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# Year End Report

## Hubert H. Fellowship Program 2008 - 2009

### Caliste Claude M'Bayia

Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow



**The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program**

A Program for Mid-Career Professionals Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State

Abidjan, December 5<sup>th</sup> 2009

➤ PREPARING LEADERS FOR A GLOBAL SOCIETY

From September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008 to June 16<sup>th</sup>, 2009, I spent an extraordinary year in the United States of America as a participant in the Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program.

This program provides a year of professional enrichment in the United States for experienced professionals from designed countries throughout the world. Fellows are selected based on their potential for leadership and their commitment to public service in either the public or private sector.

It was a rich and stretching experience that has completely changed my perspective/vision of the world.

The present document summarizes my experience as a Hubert H. Humphrey Fellow at the University of Washington in Seattle.

➤ A DIFFICULT DECISION

I had a mixed feeling when I was informed by the US Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire that I was awarded the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship. On the one hand, I was proud to be selected by this prestigious program and I really wanted to take advantage of this unique opportunity that was offered to me. But, on the other hand, I was conscious that accepting the offer to join the Hubert H. Humphrey Program will affect my family and my job. It was a tough decision, probably the most difficult decision I had ever made in my life. I have finally opted to accept the offer after a long period of reflection and discussion with my wife.

Reflecting back after my Humphrey year, it is clear that my wife and I made the right decision as the program has, by far, exceeded my expectations.

➤ THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

I spent my Humphrey year at the Evans School of Public Affairs of the University of Washington located in the city Seattle. This university was founded in 1861 and is one of the most renowned universities in the United States of America.

The University employs over 4100 full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty members and offers over 250 degrees within 150 departments programs across 18 colleges and schools over 500 buildings. It has around 50,000 students and has a presence in over 10 countries. The University of Washington manages two major medical centers ranked among the top 10 hospitals in the US.

On May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the Evans School of Public Affairs celebrated 20 years of hosting the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program at the University of Washington.

The campus of the University of Washington is designed in a way to maximize the benefits for both students and professors. Students and professors are really open-minded, eager to acquire new knowledge. I noticed this especially during class where some professors systematically would like to hear my point of view, a different perspective on subjects that are being discussed in the classroom. After classes, students and professors can stay over, for long in-depth discussions.

The programs are very flexible and the catalog of courses is so rich that it could be challenging to make choices.

I remember that after a presentation I made on reforestation and natural rubber trees in Cote d'Ivoire, people came to thank me because they have learnt so much from my presentations. I realized that the Americans value of knowledge considerably, what made me understand the actual meaning of Francis Bacon's famous aphorism: "**knowledge is power**".

➤ THE CITY OF SEATTLE

Seattle is the main city of Washington State. Located in the North-West of the United States, Seattle is the home city of many major organizations and firms such as Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks and Amazon. The Seattleites, the inhabitants of Seattle, believe that Seattle is the best place to live in the world. They are not wrong as Seattle, also known as the Evergreen city, has a lot to offer with an extraordinary landscape, climate and people.

➤ ABOUT THE AMERICANS

I found that the Americans are really enthusiastic people. They talk and act with passion. They often try to sell new ideas and convince others to share their ideas. They have lots of respect for ideas from other people and they are eager to provide positive feedback very kindly. They would often say: “that is a brilliant idea” or “I loved your presentation” or “that is a great question” even if they do not agree with you. This may sound sometimes weird or hypocritical for someone like me, coming from a culture where people would provide little positive feedback and focus more on criticism instead.

Furthermore I was especially astonished by the friendliness of the people in Seattle, on campus or in the street. Whether you are looking for information to find your way, or at the library to find a book, or looking for connections with others, there is always someone around that is ready to help.

➤ 2008-09 FELLOWS

The 2008-09 Hubert H. Humphrey fellow cohorts at the University of Washington was composed of 14 fellows coming from Europe, Asia and Africa.

