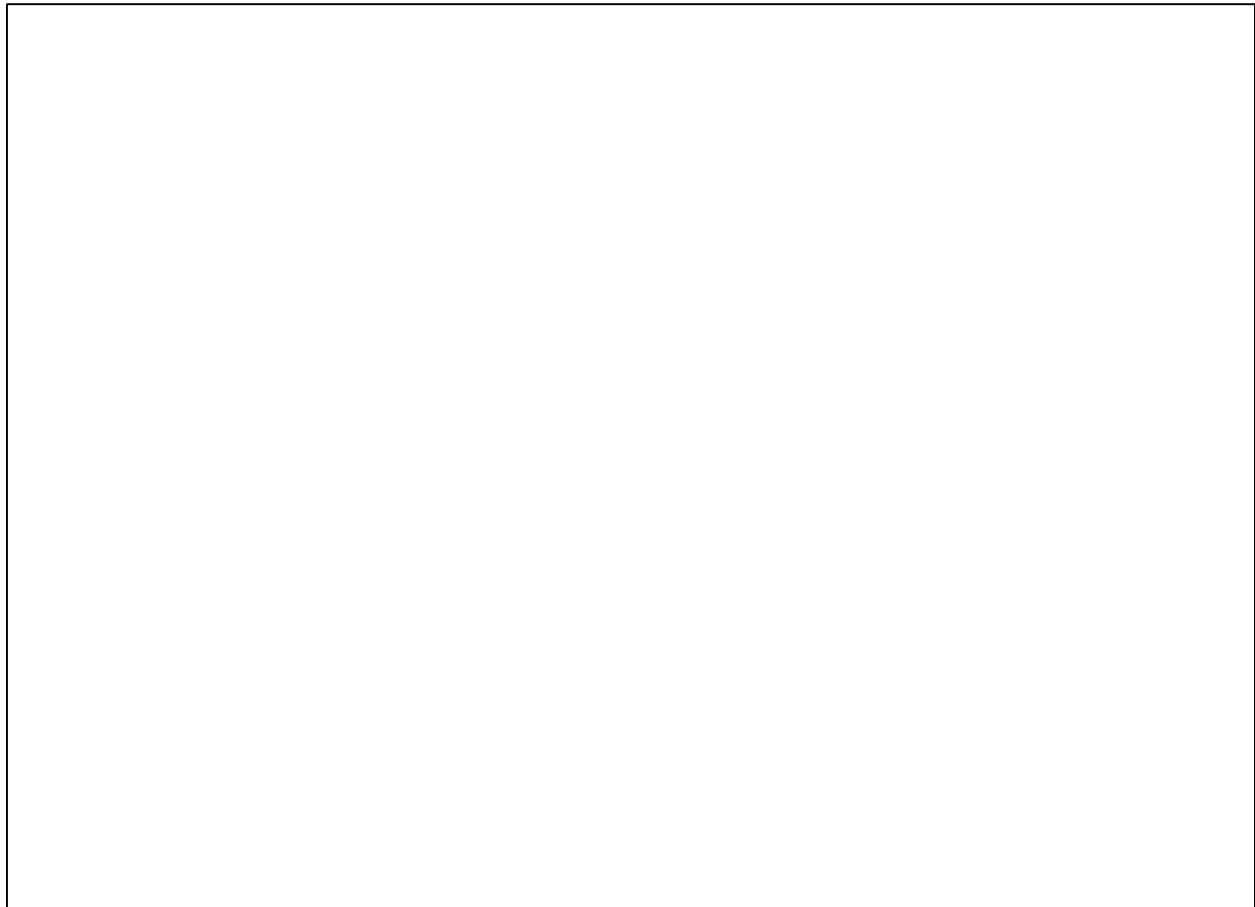


In preparation for my July 27, 2016 presentation in Philadelphia at the United People for African Congress (UPAC), I would like to provide a few facts and figures to highlight the contributions that African immigrants currently play in United States. The strength of America's economy and civil society depends on its New Americans. It is vital to point out the extent to which immigrants from Africa and their children are bringing new strength and vigor to the country.

According to the most recent U.S. Bureau of the Census data there are approximately 44 million foreign born in the US, totaling somewhere between 13% and 14% of the nation's population of 314 million. Among the foreign born there are 1.8 million Africans – 5.3% who were born in Africa of from U.S. parents, 46.8% naturalized citizens and 47.9% are non-citizens.

