

Albino ~ Non-Albino Reconciliation in Democratic Republic of Congo

April 2013



[Virginia and Ellesse Bafandjo](#) live in Commune de Lemba, Kinshasa, DR Congo. They dedicate their lives to helping local youth and adults receive adequate education, health care, social services, and communication skills to overcome violence in their culture.

In January 2012, they requested by e-mail and received by airmail their nation's first DVDs of the new, how-to documentary film, [DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future](#) . They wrote:



The film is a whole treasury...a mighty instrument to help the people of the nations emerge from danger. It's medicine for our "Human Relationship Deficiency Virus - HRV," to help our community, authorities, youth, families...for great changing. Spread it as far as possible!!

February 2012 to March 2013 in Kinshasha, with courage and creativity they used practices in the film to bring together diverse youth and adults for successful, face-to-face communication and relationship healing. Preserved online are photos and stories of [Steps #1-5 in Kinshasha: Learning Principles of Engagement](#).

Saturday, 06 April 2013 -- Kinshasa, DR Congo

Step #6: Film Screening & Face-to-Face Albino ~ Non-Albino Reconciliation

Diverse women and men met 9:00 am-12:00 noon at the playground on Lonzo Street #1, in the Kimpwanza Quarter of the Lemba District, eastern Kinshasa. The early hour indoors was to respect the sensitivity to sunlight of Albinos' eyes and skin, and the rainy season.



1. Reasons for relating with Albinos

- A. Albino are treated as second-class citizens here.
- B. They are victims of great discrimination.
- C. They are subjects of several myths and superstitions so that:
 - Some people don't greet Albinos, fearing then being haunted and in danger anywhere they go.
 - Some say and are convinced that if you greet an Albino you will give birth to an Albino.
 - Other people believe that to be an Albino is synonymous with being a witch.
 - Others fear that having an Albino in a family is a curse.
- D. Albinos are victims of violence and sometimes murder :
 - In some communities here, people seek Albino sex organs and other body parts for fetish reasons.
 - Some mums give birth to an Albino then kill the child.
 - Albinos are poisoned.

E. For Albinos, life can become bitter from loneliness, self-condemnation, physical abuse, and daily emotional suffering.

2. Objectives

The planners gave great energy and time preparing to hold this meeting to:

- A. Humanize Albinos
- B. Dignify Albinos
- C. Bring love to Albinos
- D. Share with Albinos the new tool of communication against the indifference, to help them engage and succeed in the great fight for integration into the community and to be accepted like in the Nigerian film.
- E. Experience together the moving, exciting face-to-face, heart-to-heart moments between Albino and non-Albinos so that together they can engage beyond the racial difference then become ambassadors of inclusiveness and creating true community.
- F. Help non-Albinos to be engaged in the fight to overcome discrimination against Albinos, and to really know their personal stories and problems then cease considering them as enemies.

3. Privilege of Special Guest

Participants felt privileged with the presence of Mwimba Texas, president of all the Albinos in Congo and creator of his Mwimba Texas Foundation. Freshly arrived from Belgium, Texas deeply wished to participate in the meeting.

Mwimba Texas is the most famous Albino in DR Congo and a champion of integration and acceptance into society. He is also a famous, former wrestling champion of all Africa, and is fondly called "The Champion." His participation that day had great meaning for the others. He was amazed and very interested by everything that happened, especially during the face-to-face moments between Albinos and non-Albinos.



4. Conference Program

Eight important moments during the day included :

- A. Teachings and film screening of *DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA: Muslims & Christians Creating Their Future*.
- B. Face-to-face, heart-to-heart moments between Albinos and non-Albinos.
- C. Testimonies of Albinos and non-Albinos about messages of the film and teachings.
- D. Reflections of Mwimba Texas, president of the Albinos in Congo.
- E. Song of an Albino, Filston Otshund, concerning their integration and acceptance.
- F. Dancing between Albinos and non-Albinos.
- G. Sharing food.
- H. Assistance of sunglasses and skin cream.

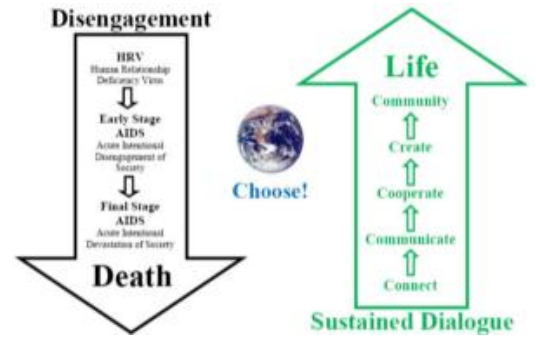
A. Teachings and film screening of *DIALOGUE IN NIGERIA*

Invited Albinos and non-Albinos carefully followed the film and other teachings. This clarified for everybody the dangers of perpetual conflict, separation, and indifference. It defined the necessity of a Sustained Dialogue for creating a true community to stay alive together. As always, they used the diagram of Mr. Emmanuel Ande Ivorgba about the danger greater than HIV/AIDS -- HRV, Human Relationship Deficiency Virus -- and the imperative of communication excellence.



The conference was planned and facilitated by Kinshasa resident, Elesse Hanoc Bafandjo, whose earlier initiatives to bring people face-to-face increased his depth of knowledge and skills to teach new artisans of listening, storytelling, and peacebuilding.

