

# “The Second Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora and the African Renaissance”

By Aliciadreams



July 12, 2006 opening plenary session

photo by Aliciadreams

***“We should, we can, we must and we will”***

Stevie Wonder, July 12, 2006

The Second Conference of Intellectuals from Africa and the Diaspora (CIAD II) under the auspice of the African Union (AU) took place in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil from July 12-14, 2006. The theme of CIAD II was: “The Diaspora and the African Renaissance.” The first CIAD was held in Dakar, Senegal in October 2004.

The term Diaspora in this case is referring to the populations of black people living outside of Africa. Africans were dispersed throughout the world during the Trans-Atlantic enslavement period, which make us African American, Afro-Cuban, Afro-Brazilian, and Black Brits, etc.

In more recent times, the dispersal was caused by the ill effects of colonization in Africa: wars, genocide, human rights violations, disease, famine, and lack of economic opportunities.

The African Union's mission promotes solidarity and unity of Africa, grounded in a joint consciousness of Africa's potential and need to work together to proactively participate in global trade. The AU divides Africa into five regions: North, West, East, South and Central.

African and Africa Diaspora intellectuals were key players in the liberation movements of African countries from colonial rule. CIAD II, having taken place in Salvador, Bahia, is instrumental in the ongoing debate to have the Diaspora be the 6th region of the African Union.

The AU's selection of Brazil as the host country of this event is significant. Salvador, Bahia was the logical place to have this meeting because it is the city with the largest black population outside of Africa. In the words of President da Silva, "Bahia is key to African traditions in Brazil."

The opening session was held in the Yemanja auditorium of the convention center with a capacity for 1,200 people. President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva of Brazil led the opening ceremony with a special tribute to Abdias Nascimento, Pan-African scholar/activist/artist, Professor Emeritus of SUNY – Buffalo, founder of the Black Experimental Theater and the Museum of Black Art, and the first Afro-Brazilian Senator and Congressman.

The Head of States included the Presidents of Senegal, Botswana, Cape Verde, Equatorial Guinea, Ghana; the Vice President of Tanzania; the Prime Minister of Jamaica; the Chairperson of the African Union Commission; and Kenya's Nobel Laureate of Peace.

The general consensus of all the speakers called forth a Pan-Africanism spirit of alliance. President Wade of Senegal promoted a, "Need for cultural and intellectual exchanges between Africa and the Diaspora." He also emphasized a resurging Africa and proclaimed the African Renaissance. Throughout his talk, Alpha Omar Konaré, the chairperson of AU, referred to the "United States of Africa."

Stevie Wonder joined the table mid-session. He attributed the following words spoken to him by his mother in his youth as being key in his formation as an African-American man: "We should, we can, we must and we will." His words rang loud and clear to me, in their simplicity and depth as the slogan that encompassed the spirit of the three days of CIAD II. Stevie Wonder also urged the elders to pass on the torch and to act as mentors to the youth and encourage them to be involved in our history.



**July 11, 2006, President's dinner at Solar de Uniao. President Mogue (Botswana), President Wade (Senegal), Stevie Wonder (U.S.A.), President Lula (Brazil), Minister of Culture Gilberto Gil (Brazil)**

photo by Aliciadreams

It took a black woman's words, Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller of Jamaica, to get everyone present in the auditorium on their feet cheering, clapping, and stomping. She invoked the spirit of the honorable Jamaican Marcus Garvey and his Pan-Africanism sentiments when expressing, "Africa for Africans at home and abroad." She spoke of Garvey's commitment to black pride, dignity and power. She then invoked the spirit of Bob Marley by quoting from "Freedom Song" and attributing Marley to delivering Garvey's Pan-Africanism ideas to the world via his music, reggae. She ended by expressing that all Africans, whether on the continent or in the Diaspora, are related, regardless of the distance or language that may separate us.

The afternoon session was particularly rousing and important with women from varied domains: religious, political and scholarly addressing the topic of "Gender and equality in Africa and the Diaspora." The speakers were from Senegal, Chad, Nigeria, Brazil, Costa Rica, and Burkina Faso.

The first to speak was Yoruba Priestess Mae Stella de Oxossi of Ile Apo Afonja Candomblé community. She spoke of the Africanity of Candomblé traditions of Bahia. The women's presence and words paid homage to the quintessential role of women in the formation and preservation of African communities throughout the world.

The second day the conference was decentralized and took place in various venues. There were hundreds of scholars from Africa and the Diaspora presenting papers at round tables that covered the following themes: "The

Humanities as bridges of dialogue between Africa and the Diaspora”; “Re-thinking the place of History and of African languages in the educational systems of Africa and the Diaspora”; “New Trends in the Historiography of Africa and the Diaspora”; “Orishas, voduns, e inkices: tradition, pluralism and diversity”; “Mutual Knowledge between Africa and the Diaspora: identity and cooperation”; “Affirmative action and positive discrimination: public policies and the role of social movements”; “Perspectives of and for the Youth in Africa and the Diaspora”; and finally, “Economy and society in Africa and the Diaspora: contemporary challenges”.

The final day of CIAD II, the morning session was on “The need for a political pact between Africa and the Diaspora for peace, democracy, and development”. Again, the speakers were from various countries: Kenya, Brazil, South Africa, Cape Verde, Morocco, Benin, Haiti, Togo, Nigeria, Mozambique and France.

The honorable Wangari Maathai, Kenya’s Nobel Laureate of Peace emphasized the link between the environments, that is, the way we manage the limited resources of the world, and peace. She pleaded for the preservation of the Amazon in Brazil and the Congo rainforest, which are both key to stopping the growth of global warming.



**Honorable Wangari Maathai**  
**Kenya’s Nobel Laurate of Peace**

photo by Aliciadreams

The final plenary session was interrupted by a march-in of local Afro-Brazilian activists demonstrating for affirmative action. When the audience understood the cause of the disruption, global African fists were raised in the air, shouting support for the affirmative action cause in Brazil. The continental Africans were amazed and supportive of this demonstration. They expressed that in today's Africa, this type of political manifestation would not be allowed. Two young black militants, a man and a woman, took over the stage and read a manifest drafted by local black movement militants denouncing recent assaults on affirmative action in the Brazilian congress — An appropriate and just ending for CIAD II, bringing to mind the phrase, "Act locally, think globally."



**Alicia, writer & photographer**  
photo by Chirlie Felix

*Alicia was born in Havana, Cuba; raised in New York City and has lived and traveled extensively throughout the Africa Diaspora world of the Caribbean, North and South America. She has been visiting Salvador, Bahia, Brazil since 1993 and has been a resident of Salvador since 1999. Alicia is an activist, a healer, a writer, a photographer, an Africana scholar (she has a Masters from African Studies at Cornell University), an African Diaspora cultural producer and acts as a cross-cultural consultant amongst global Africans. Alicia may be reached for cross cultural consultancy, cultural production or lectures at [bahiabeat@hotmail.com](mailto:bahiabeat@hotmail.com).*