Place of Birth

As you well know Africa is a varied and diverse continent and many Africans from across the continent, from North to South and East to West, have recently come to make a new home in the U.S. As Figure 1 shows, two-thirds of the foreign-born immigrants in the U.S. come from nine countries.



Language skills

As we think about the integration of African immigrants, and in fact any New Americans an important factor is language skills. In an increasingly global society a diversity of languages contributes to the strength of a nation. Recent U.S. data shows African immigrants reporting 100 different languages spoken at home.



As the chart shows, three-fourths of African immigrants report that they speak a language other than English at home. However, this does not mean that they are not English speakers. The same Census data shows that 72% of African immigrants only speak English or speak English very well. Among those with particularly high levels who speak English very well are immigrants from Nigeria (87%), Zambia (91%), Zimbabwe (93%) and the Union of South Africa (94%). At the other end of the spectrum,

significantly lower levels of English proficiency are found among immigrants from Togo (44%), Somalia (46%) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (47%).

Education

Many people do not realize that, with the exception of immigrants from Latin America and the Caribbean, foreign born residents have higher levels of educational attainment than native born Americans. Though higher percentages of Bachelor's and graduate/professional degrees are found among Asian immigrants, these percentages for African immigrants are essentially the same as New Americans from Europe, Canada and Oceania.