Sihem Ben Adbelmelek <i>Tunisia</i>	Dyuti Baral <i>Nepal</i>	Fazel Rabi Haqbeen <i>Afghanistan</i>	Svetlana Malkarova <i>Russia</i>
Lech Marcinkowski <i>Poland</i>	Carol Mumba <i>Zambia</i>	Leda Shiyakova <i>Bulgaria</i>	Yuriy Yurchenko <i>Ukraine</i>
Jean de Dieu Rakotondramihamina <i>Madagascar</i>	Petros Mandlenkosi Dlamini <i>Kingdom of Swaziland</i>	Claudine Zongo <i>Burkina Faso</i>	Hovhannes Mikoyan <i>Armenia</i>
Kyung Yeol Koo <i>South Korea</i>	Claude Caliste M'Bayia <i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>		

This group was part of a group of 163 fellows that were hosted on 17 universities across the United States. It was an exceptional opportunity to connect and live with people from all around the world. Learning from others, about their culture, their countries and their families was quite a unique experience that has fundamentally modified the way I perceive our Planet today. Now, I have friends all around the World which is something I would never have dreamt of only a year ago. These days, when I hear the news on Afghanistan, I am instinctively reminded my friend Fazel Rabi Haqbeen and all the lengthy discussions we had had on the situation in his country.

➤ THE INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

Together with a group of 3 other fellows, we decided to live together and share the same house. With Petros Dlamini from Swaziland, Jean Rakotondramihamina from Madagascar, Fazel Rabi from Afghanistan and myself from Côte d'Ivoire, we rented a very nice and fully equipped house in the Green Lake neighborhood in Seattle. Our house quickly named the International House by other fellows as it became the place where we all often gathered for meetings, discussions, food and

parties. It was an exclusive opportunity to share food, discussions, knowledge with people from other countries and culture. This would not have been possible, if it were not for the Humphrey program.

Obviously, having the chance to develop my personal and professional networks by being immersed in another culture are some of the most salient benefits of the Humphrey program.

➤ **HOST FAMILY**

During the program, each Humphrey fellow is paired with a host family. Host families are unpaid volunteers who offer support to international students by answering their questions about life in the United States and inviting the fellows for occasional activities throughout the year.

Mary and Jim Figel were my host family during the program. They are really extraordinary people that have greatly helped me in adjusting to the life in the United States as well discovering new aspects of the American culture such as attending baseball and football games or sailing. With the Figels, I spent unforgettable times. I ended up calling them Mom and Dad!

➤ **ACADEMIC COURSES**

The Humphrey Program is a very flexible one. Each fellow is responsible for designing his own curriculum. As far as I am concerned, I took classes at the following schools: the School of Public Affairs, the Forster School of Business, the Information School and the Computer Science and Engineering School.

<b>Evans School of Public Affairs</b>	<b>Forster School of Business</b>	<b>The Information School</b>	<b>Computer Science and Engineering School</b>
International Development HHH Leadership Seminar Managing Non-Profit Organizations	Business Intelligence Data-mining	Change Management and Information Technology	Computing in the Developing World

In addition to these courses, I attended many other executive seminars on leadership, performance management and accountability for results.

➤ **LEADERSHIP SEMINARS**

The Hubert H. Humphrey Program is mainly a leadership program. Therefore, attending the weekly leadership seminar is mandatory for all the fellows. My leadership classes were taught by Professor Nancy Campbell. It encompassed a complete leadership process, designed around theoretical and practical activities combined with the use of a set of human resources personality assessment tools like the 360° Leadership Skill Scope, Emotional Quotient Inventory and Myers-Briggs Type Indicators. Owing to the leadership seminars, I have now a better knowledge of myself and I believe I am now able to better understand others.

