



# AFRICAN SERVICES

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## COMMITTEE

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## "From Harlem to Addis: Celebrating 10 Years of Ethiopia" Fundraiser a Success



On Tuesday, October 29th, African Services Committee welcomed over 100 people into the beautiful WNYC Jerome L. Greene Space for an evening of celebration, honoring 10 years of service in Ethiopia.

As the title of the event suggested, African Services transported attendees to Addis Ababa, immersing them in the sights, sounds, tastes and smells of Ethiopia. The renowned band, Arki Sound, entertained the crowd with their unique Ethiopian jazz fusion. Ethiopian beer was on hand at the bar -- St. George and Meta -- for attendees to sip, and delectable food from Abyssinia Restaurant, a favorite of Ethiopian nationals in New York. ASC volunteers operated a marketplace table stocked with scarves, carvings, and pottery, all brought back from the markets of Addis Ababa. No Ethiopian experience is complete without a shot of caffeine, and Brooklyn Roasting Company was in attendance, sampling three of their four Ethiopian coffee varieties.



(c) Photos by Howard Heyman

In one short evening, we managed to raise \$25,000 in sponsorship, ticket sales & marketplace item sales. This helps immeasurably in keeping our five clinics up and running and serving tens of thousands of people each year.

Thank you to our host, [Julie Mehretu](#), for her kind words and for her support of our work.

Thank you as well to our sponsors and supporters, for without you, this evening would not have been possible: [Brooklyn Roasting Company](#) (for the spectacular coffee), [Abyssinia Restaurant](#) (for the amazing food), [Arki Sound](#) (for the soulful music), [Kikkerland Design](#), [Chembio Diagnostics](#), [Mackenzie Crone](#) (Design), [Lucky Dog Vodka](#), [BGI/Castel Wineries](#), & [MTuckman Media](#).

We'd also like to thank our amazing photographer, [Howard Heyman](#), who donated his services for the evening. View all of the photos from the event [here](#).

We hope to see you at our next celebration, the African Services annual holiday party on December 13th! Check out our "Fun in the City" section for more details.

## News and Activities

### Opening Our Home to Detainees: A Transformative Experience



Whenever supervising attorney Andrea Panjwani meets a client in detention, she begins to reach out to people in the wider African Services Committee community to find them a sponsor - that is, someone who is able to host them when they are first released from detention.

Many of the client's who approach the legal clinic for assistance have fled persecution in their home countries and come to the United States hoping to find a safe refuge and a more secure life. However if their travel documents look suspicious to the authorities when they first arrive at the airport, they may be whisked away into immigration detention.

It can be months, if not years, before asylum is granted, and if these detainees are not considered to be a security risk by the immigration authorities, they can be released into the community. Rather than languishing in detention, African Services Committee's lawyers try to help these clients by finding someone who will sponsor them so that they can be released into the community and begin building a life.

Deborah Kampmeier, a filmmaker and acting teacher based in Piermont, New York offered to host one of our clients, a woman who had fled a violent husband and an abusive family in Guinea. Deborah is a freelance artist and, by her own admission, lives hand to mouth without any kind of savings account or steady income. But she found our client's story to be deeply moving, and felt that she had no choice but to help.

"The issues of gender based violence affects me deeply and any kind of abuse or repression of women, especially their sexuality, is something that is important to me. It is an issue that speaks strongly to me. My films are always about it. So, it is close to my heart."

Another African Services Committee client who had fled gender and religiously-based persecution in Nigeria found herself stuck in detention for months before she could find a sponsor.

"Most of the people who spend time in detention are on antidepressants," she said. "It's so easy to feel depressed. People sleep all day. You know, when you have no activities to stimulate you, you go crazy. When people get on antidepressants, they walk around like zombies all day."

This client was given the name of a Nigerian woman named "Esther" who lived in Queens, New York. She contacted Esther and asked that she visit her in detention. When Esther turned out to be the same "Esther" who had been a childhood friend in Nigeria, they were stunned. "When we first saw each other, we cried and cried. As soon as Esther saw me, she said that she could not leave me in the detention center and so she would sponsor me. She said she would try to find a lawyer."