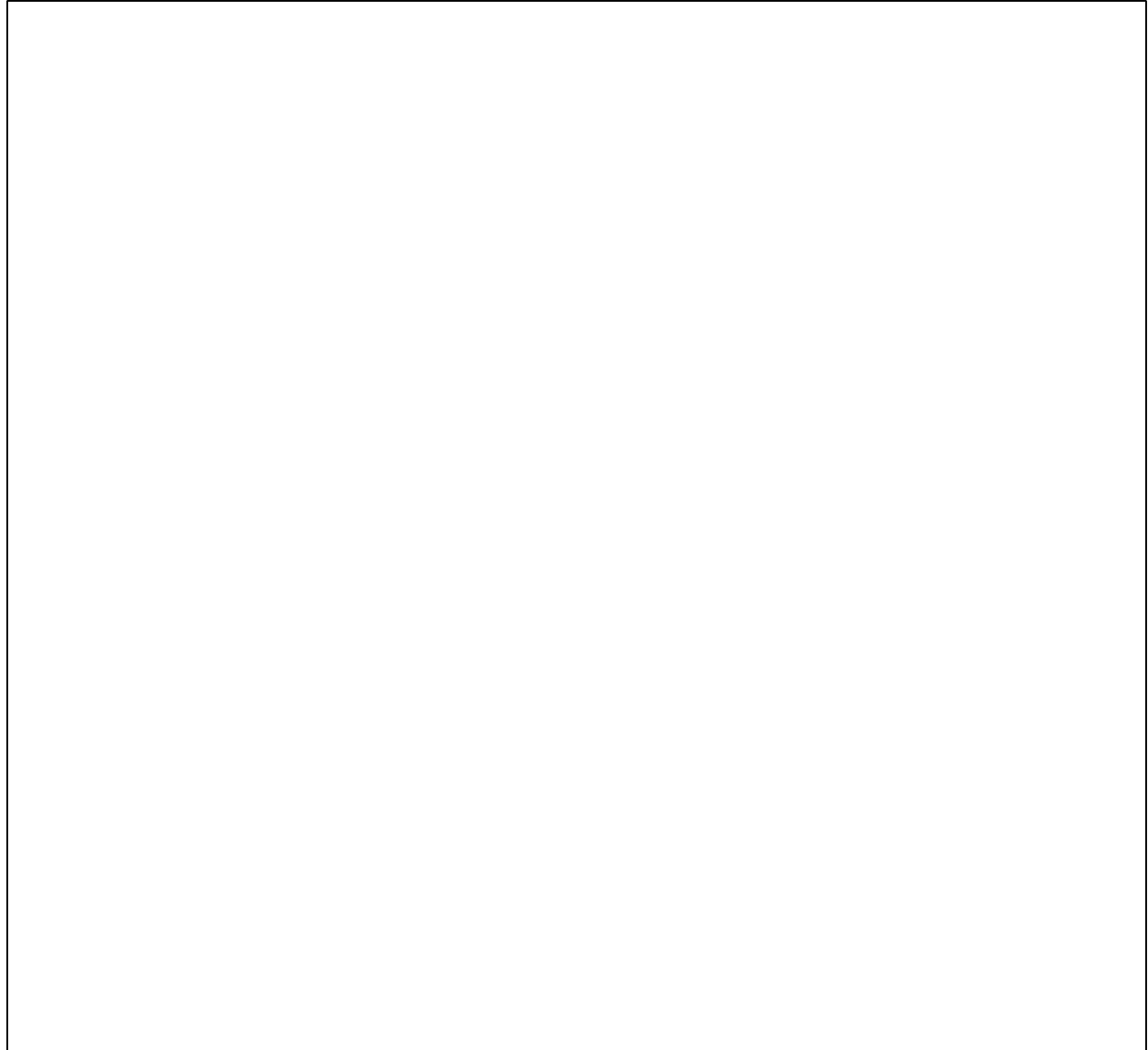


Steps to success

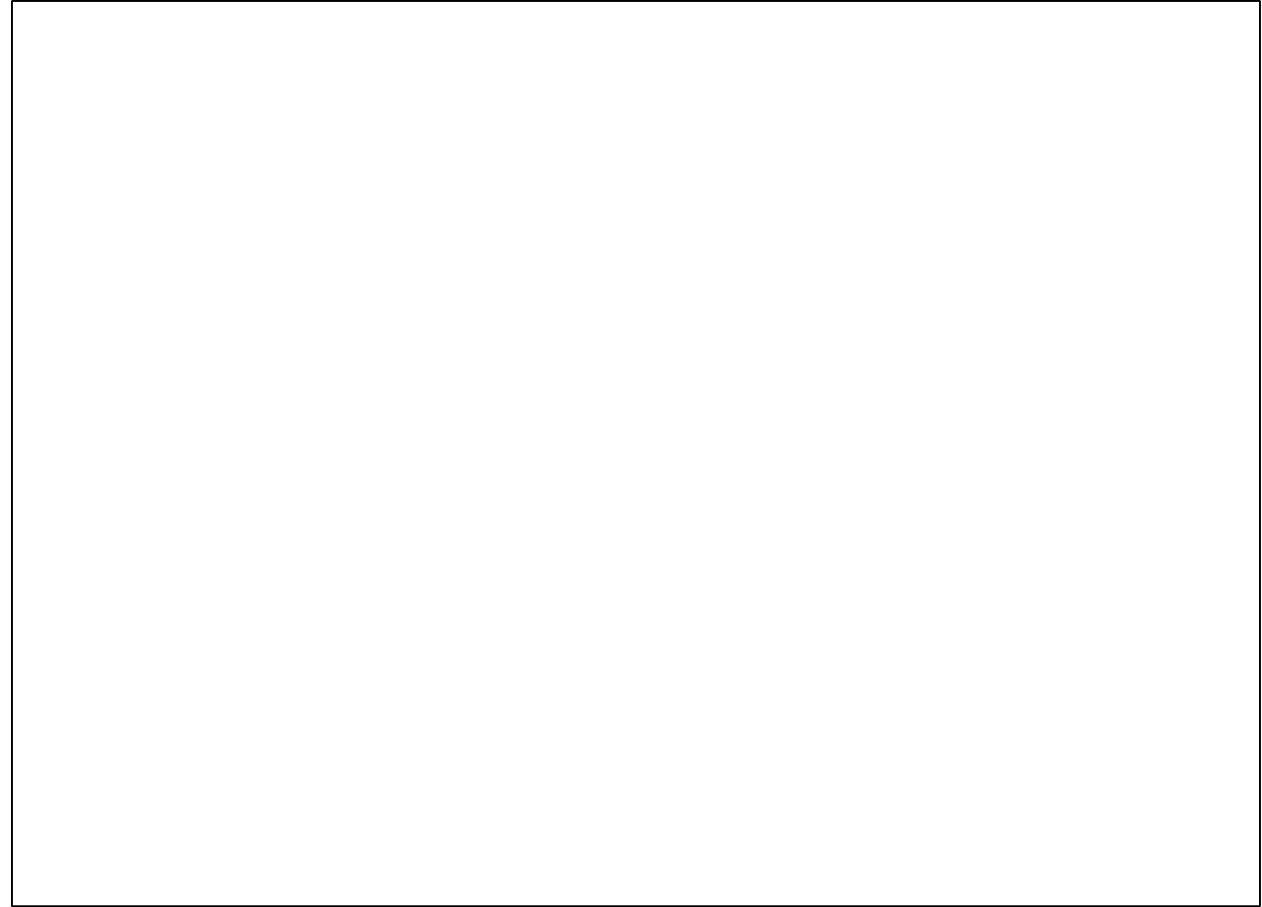
Apart from the general data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census, I would also like to present a few numbers from the Steps to Success project, which focused on the integration of immigrant professionals in the U.S. This study was a survey of over 4,000 immigrants with at least some higher education either inside the U.S. or in their home countries. The survey covered a variety of topics including demographics, civic engagement, education, language proficiency and individual economic success.