➤ **RESEARCH ASSISTANT**

I was also involved in a research project on e-government and e-commerce. I was appointed as a Research Assistant by Karin Barzilai-Nahon and Hans J. Scholl, both of them professors at the Information School at the University of Washington. I worked on the E2ECA (e-Government and e-Commerce Comparative Analysis), a research project aiming at investigating similarities and differences between e-Commerce and e-Government. This project has been going on for three years and my contribution was to organize a focus group meeting between e-commerce and e-

government experts. Through this work, I develop my organization skills, extended my connection with e-Commerce and e-Government experts and improved my understanding of e-Commerce and e-Government challenges on process management, stakeholders' relations, citizen/customer focus, digital divide and security.

### ➤ PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATION

Participating in the Professional Affiliation program is a mandatory activity. Each fellow is required to have at least one Professional Affiliation. The purpose of the a Professional Affiliation is to provide Humphrey Fellows with the opportunity to engage in hands-on work with their professional counterparts in the United States for a minimum period of 6 weeks.

But establishing a successful Professional Affiliation is a complex process. On the one hand, it requires that the Fellow understands and articulates what s/he would like to do. On the other hand, it requires finding an organization/agency doing that type of work and willing to take a Fellow. While the program is ready to assist in the process, Fellows are responsible for finding and establishing their affiliations. In most cases, the process of establishing a good affiliation involves several people, requires considerable time and effort and can have frustrating moments.

As far as I am concerned, I did my Professional Affiliation at the Department of Information Technology of the City of Seattle. The City of Seattle is recognized in the US as one leading cities the in adoption of electronic government tools and practices. I worked under the supervision of Mr. Bruce Blood, the Citywide Web Manager. My role was to participate in the Citizen Engagement Portal project, assisting in research, planning and specification of the Portal. This Professional Affiliation was beneficial not only because I was exposed to the state of art in terms e-government solutions but also because I learnt a great deal about the organization and the infrastructure required for running a Department of Technology in a governmental entity.

### ➤ THE THANKSGIVING EXPERIENCE

Celebrating Thanksgiving was awesome. I had heard of Thanksgiving before going to the United States but I did not imagine that it was such an important event, full of significance, for the American people. It was really enjoyable to share these memorable times with our American friends and their families.

### ➤ PROMOTING MY COUNTRY

I had the opportunity to make many presentations on various subjects during my Humphrey year. First, I participated in a videoconference with US Embassy in Côte d'Ivoire to share my experience with prospective applicants to the Hubert H. Humphrey Program in Cote d'Ivoire. Then, I presented a reforestation project at the School of Forestry and at the Evans School of Public Affairs of the University of Washington. I had also made a presentation on the telecommunication industry in Cote d'Ivoire at the Evans School of Public Affairs.

But "Get a Taste of Cote d'Ivoire Without Leaving Campus": this is the event I am the most proud of. It was a day dedicated to my country, Cote d'Ivoire. It was a campus wide event that offered to students of the University of Washington the opportunity to sample classic Ivorian cuisine and to experience the rich culture of Cote d'Ivoire through the exposition of Ivorian traditional dress, games, photos, music and arts. The event was organized in collaboration with FIUTS, the Foundation for International Understanding Through Students, a non-profit organization based inside the University of Washington; Ivoire Union, the Ivorian Community's association in Seattle and the Housing and Food Services Department of the University of Washington. It was a really successful event that was attended by several hundreds of students and other Seattleites.

I had the chance to make many other off-campus visits such as the Port of Seattle, the Casey Family Foundation, the Boeing plant, the Microsoft Campus, the Governor's office at Olympia,

capital city of Washington state and some of the most prestigious places in Washington DC (Ministry of foreign affairs, the Smithsonian Museums including the National Air and Space Museum, etc)

During my Humphrey year, I had also visited students at McKinley Technology High School in Washington DC to talk about my country and my job. And addressing the many challenging questions that the students had, were among the most exhilarating experience I have ever had.

