gafcon's concerns are doctrinal, not related to the Archbishop of Canterbury's gender.

Mullally inherits a church grappling with multiple challenges, including declining attendance, internal conflicts between conservative and liberal factions, racism, and disagreements over same-sex marriage. Widely viewed as a theological liberal, she is expected to play a global role in guiding and uniting Anglicans.

"Addressing theological divisions and issues around blessing same-sex marriages and the ordination of women will be a daunting task for the 63-year-old," Gafcon members noted.

Mullally's leadership and vision

Mullally was ordained a priest in 2006 and became the first female Bishop of London in 2018, making her the third most senior member of clergy in the Church of England. She succeeds Justin Welby, who resigned in November 2024 following pressure due to his mishandling of a child abuse scandal within the church.

In her acceptance speech, Mullally described herself as a "person of hope" and vowed to work with bishops, priests, and congregations across the Anglican community to foster unity. She has received warm messages of support from many quarters of the worldwide Anglican Church.

Gafcon's stance and global outreach

"We want to reorder the Anglican communion along the scriptures and right doctrine," said Archbishop Mbanda.

Gafcon members said they will not participate in meetings called by the Archbishop of Canterbury, nor will they

contribute to or receive funds from the traditional Anglican Communion or its networks.

Founded in 2008, Gafcon arose in response to theological differences within the Anglican Church, particularly concerning same-sex unions. The organization claims to represent the largest segment of the global Anglican network, though this figure is not independently verified.

Over 1,300 bishops, clergy, and laypeople attended a 2023 Gafcon conference in Kigali, Rwanda. In October 2025, Gafcon declared itself the Global Anglican Communion, establishing a new structure based on biblical authority and effectively separating from traditional Anglican instruments, including the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Mbanda concluded, "Gafcon can no longer walk with churches that have abandoned the inerrant word of God as the final authority."



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Chronic drought threatens livelihoods in Somalia

By Violet Ikong



Animals quenching their thirst in drought-affected Somalia. Photo | Abdikarim Mohamed/ICRC

Wells and rivers are drying up across Somalia. Families walk for hours to find water, while their livestock roam long distances in search of pasture. After years of recurring drought, the country faces a worsening humanitarian crisis.

Across communities, crop failures and livestock deaths are fueling hunger, robbing families of their livelihood, and uprooting many from their homes. Last year, some areas in the country received less than 30% of the average rainfall. Somalia, on the Horn of Africa, has long struggled with violent social conflict, which continues to claim lives and displace many. Now, failed rains have become another driver of displacement.

Between 2021 and 2023, Somalia faced its worst drought in 40 years, affecting more than eight million people. According to a recent report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), about five million people are affected by drought. In March alone, 6.5 million people are estimated to face acute hunger, while more than 1.8 million children face the risk of malnutrition. According to OCHA, close to 800 schools have been affected by the shortage of rainfall, with 344 of them shut down. As a result, more than 120,000 students are reported to have dropped out.

Responding to the crisis

In a March 2026 report, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Somalia warned that “Without urgent rainfall and a significant scale-up of the humanitarian response, millions of people could slip deeper into emergency levels of hunger.” The ICRC, which has maintained a presence in

relief to communities impacted by both conflict and drought.

“It’s a combined problem that you cannot decouple or address one and leave the other,” Abdikarim Mohamed, communication coordinator of the ICRC in Somalia, told *Amjambo Africa*. According to OCHA, conflict drove most new displacements in Somalia between 2024 and 2025. Separate estimates by the International Organization for Migration suggest that from December 2025 to March 2026, drought could account for a larger share of new displacements.

“The same people who are affected by conflict are also affected by drought. While our mandate focuses on conflict, the widespread effects of drought mean we also provide support to affected communities,” Mohamed said. Since November 2025, the ICRC has supported families and communities through programs including cash assistance and rehabilitation of boreholes to provide water for household use and livestock. These

livestock serve as a source of livelihood for about 60–65% of Somalia’s population and constitute 80% of its national exports, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization.

