

REPORT ON THE 9TH ANNUAL AFRICA SUMMIT IN COLORADO



Report of Discussions May 2, 2025

Jewish Community Center, Denver



Africa Agenda's 9th Annual Africa Summit in Colorado explored how we can mobilize the power of our collective knowledge to address the challenges we face in Africa and in Colorado. How do we strengthen the connections, institutions, and initiatives that are best suited to build solidarity and expand our resources for good together?

The Summit brought together over 100 participants from across Colorado at the Jewish Community Center in the heart of Denver. Participants dined on a continental Nigerian buffet served by the chefs at Yummy Meals while enjoying Zimbabwean beats from Chihera, Colorado's own family Mbira band.



WELCOME, OPENING STATEMENTS & KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The Summit kicked off with welcome remarks from the master of ceremonies, Dr. Abigail Kabandula, director of the Africa Center at the University of Denver.

George Bamu, founder and executive director of Africa Agenda welcomed guests and speakers and offered his thanks for their willingness to learn together and share what they know. He recalled Africa Agenda’s mission to inspire positive news about the African continent. He said it isn’t easy to tell all our stories. *“But the good news is that it’s wonderful when people who love the African continent come together”*

A lot of us who are part of the African diaspora, a lot of us may be born in the United States or not, have our roots in the African continent. And we have alliances and we have partners in the people of Colorado.

— George Bamu

Liz Shaw, director of educational programs at World Denver, stressed the importance of US-Africa relations during the challenging times that we live in.

We understand deeply that we can’t divorce the United States from our international relations and cooperation.

— Liz Shaw

Before introducing the keynote speaker, Dr. Douglas Mpondi, professor in the Department of Africana Studies at the Metropolitan State University of Denver, said, *“As a department, we are committed to Africa and the diaspora, including the United States.”*



Dr. Reiland Rabaka speaks during the 9th Annual Africa Summit.

Keynote speaker, Dr. Reiland Rabaka, founder of the Africa and African American Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder, inspired guests to remember the collective knowledge on which we all call build.

He invoked the bravery and vision of Africans and African Americans throughout history as they made their journey from enslavement towards liberation.

Rabaka cited the legacies of Malcom X, Amilcar Cabral, Martin Luther King Jr, and others, as he offered praise for their fighting spirit, which he said opened the doors of opportunity to his generation.

He invited guests to embrace the experience and knowledge we share to open the doors for the next generations.

We offer these secret words and poems of praise to those who opened the gates for our moving forward.

— Reiland Rabaka





TABLE CONVERSATIONS

After dinner, Summit guests took on the challenge of building on our collective knowledge in intense conversation at their tables. The topics (see Table Questions on the next page) tackled the specific questions raised by table facilitators working across many fields with Colorado's African community. Many issues from over 20 African countries were discussed, examined, and addressed.

Their discussions focused on how to plan and connect around ways to mobilize our collective knowledge to build a community that bridges from Colorado to better understand and work with nations across Africa. As several tables reported, We—the concept of community—is a central value that we all share, Africans and Americans. While polarization and division threaten to drive us to the bunkers of our homes, we have the power to act together and make the world a better place.

Ownership of development projects should be for the community and by the community.

— *Dr. Julia Munsaka, table facilitator*

Summit guests found that we must mobilize this community to rise to the challenge of grassroots diplomacy, make sure that we respect the collective knowledge of the continent and act strategically to build the strength and capacity of our communities to solve the many challenges facing us.

Many guests said it is crucial to act to increase understanding of each other and work with the priorities of African communities to meet specific challenges in education, water, agricultural and youth facing this generation and those to come.