➤ IVOIRE UNION, THE IVORIAN COMMUNITY IN SEATTLE

During my Humphrey year, I had the opportunity to reach out the Ivoirian community in the greater Seattle area. They have formed an association called Ivoire Union with around 200 members. I was invited to attend their monthly meeting to present the Humphrey program and the other initiatives that could represent a great investment opportunity for some of the Ivoirians leaving in Seattle.

➤ VOLUNTEERING MLK DAY

Volunteering at Martin Luther King, Jr Day of Service was a great opportunity for me to give back to the Washington State community that has adopted me for a year. With a group of 40 students, international fellows, staff, faculty, friends, and family, we worked with the Nature Consortium at the West Duwamish Green Belt to remove invasive growth, plant trees and salal, and place mulch. This group was part of the largest University of Washington's Day of Service ever with approximately 1,400 volunteers working at 60 different sites in the Seattle area.

➤ LIVING HISTORY

I was really blessed to be visiting the United States during the year 2008 historical presidential election campaign. My love politics and debates were entirely satisfied. Analyzing campaign messages and strategies, participating in political debates with students and professors of the School of Public Affairs where the majority of students have something to say about politics was a thrilling experience.

I followed all the debates between the two presidential candidates with groups of friends around food and wine. I remember also spending hours watching CNN and Fox News to follow endless debates between Democrat and Republican strategists.

Obama's campaign messages were well received by the American youth. Therefore, it was not surprising to see that most students on the campus of the University of Washington were supporting Barack Obama even though it is true that the State of Washington is traditionally a blue State.

Our visit to a polling station

When we learnt that it was possible to visit a polling station from inside the day of election, together with our group of Humphrey fellows we decided not to miss this unique occasion. A group of Evans School students volunteered to guide us for this visit. I was expecting anything but what I experienced.

My first surprise was to realize that voting was held inside the premises of a church.

Secondly, I was expecting a tight security near the polling station. I did not even see a single policeman around. Coming from Africa where we are used to see a heavy deployment of security forces during the voting process, I have to say that I was shocked by the fact that there was no security forces at all near the polling station.

Third surprise, the polling station was managed by volunteers, retired people, lawyers and even students. Their role was mainly to guide the voters to cast their votes when necessary. I remember that around the same period, the identification process in Cote d'Ivoire got delayed because the

workers of CEI, Commission Electorale Indépendente, were on strike because their stipends had not been paid on time. I remember saying to myself that Cote d'Ivoire could have used groups of volunteers to get this job done and hence reduce significantly the cost of the identification program. Finally, much to my surprise, we were able to enter the polling station without any control. Not even an ID control was required. We were able to take pictures inside the polling station and even touch the voting materials. It was simply unbelievable.

I was stunned to see how smooth the voting process was, making me measure how far in Cote d'Ivoire we are still from a peaceful democratic society.

#### Living the historic instant

With a group of students and friends, we gathered in a restaurant to live the historic instant of the announcement of the results of the presidential elections on CNN. An indescribable moment of joys, tears, cries and hugs. I will never forget these memorable times!

#### ➤ FROM THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FORUM TO MIT

The Global Leadership Forum is an event organized by the Institute of International Education (IIE) to bring together all fellows from all host universities. It was a unique time to get to know other fellows and make new friends with a cohort of really talented people. Much to my surprise, I realized that each fellow I came across has a unique story and background. And again, I felt extremely proud and blessed to be part of this group.

The Global Leadership Forum was such an empowering event that it triggered in me the idea that nothing was impossible; that all objectives could be achieved provided that you plan carefully and work hard. I had dreamt of over the past recent years of attending a Master's program at MIT. I decided that it was time to get ready and apply for admission. Right after the Global Leadership Forum, I started preparing myself for admission at MIT. Five months of hard work, almost every single evening to prepare for the GRE exam on which I got a honorable score, to write my essays and get the required recommendations. It took MIT Admissions Committee only week to offer me a seat in the program I had opted for, instead of the minimum of two months reported in the web site of the program. I learned later that the admission process was fast because there was a consensus of the admissions committee over my profile and application file.