The final report from this project, including specific policy recommendations may be downloaded at: <http://www.imprintproject.org/stepstosuccess/> But here I would like to highlight a few findings that compare the experiences of African immigrants with those of other New Americans from other parts of the world.

One important finding of the study was that where one went to college or university mattered—those with at least some higher education in the U.S. were more likely to be economically successful than those who only had higher education outside the U.S. As the chart below indicates African immigrant professionals on the whole had essentially the same higher education background as other New Americans, with the exception of those from Canada, Australia and New Zealand.



Despite being equally likely to have higher education in the U.S. as immigrants from other regions of the world, our study shows that African immigrants are significantly less likely to be working in a job that makes use of their higher education. Just under half of African immigrants said their current job makes use of their recent higher education as compared to nearly 70% of those from Canada,



This is one indication of the extent to which the human capital of skilled immigrants to the U.S., and in particular those from Africa is dramatically underused. This situation, which some refer to as “brain waste” is even more marked in our study when we examined the overall economic success of New Americans. Here, we defined success as not only using one’s higher education on the job but also working in a managerial or professional position and earning at least \$50,000 a year. The results reflected a glass far less than half full – only 22% of our sample of immigrant professionals were successful by this measure. When we look at the rate of success by country of origin the findings for African immigrants is particularly disturbing.



There are many factors at play here, when we look at “brain waste” for all immigrant professionals: English language skills, U.S. higher education and U.S. work experience, recognition of foreign credentials and time in the U.S. The latter factor is clearly important for African immigrants, who on average have been in the U.S. for a shorter time than immigrants from other regions of the world.

However, as everyone here knows, discrimination and prejudice plays a major role as well. Overall, 20% of the immigrant professional respondents reported facing “discrimination” on the basis of gender, race, ethnicity or other factors. There were significant differences by region of origin. A full quarter (26%) of African respondents and 23% of Latin American and Caribbean respondents said they faced discrimination, compared to 20% of Asians and Middle Easterners and just 14% of those from Europe, Canada, and Oceania.

Recommendations from *Steps to Success: Integrating Immigrant Professionals in the U.S.*

For Service Providers

- Ensure that direct-service staff, and the immigrant professionals they serve, fully understand the importance of English skills in achieving economic success
- Communicate to immigrant jobseekers the vital role of networking and the strength of “weak ties” in the U.S. employment search.
- Educate immigrant professionals on the potential value of obtaining short-term “Made in America” supplements to their international education and experience.
- Work to build connections between mainstream career pathways programs and services designed specifically for immigrant professionals.
- Provide actionable information on gaps and opportunities to funders and policymakers.

For Funders

- Ensure that support is targeted toward interventions that work
- Use philanthropic dollars as a bridge between other funding streams
- Support additional practical research on the efficacy of different types of English language training.
- Consider sponsoring opportunities for immigrant professionals to build social capital and gain U.S. experience

For Policy Makers

- Fully fund existing public programs in adult education, training, and employment
- Improve data collection on immigrant professionals
- Use existing infrastructure to improve the quality of service provision
- Similarly, use existing processes to disseminate information to immigrant professionals.

- Identify opportunities within government for immigrant professionals to acquire American experience.