“[Livestock] is the major backbone of Somalia’s economy. A lot of people have their camels and goats which they use for milk and meat, and

also sell them in the market. Now, repeated episodes of drought are putting traditional livelihoods under significant pressure,” Mohamed said.

The ICRC’s intervention also helps malnourished children, pregnant women, and new mothers, who receive health assistance and high-protein nutritional products in stabilization centers run by the organization.

Somali government response

In November 2025, the Somali government declared drought a national emergency and called for international assistance. The country’s drought response remains heavily reliant on humanitarian aid. However, the global humanitarian sector currently faces significant funding constraints, requiring organizations such as the ICRC to prioritize the most urgent needs.

In February, the United Kingdom pledged £6 million (\$8.05 million) in humanitarian funding to Somalia,

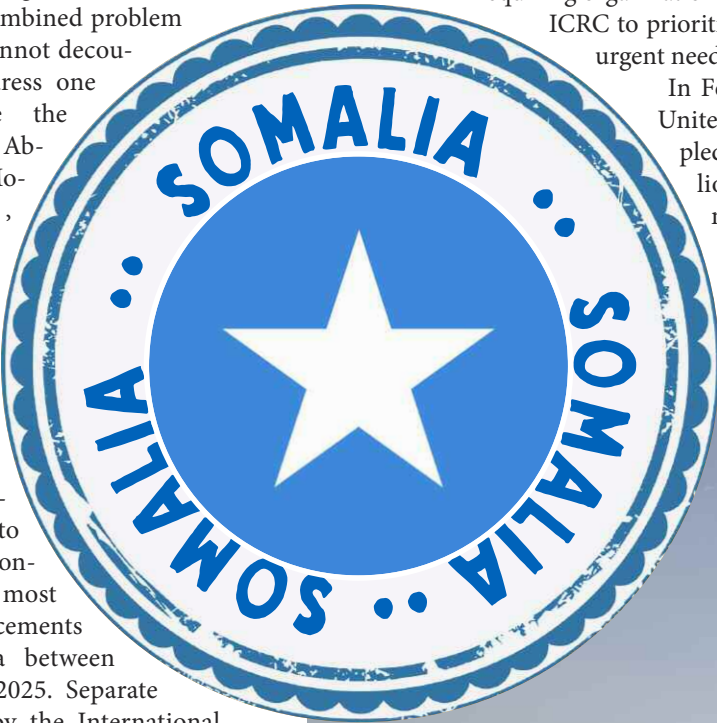
dressed the goals of governmental efforts. “These frameworks aim to move Somalia from reactive humanitarian responses and infrastructure gaps toward more coordinated resilience, climate adaptation, and long-term development planning,” Husu said.

Describing the support of international humanitarian organizations as important, he highlighted that the country is working to strengthen domestic systems and institutions for better drought response. “One of the most important steps in strengthening a country is strengthening its institutions. This includes building stronger national coordination mechanisms and improving planning and monitoring systems,” he said.

The road ahead

As drought continues to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Somalia, Mohamed says long-term measures are needed to help communities become more resilient. This includes supporting fishing communities and farmers with irrigation support and drought-resistant seedlings. “Our livelihood and economic support team at the ICRC carries out some of these responses with communities in different parts of Somalia,” Mohamed said. “But the biggest challenge is it’s not nearly enough, and given the funding challenge, you have to manage between that livelihood support and also emergency support,” he added.

On the government’s plan for the future, Husu emphasized that the country will continue to strengthen its partnership with the public and private sectors to tackle drought. “Somalis are ready to take greater ownership of resilience and development efforts. But transitions take time — systems cannot



Somalis collecting water for domestic use and for their livestock. Photo | Abdikarim Mohamed/ICRC



Abdirahim Husu Mohamed, Senior Advisor and Environment & Climate Resilience Pillar Coordinator under the National Transformation Plan (NTP) at the Ministry of Planning, Investment and Economic Development Somalia for decades, is working to provide

part of a broader £61 million (\$81.8 million) package for the 2025–2026 fiscal year. The funding is expected to reach more than 129,000 people in the worst-affected areas.

