

Let us get counted!, continued

The 2000 Census, as well as previous censuses, grossly undercounted Africans. For example, the 2000 Census counted only 26,959 Sub-Saharan Africans, including 5,458 Nigerians, 1,522 Ghanaians and 1,186 Ethiopians. The American Community Survey of 2005-2007, based on the 2000 Census, estimated that 36,498 Sub-Saharan Africans were living in the city of Chicago. It is clear that this is a huge misrepresentation and undercount! Some speculate that this is due to the fact that African immigration is still a relatively new phenomenon and new immigrants are still limited in their access to information and resources; it is not uncommon for new immigrants to be undercounted.

Since 1980, more than 233,000 African refugees have been resettled. According to the US Census, the African-born population is numbered at 1.4 million. There is a professional exodus from Africa, and the number of people migrating not only to the US, but to other developed regions of the world, is staggering. One third of Africa's skilled professionals have left the continent over recent decades. This so-called "brain drain" is a serious problem plaguing Africa today. Consider the following numbers of professional migration from Africa to the USA:

1960-1975: 27,000;

1976-1984: 40,000;

1986-1990: 60,000;

1991- present: over 25,000 annually.

57% of these professionals migrated to the United States between 1990 and 2000. In a study conducted by New York State University, researcher John R. Logan states that 43.8% of African immigrants have college degrees. That makes African immigrants as the most educated immigrant group in America.

Here in Chicago, based on our observation and service counts, the census count, as well as the yearly estimates that follow, gravely under represent the flow of African immigrants and refugees. More than 95% (120,000) of African immigrants live in the Chicago Metropolitan Area. While most live in Northeastern Chicago, many others live in Elgin, Wheaton, Bolingbrook, Harvey and Romeoville. Still, others remain in different city neighborhoods and suburbs. Due to the fact that the African immigrant population is the fastest growing immigrant group in America today, specifically among Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali and Ghanaian communities, the estimation of 120,000 individuals is considered to be conservative. **It is our responsibility to get counted so as to change the disreputable undercount of our community and ensure that elected officials and service providers can address our needs.** We must make sure that this time, we **GET COUNTED!**