



Afrikan Post

MISS AFRICA USA. FATOUMATA (FIFI) SOUMA CROWNED QUEEN

Pg. 5



Authentic
African Restaurant
11310 Georgia Avenue
Wheaton, Maryland
20902

Tel : 301 942-4242

University

Blvd

GC

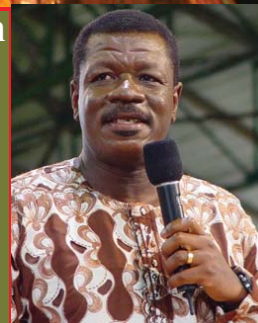
Georgia Avenue

From Washington
DC

**Dominion
Mandate**

**Sunday
August
29, 2010**

www.icgeva.org
Pg. 27



Rev. Dr. Mensah
Otabil



**Luxury
Homes for
sale in Ghana
See Pg. 19**

Royal Palm
ESTATES

A Microloan "eBay" for African Entrepreneurs

Entrepreneurs in Africa often face a dilemma: their business activities don't earn enough to support their families, but they lack the investment capital needed to make the businesses more profitable. Restrictive political and economic conditions and geographic remoteness make it expensive for local banks to lend to small business owners. Many of these borrowers are serviced by microfinance institutions, but individual business expansion loans often carry prohibitive collateral and interest requirements due to microfinance institutions' high administrative costs. So the businesses don't grow, and the families they support remain impoverished.

Zidisha.org is an innovative nonprofit that lets ordinary web users make microloans to entrepreneurs in Africa. The loans allow the individuals to start small businesses to provide higher income for their families, and once repaid the loan funds are returned to lenders who may in turn fund new individuals of their choice. What makes Zidisha unique is that there are no intermediaries. The borrowers themselves post their loan applications and communicate directly with lenders as their business investments grow. Linking entrepreneurs directly with the international peer-to-peer lending market gives them the chance to source business growth capital far more easily and affordably than was previously possible in many parts of Africa. Who are the individuals you can help on Zidisha.org? One typical Zidisha borrower, Bineta Sarr (pictured below), supports an unemployed husband and three children independently with her small clothing sewing business in Senegal, West Africa. Before she received her Zidisha loan, she was only able to work part-time as she lacked the cash reserves necessary to buy the equipment and materials needed for large-scale production. She was able to raise the necessary funds through Zidisha, thanks to the generosity of ordinary web users who contributed \$10 or \$20 each to fund her loan. Now she has her own clothing boutique and has employed other staff to help continue to grow her business. She is using her increased earnings to pay for her children's education, including college for her oldest child. You may read more about Bineta Sarr on her Zidisha loan profile page.

One of Zidisha's current applicants, Faith Wanjira, has a small shop in a famine-stricken village in rural Kenya that Zidisha director Julia Kurnia visited last year. She is trying to raise \$330 to purchase a stock of food items such as rice, flour and cooking oil to retail in the village. This would allow her to earn money to keep her daughter in school (a rarity in Kenya where the majority of families cannot afford to keep their kids in school



for more than a few years) and also improve food security in the village. Lenders can contribute as little as a dollar to help fund the loan and can reuse the repayment funds returned to them to relend to other borrowers or withdraw as cash if they prefer. You may view Faith's loan application here.

Any individual in a country serviced by Zidisha may create a borrower account on the Zidisha.org website. Zidisha compensates for the lack of formal credit scores in African countries by requiring borrowers to have successfully repaid loans to local banks or microfinance institutions, and having their self-reported credit histories independently verified before the borrower's account is activated for posting of loan applications. The local loan repayment record becomes the basis for the borrower's "feedback rating", a system similar to that used by business platforms such as eBay and Amazon, in which each lender is invited to post a comment and approval rating upon completion of a loan, and borrowers with high, positive feedback ratings find it easier to raise larger amounts at lower interest rates in the future.

Africa is home to a growing class of entrepreneurs who, while economically disadvantaged, are computer-literate and have verifiable credit histories with local microfinance institutions - all of which can be tapped to supply many of the communication and record-keeping services traditionally performed by local banks and microfinance institutions. Zidisha is designed to serve this type of entrepreneur in a way analogous to eBay, which greatly advanced the opportunities of small entrepreneurs in the US by supplying a regulated venue in which business growth is limited only by entrepreneurs' own creativity and track record of responsible conduct. Zidisha uses Internet and mobile phone technology to deliver the key services needed to overcome the geographic barrier between lenders and borrowers - local credit history verification, low-cost electronic money transfers, independent tracking of borrower performance history - then gets out of the way and lets web users and entrepreneurs interact directly.