Similarly, the European Union recently announced £63 million (\$84.49 million) in humanitarian funding to cover responses to conflict, displacement, and drought.

Last year, Somalia’s federal government launched a five-year National Transformation Plan (NTP) to build on existing programs, including its Nationally Determined Contribution, with a focus on national priorities such as drought. In an interview with *Amjambo Africa*, Abdirahim Husu, Senior Advisor and Environment and Climate Resilience Pillar Coordinator under the NTP at Somalia’s Ministry of Planning, Investment, and Economic Development, ad-

change overnight,” Husu told *Amjambo Africa*.

While the rains remain uncertain and humanitarian organizations struggle to navigate funding shortfalls, Somalia’s path toward tackling drought rests on a delicate balance between emergency relief and long-term resilience. For millions of Somalis, without that balance, the struggle for survival will continue to deepen.



Hunger and violence collide in Ethiopia's Gambella region

By Samuel Getachew

Ethiopia's far southwestern Gambella region is facing a deepening crisis as famine, ethnic tensions, and a growing influx of refugees from neighboring countries push the region toward instability. Gambella — home to more than 400,000 South Sudanese refugees, and, more recently, thousands fleeing the war in Sudan — is struggling to cope with mounting humanitarian and political pressures.

The region is primarily inhabited by two major ethnic groups, the Anuak and the Nuer. For years, Gambella's political and security structures have been divided along tribal lines, often fueling tensions as each side accuses the other of wielding greater political influence and power. These rivalries have repeatedly erupted into deadly violence, creating a long and complicated history of hostility.

The situation escalated last month following the killing of the region's police chief, Umod Ujulu, by his deputy. The incident triggered a wave of ethnic violence between members of the Anuak and Nuer communities. "The situation is desperate. There is a curfew, and there is lawlessness with random and frequent attacks based on ethnicity," Yonas Gatulak told Amjambo. "Those who are able are fleeing the region, while many vulnerable people are left behind and forced to endure the tragic reality on the ground."

Reports indicate that hundreds of people have been killed, prompting Ethiopia's fed-

eral government to deploy troops in an attempt to restore order. "Many residents are living in fear," another resident, Obang Ujulu, said. "Many refugees have left their designated camps and are moving into the city in search of humanitarian assistance, which is already dwindling." The crisis has been worsened by disruptions in humanitarian aid. Last month, several organizations — including the World Food Programme, the region's largest provider of emergency aid — temporarily suspended operations before later resuming them.

The disruption affected thousands of people who rely on food assistance for survival. According to South Sudanese refugee Jonas Yekeni, conditions in the camps are rapidly deteriorating. Food rations have been significantly reduced since cuts to USAID last year, which were initiated at the beginning of the second Trump administration. "Many refugees are facing hunger, and there are very few opportunities for employment," Yekeni said. "Many are even afraid to leave the camps because they fear attacks by local residents. That tension has pushed some people toward violence along ethnic lines." He added that damage to infrastructure across the region is visible and widespread.

The arrival of refugees from Sudan, who have been fleeing the ongoing war that began more than two years ago, has placed additional strain on the already limited resources available in the Gambella region.

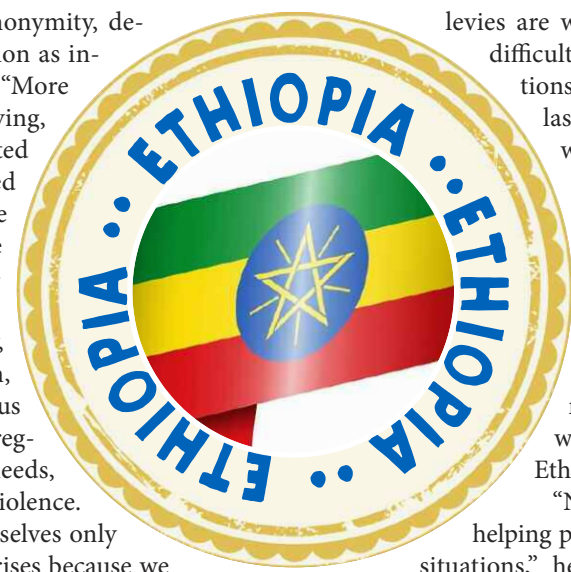
A humanitarian worker in one of the camps,

who requested anonymity, described the situation as increasingly dire. "More refugees are arriving, but there are limited resources to feed and accommodate such a vulnerable population," he said. "Many people are elderly, many are children, and there are serious concerns about pregnancy, medical needs, and even sexual violence."

