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Africa Peace Tour Comes to Illinois Wesleyan University

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.--On April 8, at 4 p.m., in the Beckman Auditorium of The Ames Library, 1 Ames Plaza, two Africa Peace Tour (APT) speakers will visit Illinois Wesleyan University.

The theme for the 17th annual educational tour of African speakers is "U.S. Africa Policy in the aftermath of the eleventh of September, 2001." Tour speakers will encourage the audience to join them in examining the impact of the New York and Washington attacks on U.S. policy toward Africa. In addition, the speakers will review the north/south economic relationship, the effects of arms transfers from the west to challenge the audience to learn more about U.S. policy towards the African continent.

One of the goals of the Peace Tour "is to help students break out of their preconceptions about Africa and its people," said Neal Holmes, one of the organizers of the tour. The Africa Peace Tour believes that community education makes for good public policy.

According to Bakary Tandia, one of the Peace Tour speakers, "Most Americans have many misconceptions about Africa. For example, many think of African countries as poor, when, in fact, they have valuable natural resources like coffee, gold, iron ore, and the dust like product used in computers and game boys. What they need is a fair rate of exchange for those resources, which would reduce the outflow of Africa's wealth."

The Africa Peace Tour has brought speakers to American universities and communities since 1986. Jerry Herman, the director and coordinator for APT has a long history of work in Southern Africa, and has traveled extensively throughout the continent. For more information about the tour, contact Herman at (856) 307-9591 or e-mail him at jh4263@aol.com. Illinois Wesleyan contacts are William Munro, assistant professor of political science and Rebecca Gearhart, assistant professor of Anthropology at IWU.

About the Speakers

Faustin Twagiramungu

Faustin Twagiramungu is a former Rwandan Prime Minister. He was a leading voice in the call for including the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) in the Rwandan government.

The Arusha Peace Accord, signed between the Rwandan government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, chose him Prime Minister designate during the genocide (1994). With the help of the U.S. embassy in Kigali, Twagiramungu escaped from a neighbor's home, where he was rescued with an armored personnel vehicle. While his immediate family survived, most of his brothers and sisters were killed.

Twagiramungu left the country rolled up inside a tarp that the UN Mission in Rwanda had arranged to load onto one of their cargo planes. This occurred under the watchful eye of the extremist. After genocide, he was chosen by the RPF to become Prime Minister.

As the Rwandan Prime Minister he worked at ending the violence in the country, however, he resigned as Prime Minister after serving one year.

Bakary Tandia

Bakary Tandia is a human rights activist from the country of Mauritania. He has been especially active on the issue of slavery in Mauritania and the lack of southern representation in the Mauritanian government. Tandia's other concerns center around land expropriation, physical abuse against Africans, and forced exile of Africans and others who oppose President Taya's government.

Tandia has been active in lobbying UN missions, NGO's, the U.S. State Department and other European countries to apply pressure to the Mauritanian government to release Boubacar Messaoud, an imprisoned antislavery leader. He also played a major role at the World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa in August and September of 2001. It was Tandia's intervention at a plenary session that challenged the South Africans present to speak out against slavery on the African continent.