Up until recently there was no viable way to transfer small loan amounts directly between African borrowers and international lenders without a local intermediary. This became possible for the first time when Kenya launched its mobile phone-based money transfer service, M-PESA, which allows Kenyans to send money using cell phone text messages. Zidisha uses M-PESA for money transfers in Kenya, so that borrowers receive loan disbursements via secure SMS messages to their cell phones, which they exchange for cash from the local M-PESA outlet. They send their repayment installments back to Zidisha's account via M-PESA as well, so that there is no need to outsource loan funds management to local intermediaries. Borrowers log onto the Zidisha website from local cybercafes, where they may post business updates, photos and responses to lender questions via a weblog-style Comments Forum on their Zidisha profile pages. Zidisha uses this sort of grassroots technology to connect people in ways that would have been unthinkable just a few years ago.

"Zidisha" is the Swahili word for "grow" or "expand", as in a business, an investment, or a quality such as freedom or prosperity. Zidisha currently operates in Kenya and Senegal, and plans to expand to other countries in the near future. According to director Julia Kurnia, "Zidisha is designed to operate at scale, and we aim to facilitate a high volume of lending on the platform while maintaining sufficient incentives for responsible use by lenders and borrowers. We are a nonprofit organization, and our primary purpose is to facilitate win-win transactions between lenders and borrowers in a way that advances the economic opportunities of highly motivated entrepreneurs in impoverished areas. We will have reached our goal when Zidisha develops into a widely available ladder to prosperity for any deserving entrepreneur, regardless of geographic location."

To learn more, check out www.zidisha.org, or better yet, register as a lender and make a life-changing connection with an individual entrepreneur in Africa.



Naomi Campbell Testifies at Taylor Trial

By Michael Steen in The Hague

Naomi Campbell, the British supermodel, took the witness box at the war crimes trial of Charles Taylor on Thursday and admitted receiving a pouch of "very small dirty-looking stones" in response to questions seeking to establish whether she had received conflict diamonds from the Liberian president in 1997.

Prosecutors called Ms Campbell because they want to prove that Mr Taylor was in possession of so-called "blood diamonds" from rebels in Sierra Leone that, they say, were used to buy arms from Mr Taylor.

However, Ms Campbell's testimony stopped short of directly linking the diamonds to Mr Taylor or to Sierra Leone.

Ms Campbell said that, a few hours after a charity dinner in South Africa hosted by Nelson Mandela, unidentified men came to her room, woke her and then handed her the gift.

Mr Taylor, 62, is accused of orchestrating a campaign of terror in Sierra Leone to gain control of the country's diamond resources, using methods including murder, sexual slavery and the recruitment of child soldiers during a decade-long civil war that left tens of thousands dead.

"I don't know a thing about Charles Taylor, I'd never heard of him before, I'd never heard of the country Liberia before, I'd never heard of the term blood diamonds before," Ms Campbell said. "I'm used to seeing diamonds shiny in a box, that's the kind of diamond I'm used to seeing."

Ms Campbell, who was ordered to appear before the court after refusing to co-operate with prosecutors, previously denied receiving any diamonds from Mr Taylor.

The diamonds were given to Jeremy Ratcliffe, at the time the head of the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund, after the breakfast, in order to raise money for the charity, Ms Campbell said.

But she also claimed that when she spoke to Mr Ratcliffe last year, he still had them. The charity said it had not received the diamonds, according to a letter shown in court.

According to her testimony, either Mia Farrow, the US actress, or Carole White, her former agent, suggested that the stones in the pouch were rough-cut diamonds and came from Mr Taylor when she discussed the matter at breakfast the following morning. Ms Campbell said she assumed the suggestions had been correct.

Ms Campbell, who was ordered to appear before the court after refusing to co-operate with prosecutors, has previously denied receiving any diamonds from Mr Taylor.

She said she had given the pouch to the head of a charity after the breakfast. Ms Farrow and Ms White are to appear in court on Monday.

The improbable collision of the worlds of fashion and international justice took place in an equally strange location — a converted basketball court that had been used by Dutch spies before the building in a suburb of The Hague was vacated by the intelligence service and converted into an international tribunal.

Mr Taylor's trial, which has run for three years, is hearing the case for the defence but prosecutors won leave to reopen their case in order to hear Ms Campbell and the two other witnesses.