We often find ourselves only observing these crises because we no longer have the financial capacity to respond."

The president of the Gambella Regional State, Alemitu Omod, has appealed to the federal government for additional support. However, with significant humanitarian needs rising all across Ethiopia, assistance has been slow to arrive in the southwest.

According to the latest outlook from the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, about 15 million Ethiopians are in urgent need of emergency food assistance. With international aid declining, the Ethiopian government has introduced new taxes on communications and fuel as part of an effort to finance domestic solutions to recurring food crises. But many citizens say the new



levies are worsening already difficult economic conditions. Daniel Gebreselassie, a former hotel worker in Gambella who has since relocated to Addis Ababa, said famine and economic pressures are now affecting even middle- and working-class Ethiopians.

"No one is against helping people in such dire situations," he said. "But new taxes added frequently are pushing me to the brink of disaster. I can barely afford food, let alone rent or school fees for my children." Residents also say recent violence has caused significant damage to infrastructure in Gambella's main town, including hotels and restaurants that once supported a modest but growing tourism sector.

Gebreselassie believes the economic decline and insecurity are forcing many young workers to leave the region in search of better opportunities elsewhere. "That is why many people my age are abandoning the town," he said. "And it is why I fear Gambella — my adopted city — may face a very bleak future."

US imposes visa restrictions on senior Rwandan officials as eastern DRC conflict escalates

By Ignatius Ssuuna

The United States has imposed visa restrictions on senior Rwandan government officials, following earlier sanctions targeting the Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) and its top commanders. The measures are part of Washington's effort to pressure Rwandan capital Kigali to withdraw troops and military equipment from eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), a region long plagued by instability and armed conflict.

On March 2, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control announced sanctions against the RDF and four senior commanders: Lieutenant General Mubarakh Muganga, chief of defence staff; Major General Vincent Nyakarundi, army chief of staff; Major General Ruki Karusisi, commander of the 5th Infantry Division; and Brigadier General Stanislas Gashugi, commander of the Special Operations Force.

In Washington, the move was framed as enforcement of The Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity. "We expect the immediate withdrawal of Rwanda Defence Force troops, weapons, and equipment," U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent said. "The parties to The Washington Accords must uphold their obligations."

Signed on December 4, 2025, The Washington Accords for Peace and Prosperity call for Rwanda to withdraw from Congolese territory and for DRC President Félix Tshisekedi's government to cease alleged support for the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR), a group that includes individuals accused of participating in the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

Rwanda rejected the sanctions, describing them as "unjust and unfounded," and reiterated that its security posture is defensive. "Protecting our country is a badge of honour which the Rwanda Defence Force carries very proudly," the government said in a

statement.

Kagame addresses diplomats

Rwandan President Paul Kagame addressed diplomats in Kigali on Thursday, March 5, emphasizing that peace agreements should bind all parties equally.