Esther happened to have been a client at African Services Committee, so she was able to engage Andrea to represent her friend. Andrea quickly prepared the sponsorship documentation and arranged for the client to be released the day before Thanksgiving. She was able to spend her first American Thanksgiving with her good friend, Esther and her children in Queens instead of in a cold detention cell.

Today both of these clients are studying and improving their skills while they await the outcome of their asylum applications. They will soon receive work authorization and will be in a position to pay for a place of their own.

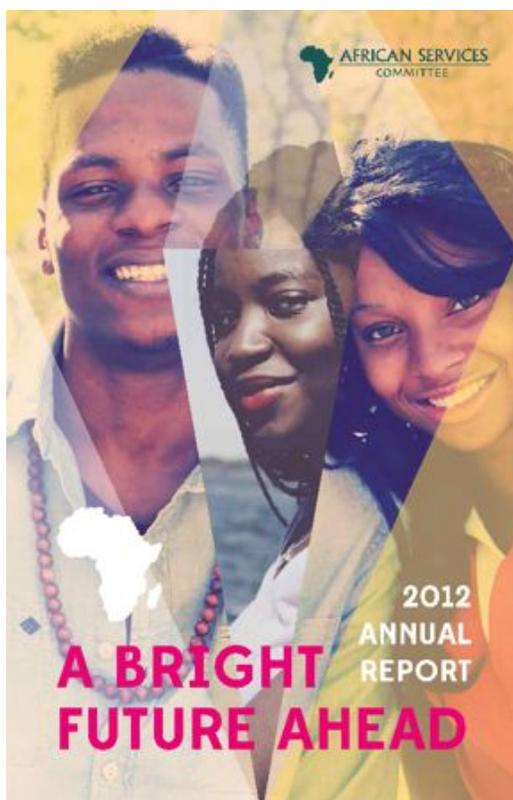
Sponsoring an asylum applicant is an enriching experience. Deborah Kampmeier has been amazed by the transformation of the young woman from Guinea that she has welcomed into her home. "She's blossomed. It's amazing how in two and a half months, she's transformed her whole life. She's radiant and happy and finding her way. It's been amazing to watch."

She also feels that the experience has had a powerful impact on her daughter. "It's very inspiring to expose your children to something like this. It's opened my daughter's experience of the world."

Many of African Services Committee's clients are still in detention because they do not know anyone who can sponsor them in the community. If you, or someone you know, can host an African Services Committee client in detention for two to four months, please contact Andrea Panjwani at [andreap@africanservices.org](mailto:andreap@africanservices.org).

--Dalit Kaplan

## African Services Committee Publishes 2012 Annual Report



African Services Committee is proud to release our 2012 Annual Report, titled "A Bright Future Ahead."

2012 was a busy year at African Services, and was highlighted with many changes and developments for our clients, specifically within the area of immigration reform, and the passage of DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals). African Services has been active in assisting young immigrants with applying for DACA, and feature the stories of several clients who have benefited from these services, allowing them to turn their sights towards the "bright future" that now awaits them.

Our report also details other agency highlights, including the organization of our young girls' empowerment workshop and partnering with public and private organizations working towards a cure for malaria. Halfway across the globe, ASC's presence continues to expand in Ethiopia.

The new Hawassa clinic serves demand in a burgeoning population center in the country's southern region.

Take a moment and read through the report ([Click here for a PDF](#)) and see what your support and donations have allowed us to accomplish in 2012. As we move ahead into 2014, we hope we can count on your continued support. Enclosed in the report you will find a donation envelope. It is your generosity that makes our work possible, so mail back the envelope or donate online here. No amount is insignificant.

We want to thank Mackenzie Crone, who once again created the beautiful layout and design for the report. We must also thank Stephanie Kaplan, for capturing the

beauty and spirit of our clients on the cover, and to Sarah Klugman for her editorial contributions.