Mr. Bafandjo translated the deep messages into French and Lingala, reaching the hearts of all the participants while speaking for 50 minutes. In each participant he saw deep attention, interest, and emotions. He observed his Albino partners having some problems with seeing the film, because of the smallness of the computer screen and also because of the warm weather. "However," Bafandjo wrote, "we experienced that cinema can help create community and improve relationships."



B. Face -to-face, heart-to-heart moments between Albinos and non-Albinos

Bafandjo reflected: "Ho, what an exciting, moving emotional and unforgettable moment! This point was one of the most important of our gathering !"

Albinos and non-Albinos sat down knee-on-knee, face-to-face and surely heart-to-heart. They exchanged their story with each other, and then understood that "the enemy is the one whose story we don't know."

Snaps were taken to illustrate and remember this wonderful moment. The exchanges were very, very deep and very interesting !



Albinos expressed their pain and sorrow, and how they are rejected and discriminated against because of their nature.

They did their best to help everyone understand that they are part of humankind with the breath and blood. They explained the real reason of their Albinism.



At this moment, an Albino, (Ms.) Maman Moseka, began to cry -- weeping during the exchange while telling her personal story then finally thanking Ellesse Bafandjo for the initiative so full of love for Albinos who are in "a sort of prison." She continued to say that she has never seen this kind of idea, this person-to-person activity.

And Mwimba Texas, surprised by the method, commented that the face-to-face moment was wonderful -- a great nurturer of relations, a powerful contribution for the fight he is leading, an invention of genius. Texas suggested with conviction the regular organization of this kind of gathering.

C. Testimonies of Albinos and non-Albinos about messages of the film and teachings

In the beginning, participants were asked two questions:

- (1) What in the film touched you, had meaning for you?
- (2) What new possibility or initiative was awakened in you?

Ms. Henrica (Albino): *"I appreciate the initiative and encourage other Albinos to participate. I miss words to express what I'm feeling in this special gathering. I thank Mr. Ellesse and his wife, Virginia. From the film I was touched by the degree of destruction that can come from indifference to unresolved misunderstanding about matters of religion, ethnicity, and race. A new possibility was awakened in me -- my decision, my engagement to work even hardly for inclusiveness in the community by means of a sustained dialogue."*

Madame Tele Lungungu (Non-Albino): *"First of all, the initiative is wonderful and the program exciting and instructive. All I can is that, we are dying together with our community because we have a lack of knowledge and we miss this efficient process to solve to solve problems. When I entered this room, the diagram on the blackboard seemed a mystery for me. And later I was very edified by the explanations. Furthermore, I changed my ideas and views about Albinos and will begin to consider them more thoughtfully."*

D. Reflections of Mwimba Texas, president of Albinos in DR Congo

Mr. Mwimba Texas, famous in DR Congo and so invested in correcting causes of Albino discrimination, regretted that many people, even some NGOs, are exploiting Albinos for their own enrichment -- neither fully aware of the deeper Albino problems nor working purely for the welfare of Albinos.

He said that he accepted his invitation to this day because he sensed that the Ellesse, the organizer, and the motivation were trustworthy and bringing something new to complete his hard mission for Albino acceptance.

Mr. Texas explained the real cause of Albinism and invited everybody to participate in the integration of Albino citizens into the larger community.

He appreciated the initiative of the screening and face-to-face conference, "like gorgeous tools of sustained dialog that lead the community into inclusiveness."

Texas proposed with all his heart that these sorts of meetings be held even two time each month, with such this quality of organized and large audiences. He is in touch with 5,000 Albinos.



At the end, Mwimba Texas described Albinos' difficult social and medical conditions, including high incidence of skin cancer causing their deaths. There were some shocking snaps.

E. Song by an Albino, Filston Otshundu, concerning their integration and acceptance

What an emotional, edifying moment!

Music, like cinema, communicates powerfully in DR Congo. People often say that "Aricans have music in their blood!!"

In tears, this Albino with all his heart communicated a deep message deserving of a studio recording to be widely dispersed throughout the culture.



F. Dancing between Albinos and non-Albinos

After all their moments together -- film screening, face-to-face stories, testimonies, song -- Albinos and non-Albinos were joyful, emotional, awakened, closer, and compelled to begin dancing together to music that moved toward prayerful gratitude together.



G. Sharing food

An African tradition is to welcome new relations by offering food to eat together. So after the dancing, the hosts provided food and drinks for all to share.

H. Assistance of sunglasses and skin cream



There was a strong desire among planners to assist the Albinos and show them love. So gifts of sunglasses and products for skin health were gifted.

Thus ended this day of educating, relating, healing, and celebrating a day hoped to ease Albinos' challenges of dignity, safety, and health, while modeling real community for Kinshasha, DR Congo, Africa, and beyond.



CONCLUSION

Facilitator Ellesse Bafandjo wrote: *"Together we created a very blessed and exciting moment between Albino and non-Albino women and men. We really experienced that cinema can help create community and improve relationships! It can unify youth and adults of diverse nations, cultures, tribes, languages and faith traditions."*

Ellesse and his wife, Virginia -- since this meeting, first-time parents of their newborn daughter, Elvia -- receive e-mail at mladrc.elvi@yahoo.fr

Return to <http://traubman.igc.org/vidnigeriadrcngo.htm>

to see all their

Relationship-Building Steps in Kinshasa, DR Congo