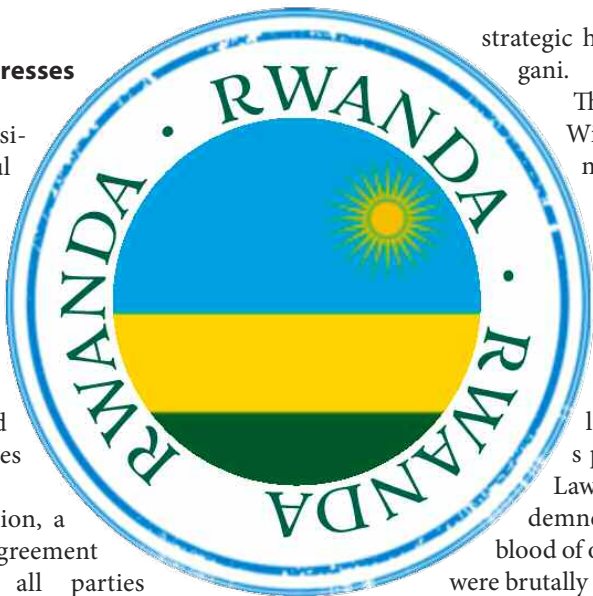
"By definition, a signed peace agreement should bind all parties equally and implementation should follow the text. However, this has not been our experience. What we see instead is that one party is expected to carry almost the whole burden," Kagame said.

"As things stand, Rwanda faces an impossible choice: to either tolerate the continued presence of the FDLR and its growing network of militias near our border, or to defend ourselves and be condemned for it. The choice is, therefore, very clear. In our position, would any other country make a different choice?" he added.

Escalating fighting and territorial control

The March 23 Movement (M23), currently affiliated with the Alliance Fleuve Congo led by former Congolese electoral chief Corneille Nangaa, has consolidated its presence in parts of North and South Kivu. M23 has controlled Goma, the capital of North Kivu and largest city in eastern Congo, and Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu, since early 2025. The coalition advocates for a federal state in the DRC.

Fighting between Congolese government forces and the M23 rebel movement has escalated. The FARDC, the Congolese loyalist army, continues operations to counter the rebels, including drone deployments from



strategic hubs such as Kisan-gani.

The killing of Colonel Willy Ngoma, M23's military spokesperson, on February 24 in the Rubaya operational zone by a FARDC drone strike has fueled hardened rhetoric from the rebels. Alliance Fleuve Congo spokesperson Lawrence Kanyuka condemned the strike: "The blood of our compatriots who were brutally murdered, as well as that of several of our soldiers, including our military spokesperson comrade Colonel Willy Ngoma, will neither be forgotten nor passed over in silence," he said. "The Kinshasa regime and its criminal coalition bear full responsibility for these heinous crimes."

Kanyuka defended M23's military posture near Kisangani, stating, "Our forces carried out a targeted operation to neutralize and destroy drones that were about to be launched to massacre civilians and attack our positions. This action falls within our patriotic duty to protect innocent populations."

Minerals and strategic leverage

Control over territory and natural resources underpins the conflict. Rubaya, home to one of the world's largest coltan deposits, supplies tantalum used in mobile phones, computers, military equipment, and other advanced technologies. Control of Rubaya provides both a military advantage and strategic economic leverage in global supply chains.

U.S. Senior Advisor for Africa Massad Boulos blamed M23 and Rwanda for the latest surge in violence, calling it a "serious breach" of The Washington Accords. Despite diplomatic pressure and mediation efforts in Doha, Qatar, fighting continues, displacing

thousands of civilians, including women and children.

Regional risks and deployments

Temporary M23 occupation of Uvira, near the Burundian border, underscored the fragility of security in Africa's Great Lakes region. Although M23 later withdrew under international pressure, the episode raised fears of wider confrontation.

Deployments by Burundi and Rwanda to their respective borders have further heightened regional tensions. An internal Congolese report reviewed by *Amjambo Africa* notes that Burundi has deployed more than 29,000 soldiers to support FARDC and Wazalendo militias against M23. Rwanda continues to deny direct support to M23, though a UN Group of Experts report in December 2025 documented 5,000 to 7,000 Rwandan troops operating alongside M23 inside Congolese territory.

Fragile diplomacy and uncertain trajectory

The Washington Accords was intended as a roadmap for de-escalation: Rwanda would withdraw, Kinshasa would address the FDLR threat, and both sides would implement confidence-building measures. Instead, accusations of noncompliance dominate the narrative.

For Washington, sanctions represent leverage. For Kigali, they signal bias. For Kinshasa, they validate allegations of external interference. For M23, they reinforce a narrative of resistance. Meanwhile, civilians continue to bear the brunt of the fighting, with camps swelling and mineral-rich hills contested by armed groups.

