

I WAS HOUSE SLAVE, ZAMBIAN CHARGES

Daily News (New York)

January 4, 2001, Thursday, SPORTS FINAL EDITION

Copyright 2001 Daily News, L.P.

Section: NEWS;

Length: 378 words

Byline: By MARTIN MBUGUA DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

Body

A retired United Nations employee who plans to run for president of his native Zambia stands accused of treating the housekeeper in his posh Westchester home - a fellow Zambian - like a virtual slave.

Mason Hikabanze has filed a federal lawsuit seeking damages from his former boss, Yobert Shamapande, who, until his retirement last month, was chief of the business development unit in the UN Department of Public Information.

Hikabanze, 26, alleges that over 17 months, Shamapande, 59, and his wife, Lynah, paid him a meager 58 cents an hour to care for an autistic teenager, cook and serve meals, and do laundry and housekeeping in the 11-room home.

The suit, filed Dec. 22 in Manhattan Federal Court, charges the Shamapandes with violating federal, state and international laws against involuntary servitude from Aug. 7, 1999, to Dec. 15, 2000.

"[This] is an utter violation of American law," said Sameer Ashar, a staff attorney with New York University's Immigrants' Rights Clinic, who filed the lawsuit for Hikabanze and is acting as his spokesman.

Hikabanze said through his lawyer that he worked at the home in Goldens Bridge, Westchester, until he fled three weeks ago. During that time, he says, he was required to work 69 hours a week for a fixed salary of \$160 a month.

According to court papers, the Shamapandes allegedly told Hikabanze that U.S. immigration officials would deport him if he went public with complaints about his working conditions.

"It's just unfortunate," Ashar said of Hikabanze's ordeal.

Shamapande, who lectures on poverty, development economics, government ethics and governance as an adjunct professor at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs, plans to run for president of Zambia this year. He could not be reached for comment on Hikabanze's allegations.

According to a spokesman for the UN Visa Committee who asked not to be named, the UN requires employees such as Shamapande to submit annual proof that they have paid income and Social Security taxes, as well as health insurance, for their domestic staff before entry visas for those staffers are approved.

The spokesman said Shamapande got into trouble "by circumventing the rules as long as he could, and now he's been caught."

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

I WAS HOUSE SLAVE, ZAMBIAN CHARGES

Subject: SUITS & CLAIMS (90%); IMMIGRATION LAW (90%); LITIGATION (90%); UNITED NATIONS (89%); WAGES & SALARIES (78%); SOCIAL SECURITY (78%); ETHICS (78%); US SOCIAL SECURITY (78%); INTERNATIONAL LAW (78%); UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTIONS (78%); LAWYERS (77%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (74%); IMMIGRATION (74%); EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLANS (73%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (72%); DAMAGES (72%); LAW COURTS & TRIBUNALS (69%); AUTISM (55%)

Company: COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS (53%); COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS (53%); UNITED NATIONS (93%); UNITED NATIONS (93%)

Organization: UNITED NATIONS (93%); UNITED NATIONS (93%)

Industry: LAWYERS (77%); EMPLOYEE HEALTH PLANS (73%); COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS (72%); HEALTH INSURANCE (70%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (79%); NEW YORK, USA (79%); ZAMBIA (94%); UNITED STATES (79%)

Load-Date: January 4, 2001

End of Document