#### ➤ GRADUATION CEREMONY

Our graduation ceremony held in Washington DC was another festive and appealing moment as we received our certificates from the Government of the United States in recognition of our achievements. All the fellows were really proud to reach successfully the end of the program.

What made us even more proud was to discover that our certificates were signed by the two most prominent figures in the United States today: Secretary Hillary Clinton and President Barack Obama. I was myself so proud that just the day after the receipt of this certificate, I was in New York and I wanted to show my certificate to everyone I came across on the 8<sup>th</sup> avenue.

#### ➤ BACK HOME

I left the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program with mixed feelings: on the one hand, the pleasure to go back home, to my family and country, and on the other hand, the sorrow to leave behind my new friends and families.

But it was a pleasure to be finally back home and get together with my family. Thanks to Skype and the internet, I was able to be in touch with my family almost every day. This has made our separation less difficult to handle. The backside is that when I came back home, there were almost any completely new story to tell since I was aware of everything that was happening home and my family was also kept updated with all my activities in the United States!

Now, I have resumed my work at Smart Technologies, where the backlog of work and pending issues gave me no other options but full time dedication to my job.

## SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

I have decided to pursue my quest for more knowledge at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for a joint Master's degree program at MIT School of Engineering and Sloan School of Management. The program will start in January 2010. In the meantime, I am developing many projects including launching a rubber trees plantation project to help rural populations in Cote d'Ivoire create a sustainable source of income as well as an e-Government initiative that is expected to bring more transparency and accountability in the management of our public resources.

➤ CONCLUSION

Through the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, I spent an extraordinary year in the United States, a year full of joy, discoveries and learning experiences.

During this time, I learned a lot about the American culture and society. I had also given back by bringing different perspectives to the class, seminars or workshops that I attended. I had developed my leadership skills through not only a better knowledge of myself but also a better understanding of others. I believe I am now equipped, in my minds and in my hands, with powerful tools that will help me lead effectively for the betterment of my community.

My Humphrey fellowship year has also been a sabbatical period that gave me plenty of opportunities to reflect about myself, my job, my family and my community. It was also a personal investment that I hope will bear fruits in a near future.

I am quite proud of what I have achieved during my Humphrey year. I consider myself now as a Citizen of the World committed to embrace the most critical challenges affecting our planet with the aim to make our world a better place to live.

The Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program is definitely a memorable journey and a transforming experience.

But all these could not have been possible, without the dedication and the support of some extraordinary people that I have had the chance to meet all the way through.

I would like to close this report by expressing my gratitude to the following people and organization for making this experience possible:

- The Government of the United States of America,
- the Staff of the US Embassy in Cote d'Ivoire especially Mrs. Brigitte Motto, Mrs. Angèle Gnako, Mr. Guy Honoré Koffi,
- the Staff of IIE, especially Mr. Ed. Roslof and Mrs. Anne Shimko, respectively Director and Deputy Director of IIE,
- Jim and Marie Figel, my host family in Seattle,
- Mr. Bill Schrier, Director of the Department of Technology at the City of Seattle,
- The Staff of the Evans School of Public Affairs especially Mrs. Diana Fletschner, Alexandra Furness respectively Coordinator and Manager of the Humphrey program at the University of Washington,
- My wife, Mireille and daughters Anne-Sophie, Marie-Laure and Alexandra.

May God bless you all.

*The Government  
of the United States of America*

*awards this certificate to*

*Claude Caliste M'Bayia*

*in recognition of the successful completion of a one-year  
program of graduate study and professional development at*

**University of Washington**

**2008-2009**

*as a participant in the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program*

*Hillary Rodham Clinton*

Secretary of State  
United States Department of State

*Barack Obama*

President  
United States of America