Whether The Washington Accords become a turning point or another failed diplomatic attempt will depend on concrete steps: verifiable troop withdrawals, credible security guarantees, and sustained regional dialogue. In eastern Congo, the boundary between insurgency and interstate confrontation is narrowing — and the stakes are higher than ever.

Governor unveils supplemental budget, advocates call for more funding to offset federal SNAP and MaineCare cuts

By Andy O'Brien

Last month, Gov. Janet Mills unveiled her \$275 million supplemental budget, dubbed the Affordability Agenda, aimed at reducing costs for Mainers. The plan includes funding to offset federal cuts to Medicaid and food assistance, make community college permanently free for all Maine students, reduce housing construction costs, and provide tax relief measures. The supplemental budget uses additional revenues of \$248.4 million projected over the next two years, raising the state's biennial budget to \$11.93 billion.

"Through this proposal, we are delivering financial relief to Maine people, addressing high housing costs, and making free community college — a highly successful program for Maine students — permanent," said Mills in a statement. "At the same time, we are maintaining core commitments, like funding for education and for health care, that help lower costs for folks across our state."

The budget includes \$218.5 million from the state's "rainy day" fund to provide \$300 checks to about 725,000 Mainers and \$70 million to build 825 additional affordable homes. Previously, the Legislature made community college free only through the high school graduating class of 2025, but this budget makes it free for all Maine students into the future. Mills' plan also proposes gradually

raising minimum teacher salaries from \$40,000 to \$45,000 in fall 2027, to \$47,500 in fall 2028, and to \$50,000 in fall 2029.

Advocates call for more SNAP funding to offset federal cuts

The governor's supplemental budget would also provide \$14.7 million to address significant federal cost shifts to the state for MaineCare and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) under President Donald Trump's One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). However, at a public hearing, low-income advocates argued that the OBBBA is projected to increase SNAP costs by 444 percent.

According to the hunger relief nonprofit Full Plates Full Potential, Maine will either need to pay \$53 million more for SNAP benefits in October 2027 than it does now, or be forced to cut that same amount from SNAP benefits. The OBBBA will also require Maine to increase its budget by \$20 million a year for SNAP administration costs.

Anna Korsen, Deputy Director with Full Plates Full Potential, argued that the state should raise taxes on the wealthiest Mainers to help offset the federal cuts and fully fund SNAP.

"We envision a Maine free from hunger, but if we continue to fund short-term policies and refuse to reform our tax code, we will never end hunger in Maine," Korsen wrote. "SNAP is our most successful and effective tool for preventing hunger, and its future is uncertain because of the federal administration's choice to fund tax breaks for billionaires rather than food for the working poor, children, and older adults."

Full Plates Full Potential is a member of Mainers for Tax Fairness, a coalition supporting measures to bring in more state revenue by taxing the wealthiest Mainers. Priority bills include LD 1089, sponsored by Rep. Cheryl Golek (D-Dist. 99, Harpswell), which would place a 2 percent surcharge on incomes over \$1 million, bringing in \$143 million over the next two years. The coalition is also backing LD 1879, sponsored by Rep. Bill Pluecker (I-Dist. 44, Warren), which would increase Maine's top corporate tax rate to 8.93 percent on corporate profits over \$3.5 million.

The Maine Immigrants' Rights Coalition (MIRC) also expressed support for progressive tax policies to help pay for federal SNAP cuts, noting that immigrant families will be particularly harmed if Maine is forced to cut MaineCare and food assistance. Ruben Torres, MIRC's Advocacy and Policy Manager, criticized the Governor's plan to send \$300 checks, arguing that the money could be more effectively used to offset cuts to MaineCare and SNAP.

"For immigrant households, including mixed-status families and newly work-authorized individuals, loss of these supports directly undermines workforce participation and economic integration," said Torres.

"When residents delay care or rely solely on emergency systems, costs shift rather than disappear. One-time relief payments, while helpful in the short term, cannot substitute for sustained health coverage or nutrition assistance."