Africa Summit Table Questions

- Table 1. What can we do to spark and support strong participation of African residents in the Colorado economy?
- Table 2. How can the media serve our cross Africa community?
- Table 3. How do Ubuntu African values help us in bridging our cultural differences?
- Table 4. How can students build and strengthen ties with Africa?
- Table 5. What are our opportunities to rebuild a robust, meaningful and effective foreign assistance and philanthropy?
- Table 6. What can we do to contribute to the resolution of the conflict in Cameroon?
- Table 7. How can we create local relevant jobs and income in Rwanda and Uganda?
- Table 8. How can we knit a community across the whole African diaspora?
- Table 9. How can we support African communities to lead in the development of the continent?
- Table 10. How do we create the conditions to learn from the deep wisdom on the African continent?
- Table 11. How are organizations working in Africa helping to build a strong community of international solidarity in Colorado?
- Table 12. What is working to ensure that communities in Africa have access to safe, affordable water?
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“One solution that came up was making sure children are educated about the history of Africa,” — Dr. Susan Ghais, table facilitator

Building on the initiatives of many guests, the Summit opened up practical ways in which to strengthen our communities and connect with others. In many African cultures, the idea of Ubuntu – I am because we are – has sustained and continues to sustain people. This is because the power is in coming together and acting.

In Colorado, guests spoke about the experience of dozens of organizations that are acting to sustain people, build a future for our children and provide what everyone needs to thrive both here and across Africa. Guests discussed how to strengthen specific collaborative initiatives between Colorado organizations and those in Senegal, Mali, Rwanda, Uganda, Cameroon and other countries as well as challenges in the media, government and private sector.

Some specific insights were:

- *We must approach collaboration as a process in which we all learn from what works and acknowledge what is not working.*
- *Sustainability and effectiveness can only emerge from understanding the priorities of the communities where we are working.*
- *Our success becomes much more likely when we build on the excitement and engagement, especially of the youth.*



Table reports made the key point that the process of working together must be built around asking questions and creating the conditions for mutual trust. For example, often communities in Africa look to their American partners for help in securing financing especially where governments are struggling with significant debt. Americans can help to intermediate these resources, but our effectiveness in matching resources to need is also fundamentally connected to the time we invest in understanding what people want and our ability to see both the need and possibilities from the perspectives of the communities with which we work.



Several discussions pointed out that this understanding must go beyond the technical boundaries of the problems to be solved and the opportunities to be pursued to an exchange of **cultural knowledge**, which is often undervalued in relationships with African countries, communities and the diaspora.

Another issue that arose in knitting stronger networks and relationships is the continuing challenge of forging a better, more realistic, and forward-looking knowledge of the contributions of Africa and Africans to human knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurship for a more sustainable and peaceful global compact. Guests felt it is crucial to focus on moving beyond thinking we know what other people need to face-to-face dialogue and contextual understanding whether working at home or in Africa. This is a critical role for those working in media, the arts, education, and diplomacy.





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Africa Agenda thanks the Africa Summit sponsors: The Africa Center at Colorado State University, Center for Cultural Dynamics, Rose Community Foundation, Africa Development Promise, Global Greengrants Fund, Womenful Voice, Chihera Music, KETO FM Radio (93.9 FM), and Yummy Meals.

The event was made possible by the amazing leaders in our community who volunteered to facilitate the table discussions for the 2025 Summit:

- Alphonse Nembot, African Leadership Group
- Douglas Mpondi, Metro State University of Denver
- Akusua Otiwaa Ampofu, Students for Africa, University of Denver
- Monica Labiche Brown, Africa Development Promise
- Tracy Williams, TradeWinds Communications
- Senska O'Donnell, Womenful Voice
- Susan Abbott, Cross Pollinate Consulting Solutions
- Susan Ghais, Pathfinders for Peace
- Chinesom Ejiasa, Global Greengrants Fund
- Liz Shaw, World Denver
- Jamie Hanson, Posner Center for International Development
- Kelly Latham, Water for People

And a big thank you as well to the Students for Africa and the Africa Center at the Joseph Korbel School for International Studies, and our community volunteers who made the evening run so smoothly.

Africa Agenda convenes these yearly gatherings in our community to support our global citizenship and to share in the contributions, triumphs, joys, and challenges of African peoples from 54 nations and in our community in Denver. The Summit continues to be a unique opportunity to participate in an African dialogue in the Rockies and celebrate the food, music, and culture of the continent.