--Andy Zou

## African Services Awarded Hurricane Sandy Block Grant



Over a year has elapsed since the devastating "Superstorm Sandy" made landfall here in New York City, destroying hundreds of homes and displacing so many. Unfortunately, our clients were some of the people so great affected by this storm, and thanks to a grant from the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance that was recently awarded to ASC, we will be able to move forward with plans to assist those people, whom even a year later are still reeling from the losses they experienced during that time.

These multi-year funds will allow us to go out into the hardest hit communities in Southern Queens, Far Rockaway and Staten Island to reach the high-need immigrant populations that live there. African Services will be offering legal, health and housing assistance to individuals who qualify. Many of those affected still do not have stable housing situations, or have been unable, because of the damage, to pursue change of immigration status, or applications for the social benefits that they need.

"We're so pleased that the state selected our program for funding. So many of our clients are still deeply affected by the storm, even over a year later, and with the funding we will be able to bring our services to them, and provide in-depth assistance to help them get back on their feet," shared Co-Executive Director, Kim Nichols.

This grant, the Sandy Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), was awarded to over 450 local healthcare and human service providers and community-based organizations. African Services will be launching the program by December 1st and it is slated to continue through September 2015.

For more information, email us at [info@africanservices.org](mailto:info@africanservices.org).

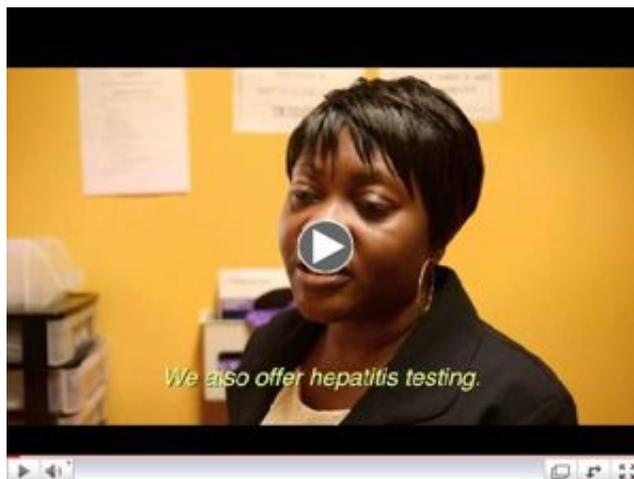
## African Services Committee Premieres HIV Testing Video



African Services Committee, in partnership with the Federal Office for Minority Health Resource Center, is proud to premiere our video, "Do the Right Thing: Know Your Status."

Following extensive focus group research in the African immigrant community, we noticed multiple barriers that kept our clients from getting tested for HIV -- a service we offer free here at our testing center. To address these barriers and to combat

the 'myths' that surround the HIV testing process, African Services -- thanks to funding from OMH -- partnered with filmmaker, Matthew Lapiska, to produce a short film detailing the experience of two fictional African immigrants who decide to come to African Services Committee and get tested for HIV.



### **Do The Right Thing: Know Your Status**

Our film follows our two main characters, Ahmed and Ami, both of whom make the decision to get tested for HIV for differing reasons. Our video aims to dispel the rumors and myths that surround the HIV testing process, while also showing how simple, easy and important it is for individuals to know their HIV status.

African Services will be working with OMH, our hospital partners, and online outlets to widely distribute the video.

Thank you to the Office of Minority Health Resource Center, Matthew Lapiska, and our actors, staff and volunteers who made this video possible.

## **Fun in the City**

**The Entire African Services' Staff recommends...**

**It's Time to Celebrate! Fête de fine d'année!**



It's that time of year again...for the African Services Holiday Party! Join us to celebrate the successes of 2013, and raise a glass to the coming holidays and New Year!

**When:** Friday, December 13th, 6-10 pm

**What:** African Food, music, drinks, dancing & good cheer

**Where:** African Services Committee, 429 West 127th Street (b/w Convent & Amsterdam Ave.)

**\*\*Voluntary \$10 donation at the door. Festive dress!\*\***

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