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Mills responds to Trump administration’s Medicaid fraud investigation By Andy O’Brien



Gov. Janet Mills has fired back at President Donald Trump’s administration over its allegations of overbilling in MaineCare, the state’s Medicaid program. On Feb. 6, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Administrator Mehmet Oz announced that he was targeting Democratic-run states, including Maine, with investigations into alleged Medicaid overbilling and improper payments. Dr. Oz demanded that Maine answer 33 questions within 30 days regarding allegations that the state made \$45.6 million in improper or potentially improper payments for rehabilitative and community support services for children with autism. However, the report does not allege that any fraud occurred.

The governor sent a 50-page response to CMS detailing MaineCare practices and outlining measures her administration has taken to detect and combat Medicaid fraud. In a video message on March 6, Mills said MaineCare providers are held to the highest standards of care and that the state has “robust procedures and enforcement mechanisms to identify fraud.” She also criticized the Trump administration, calling the allegations a “thinly disguised attempt to attack and intimidate those who fight the President’s abuses of power.”

“Look, as District Attorney, as your Attorney General, and as your Governor, I have always cracked down on fraud. I have been going after criminals since before Dr. Oz was on TV peddling fake supplements to the American people,” said Mills. “And I’ve often worked hand-in-hand with the federal government because going after fraud should be a collective, professional effort between the State and Federal government. But under this President, addressing alleged fraud has

become a political cudgel that he is using to desperately distract from his failing agenda.”

Mills has frequently clashed with Trump, famously telling him “I’ll see you in court” at the White House last year in response to threats to cut federal funding to Maine over the state’s policy allowing transgender student athletes to play in women’s sports. Mills argued that the Trump administration is using “allegations of fraud as a pretense to send ICE and other weaponized federal agents into states led by Democrats.”

The Trump administration sent thousands of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents to Minneapolis to arrest immigrants after a right-wing influencer made unsubstantiated claims alleging systemic fraud in the city’s Somali-run day care centers. Several hundred ICE agents were also sent to Maine following allegations that Gateway Community Services LLC, a Somali-founded company, committed fraud in billing for interpretation services. The Maine Attorney General’s office is currently investigating the company.

In a statement, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) noted that CMS has not alleged that Maine providers of rehabilitative and community support services for people with autism and intellectual disabilities have committed fraud. The agency said it simply flagged that MaineCare fee-for-service payments for these services increased significantly from 2019 to 2023. The Mills administration attributes these increases to growth in member population, expanded behavioral health services, reimbursement rate increases, and higher service utilization.

“These increases, necessarily, resulted in increased costs, but also served the health care needs of Maine patients and their families,” Maine DHHS wrote in February.

Mills highlighted that Maine’s Medicaid payment error rate is just 2.4 percent, less than half the national average of 6.1 percent. According to the nonpartisan health policy organization KFF, most improper Medicaid payments are due to providers not providing sufficient documentation for services provided.

Mills also criticized the Trump administration for first sharing its communications regarding the investigation with a right-wing news outlet, The Maine Wire, before sending them to the Governor. On Feb. 7,

Dr. Oz sent a letter denying the Mills administration’s request for more time to answer questions, and the outlet ran an “exclusive” story before the state received the correspondence.

The right-wing “Somali fraud” narrative

The Maine Wire has published several thinly sourced stories alleging that Somali-run providers for people with disabilities are committing Medicaid fraud. Families of patients receiving services have disputed these claims.

Claudia Millett of Stoneham told Amjambo Africa that last month The Maine Wire visited the Lewiston home of

her 22-year-old son, who has severe autism requiring round-the-clock care.

She said that while her son was eating lunch, a reporter and camera operator knocked on the door. Later that day, The Maine Wire posted the video on social media.

In the video, Republican activist Jon Fetherston is seen knocking on the door and disclosing the street where Millett’s son lives. Fetherston claimed he “received numerous tips from neighbors” about poor conditions inside. A staffer refused to come to the door, citing HIPAA protections. Fetherston later appeared on the outlet’s podcast, claiming that warning signs such as disheveled blinds and the staff’s refusal to talk indicated mistreatment.

