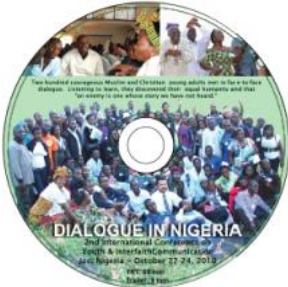


DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA ~ Models of engagement replicated in Ivory Coast **Step #5: Albino ~ Non-Albino Reconciliation in Cote d'Ivoire**

Beginning January, 2012, inspired by a powerful 2010 model of face-to-face communication by Nigerian "enemies" and the 2012 documentary film about it, [DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future](#), a small team in Cote d'Ivoire duplicated among diverse women, men, and youth [similarly successful meetings](#) (1) near home in Abidjan, (2) among conflicted Akuedo Ebrie adversaries, then (3) among distant Duekoue's aggrieved villagers. Again in Duekoue was (4) a historic [Dozos-Guerre Tribal Reconciliation](#). All were facilitated by Offuh James OFFUH, president and founder of the NGO -- [ONG United for Peace Against Conflict International \(UFPACI\)](#) in Abidjan.



In Spring, 2013, the Cote d'Ivoire team became aware of prejudice, violence, isolation, and medical hardships endured by Albino citizens. The women and men of UFPACI were also inspired by the earlier April [Albino ~ Non-Albino face-to-face meeting, education, and healing in Kinshasa, DR Congo](#).

Part 1: Meeting, Learning with Albino Leadership

Mid-September, 2013, Offuh James OFFUH was further awakened to the social and economic exclusion of Albino citizens in Cote d'Ivoire, and how they are targeted for diabolic ritual cruelty, abuse, and death because of their skin color and of ancient superstition.

Thursday afternoon, 26 September 2013, Offuh invited to his Abidjan office **Mr. Alain Lamkan COULIBALY**, president of the Ivory Coast Albinos Association. For two hours they discussed in the office then over lunch many details about the social and workplace discrimination and marginalization suffered by the Albino community of Cote d'Ivoire.



"My heart was gripped with sorrow and anger," wrote Offuh, hearing from Coulibaly's lips how people spit at Albinos and flee from them in public places, and neither public nor private companies give them employment opportunities. Offuh determined to transform with Sustained Dialogue this mistreatment and dehumanizing of Albinos in Africa and beyond.



Part 2: Listening More, Planning Together

By Saturday morning, 28 September, in a Plateau Dokui commune restaurant, Abidjan, Mr. Alain Lamkan COULIBALY with members of the Albinos Association of Cote d'Ivoire met together with Mr. Offuh James OFFUH and members of the ONG UFPACI. They intended to listen and learn from the story narratives of the Albino brothers and sisters living with albinism, and who are victims of discrimination and marginalization of epidemic proportion because of the color and nature of their skin.



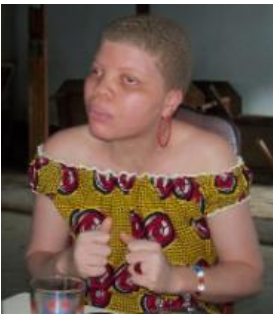
Mr. COULIBALY enumerated how Albinos suffer nationwide social exclusion, prejudice, segregation, and economic job exclusion even with competence and academic qualifications. Employers see their skin and automatically reject Albinos without skill testing. Alain proposes creating public awareness and sensitivity about albinism to alleviate ignorance and fear. Problems of eye sensitivity to sun and vision plead for help to improve the 75% illiteracy rate among Albinos. Sun block creams and medicine are needed to prevent and heal skin lesions that degenerate into skin cancer.

Medical prescriptions for dermatologic and ophthalmologic treatment often go unfilled in Cote d'Ivoire, with little compassion from the larger community. The Albinos hope ONG UFPACI will make a difference to improve their condition.

Mr. Dacoury NARCISSE narrated his stories, including about his attempted suicide due to prejudice and rejection from society. His vision problem caused painful difficulties in his school studies. He suggested that Albinos have their own school to meet their educational and medical needs. He also pleaded for creating public awareness and community psychological support in the face of constant trauma from discrimination and medical neglect. He also explained his dating challenges, as no woman with black skin wants to date or enter into marriage with an Albino. He said, "In public they are afraid of us and call us all manner of offensive names." Some superstitious people still give power to magic, wishing to kidnap Albinos to use them and their body parts for rituals. So Albinos have great fears of people with black skin.



Miss Rita Estelle TOMETY told her own stories of facing continual rejection from the society, most painfully by the family of a man in black skin who sincerely wishes to marry her. "We don't bring Albinos into our family," they'd say. This once caused Rita to attempt suicide. She spoke of her bad vision and skin problem and asked for help to create awareness in Cote d'Ivoire society.



Rita pleaded for health care assistance for the skin problems and poor vision. She prays for an end to derogatory, hurtful names she and other Albinos often hear in public, like "Toubabou" (white foreigner) and "Gbamlè mouso". Maltreatment like this mockery and disapproval haunts her daily.

Mr. Doumbia DJAKARIDJA explained his troubles: "The society rejects me. They mock me. For this reason I hide indoors from being seen and shamed by others in black skin. Nobody wants to help us. They say we are demons and call us many names that make us angry." He continued: "My elder brother was also Albino. He suffered skin problems. Nobody helped us. Then he died of skin cancer."

"Look at my body. I am suffering the same skin cancer. Maybe what happened to my elder brother will soon happen to me. But I have hope that ONG UFPACI can help save us from all these troubles." Doumbia suggests correcting the Albino's inaccurate public image and creating awareness to alleviate ignorance, fear, and prejudice. He added: "Then we can be accepted in dignity and honor for our equal humanity. All Albinos in Cote d'Ivoire are suffering the same general problems. We need your help!!!!."



The meeting resulted in urgent plans for Part #3 to dramatically expand the circle by bringing face-to-face 250 Albinos and Non-Albinos of Cote d'Ivoire on Friday and Saturday, 25-26 October, 2013. The purpose would be to (1) apply Sustained Dialogue toward creating awareness of albinism with intercultural, civil communication, and (2) provide symbolic humanitarian aid of sun hats and sunglasses, with support from the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue in California, USA.

Family Photo

Women and men of ONG UFPACI and Albinos Association of Cote d'Ivoire



By Sunday, 13 October 2013, two more planning meetings were held. First, two planners from the UFPACI core team met with the president and secretary general of the Albinos Federation of Cote d'Ivoire in its Triechville commune office, in Abidjan.

UFPACI organizers then gathered to exchange ideas for making the 25-26 October Albino ~ Non-Albino encounter a success.



Further complications arose, including fear among Albino leaders and groups of possibly enduring yet more of the usual, painful public rejection, stigmatizing, and abuse.

Planners required 10 additional days to build trust with the larger Albino community before agreeing to co-host Part 3: the First Albino ~ Non-Albino All-Day Dialogue Conference in Cote d'Ivoire, Friday, 01 November 2013, reported at <http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriaivorycoast.htm>



Reported by Offuh James OFFUH
[ONG UFPACI](#) - COTE D'IVOIRE