“What is the secrecy in these homes? Why are people hiding inside these homes? You’re doing everything you can to prove you’re guilty,” Fetherston said. “I am just getting extremely worried about the care being provided for the people in these houses because it’s obvious that they’re not getting the care that they need.”

The Maine Wire Editor-in-Chief Steve Robinson concluded without evidence that Millett’s son’s home was “being used as a money-making scheme and free shelter for the paroled illegal alien population,” later suggesting on social media that Medicaid be abolished and direct care workers deported. Millett said the outlet could have asked her about her son but did not.

“I was upset,” Millett told Amjambo Africa. “I am shocked because my son has meltdowns and he’s very sensory oriented. He’s level three autism, he’s nonverbal and he doesn’t understand stuff like that. With somebody banging on the door, he could have gone to the window in just a pull-up or shorts, and they would have been saying

stuff about that.”

She added that the staff at her son’s Lewiston home are attentive and caring. “They’re very nice. They’re knowledgeable and really good with my son. Sure, there’s been some issues, but everything is fine now. He’s not being neglected. The group home manager who works there is awesome with my son.”

MaineCare staffing challenges

The Section 21 MaineCare program typically reimburses providers for one-on-one care for clients with very high needs, making it one of the costliest MaineCare services. Chronic underfunding has kept direct care wages low, between \$15.77 and \$19.61 per hour depending on location, experience, and employer, making recruitment and retention difficult. Despite recent increases, about 2,254 people remain on the waiting list, according to the Maine Coalition for Housing & Quality Services. Families often have to quit jobs to care for loved ones, creating financial strain.

Immigrants seeking asylum from Africa have become a crucial part of Maine’s direct care workforce. The proportion of people of color in the state’s healthcare workforce rose from 4 percent in 2014 to 10 percent in 2025.

Political fallout

In response to The Maine Wire stories and the Trump administration investigation, Republican leaders in the Legislature have accused Gov. Mills of failing to address what they call “systemic fraud.”

Senate Minority Leader Trey Stewart (R-Dist. 2, Aroostook) held a press conference on March 10 to announce an after-the-deadline bill that would require a third-party, independent review of MaineCare fraud, impose work requirements for recipients, and freeze enrollment with a goal of reducing participation by 10 percent.

“This bill is timely, this bill is necessary and I am asking that our Democrat colleagues allow it to just move forward for a hearing,” Stewart said.

Because the bill was submitted after the deadline, it would require Democratic leadership support to be considered. Meanwhile, Mills says the Trump administration’s MaineCare investigation outcome is “predetermined” and expects the President to “retaliate against Maine” by withholding federal Medicaid funding.

“Nearly 400,000 Maine people, seniors, children, veterans and people with disabilities, rely on MaineCare,” said Mills in her March 6 video message. “But make no mistake, if the Trump administration attempts to halt Medicaid payments, the Attorney General and I will not hesitate to see him in court to preserve critical healthcare for Maine people.”





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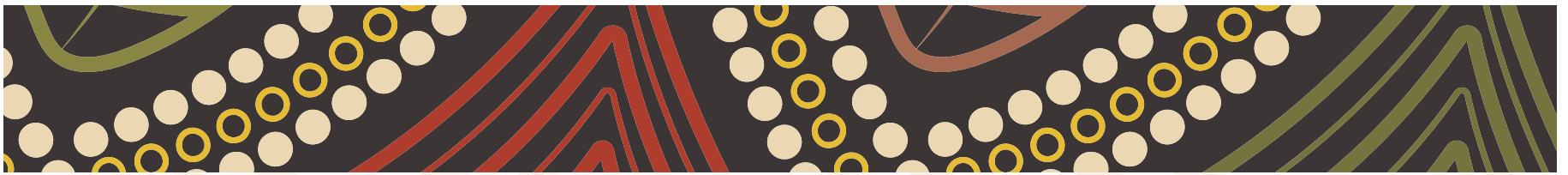
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