

The Camel Express



Newsletter of the Friends of Niger

June/July 2019

Please note we have changed our mailing address to PO Box 612, Decatur IL 62525

In this issue:

1. CONUSA
2. Archive of the Republic of Niger at Boston University
3. Geography Now! – Niger
4. Survey of youth in Niger
5. Niger Connections at University of Illinois: Nigerien Ambassador-at-large Hassana Alidou and American Ambassador Eric Whitaker
6. GET INVOLVED: Online Auction to benefit Hesperian – publisher of Where There is no Doctor
7. Niger in the news – Op-ed by Leonard Pitts, Miami Herald

From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Let's get personal! I have been experiencing the joy and chaos of retiring and moving back to my home territory in southern Oregon. My apologies that all this personal activity has made the Camel Express late ---- again! For my last day at work as a federal employee, I went full circle back to the beginning of my federal career and wore a brightly colored Nigerien *complet*. This was met with a wide variety of responses by US Forest Service colleagues at Mount St. Helens National Monument. I had a blast and while purportedly leading a portion of a staff meeting, I managed to sneak in a plug for Peace Corps and the rehire possibility for federal employees, "agencies holding your spot for you". Ironically, the Peace Corps portion of my career where I had the least agency/organizational support was possibly the most fruitful and productive service. How about YOU? How do your current work experiences compare to Niger days? Friends of Niger would love to hear from you about how your time in Niger impacts your life.

Amy Wilson, dit Amibula

1) CONUSA

So what is CONUSA? To satisfy my curiosity I reached out to Douma who heads up the Conseil des Nigeriens aux USA and represents the group on the Board of the Friends of Niger. CONUSA is an organization formed to support Nigeriens living in the US. While there is no firm population number, it is estimated that there are some 10,000 Nigeriens living in the US. Many of them live in areas where there is a concentration of Nigeriens, like Harrisburg, Washington DC, NYC, Greensboro NC, Boston, Florida, New Orleans, and Lincoln Nebraska. Others are widely dispersed throughout the states, cities and even rural communities.

CONUSA is available to support Nigeriens with a range of social issues that they may encounter while living away from home, including immigration glitches, dealing with a death in the family, addressing education needs, and with diverse legal situations. The help CONUSA offers is in the form of referrals, and connections to resources, as well as moral and financial support.

According to Seybou some 18-20 Nigeriens are currently facing deportation from Atlanta, Boston, Philadelphia and New Jersey. Most of those in this precarious situation have overstayed their visas, or they came as students and are flagged immediately after completing their education even if they stay out of trouble. A small number are drawn into legal and criminal trouble in the US and are being deported as a result. Seybou said that CONUSA is often able to help those who have not strayed into criminal activity. CONUSA raises funds for legal assistance and tries to help people resolve other uncomplicated, non-criminal legal issues.

A new concern they are seeing increasingly is that more of the diaspora are reaching retirement age and yearn to return to Niger to be with family to live out their days. Financial assistance and coaching to navigate the transition is much needed.

How can Friends of Niger engage?

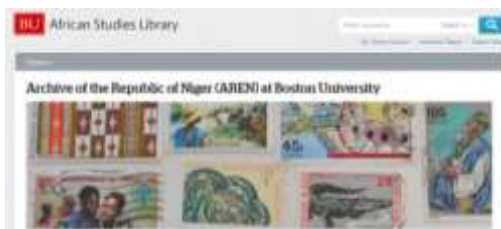
1. Connect Nigeriens. Nigeriens living in the US may not know about CONUSA. Whether they need assistance or have something to offer others, CONUSA would love to be in contact with Nigeriens living in the US.
2. Support Nigeriens. Find a Nigerien living near you! If you don't know of any, maybe Seybou and CONUSA can connect you. A friendly face and a word in Hausa or Zarma could really make a difference.
3. Offer expertise. Do you have expertise, connections, or ideas for Nigeriens making their living here?
4. Offer financial support. Some problems need money. Consider contributing to CONUSA to help them achieve their goals.

To learn more about CONUSA please contact Seybou Douma. He has been in the US since 1997 and is raising his family in the Bronx while he works for CVS Pharmacy and is an active community organizer. He has 6 kids, the oldest daughter just now completing a BA in psychology and the youngest is 7 years old. douma2@optonline.net, 212-203-6048



Speaking of immigration woes. . . Here is more information on how Immigration and Customs Enforcement removal of Africans increased between 2016 and 2017 even as removals of other regions declined: <https://qz.com/africa/120411/trumps-immigration-ice-kicked-out-more-africans-than-ever-while-reducing-overall-removals/>

2) Archive of the Republic of Niger (AREN) at Boston University



Boston University has supported many programs linking Americans to Niger through academic programming. As a result of those strong ties an Archive of the Republic of Niger was established in the African Studies Library at Boston University.

The hope for the collection is that it might come to serve as a national resource for materials about and from the

Republic of Niger. The target stakeholders in establishing an Archive of the Republic of Niger include: Nigeriens, Nigerophiles, Nigerienists, Return Peace Corps Volunteers, Alumni of Study Abroad Programs, academics, consultants, former employees of NGOs, etc.

This Archive was inaugurated by the Nigerien President in April 2015; photographs from that inauguration event can be viewed here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/123460528@No3/sets/72157651729968556/>

Check out that portion available online at: <http://www.bu.edu/library/african-studies/aren/>. A link is available on that page to a form you can fill out if you are interested in contributing to the archive. If you have any questions, please contact Beth Restrict, African Studies Librarian (brestric "at" bu.edu). Consider looking at the larger African Studies collection at: <http://www.bu.edu/library/african-studies/>

For more on the Background submitted by John Hutchison please go to: <http://www.friendsofniger.org/archive-of-the-republic-of-niger-aren-at-boston-university/>

3) Geography Now! - Niger

Check out this 15 minute speed version of Niger geography and see if you learn something new.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHeq99pojLo>

You'll see they need some help with pronunciation, but it is packed with information! It got: 429,746 views; likes - 17K thumbs down – 234 - from Sue Rosenfeld



4) Participatory survey of youth in Niger By UNICEF, World Bank and USAID

*Generating knowledge to better understand the social and economic exclusion and inclusion dynamics affecting young people. **75% of the population is now below 25 years old***

In Niger, young people represent the vast majority of the population. Rapid population growth creates a high demand for public investments in health and education and raises the issue of the place and role of young people in the society.

The issue of youths' insertion in the labour market and ability to engage in entrepreneurial initiatives is particularly acute, since half of the youth are estimated to be underemployed.


YOUTH MESSAGES

- Quel que soit l'âge que l'on a, l'on peut se considérer comme jeune, même lorsqu'on est marié.
- Certaines façons de faire et de penser, certaines règles de vie en société empêchent au jeune de s'exprimer et de se réaliser, c'est pourquoi le jeune a l'impression d'être prisonnier dans son terroir
- Pour s'en sortir, le jeune ne pense et ne peut que faire comme ceux qui sont supposé avoir réussi dans son milieu, mais certains exemples de réussite ne sont pas toujours bons
- Pour le jeune, l'état ne fait rien pour qu'il s'en sorte soit parce qu'il est perçu comme absent, soit quand il est présent, ses interventions semblent freiner la réalisation des aspirations du jeune

- beaucoup de jeunes femmes pensent ne rien pouvoir devenir si elles ne sont pas mariées, celles qui pensent le contraire et/ou se comportent différemment pour se réaliser sont mal vues.


" Parole des Jeunes "

1 QUEL QUE SOIT L'ÂGE QUE L'ON A, L'ON PEUT SE CONSIDÉRER COMME JEUNE, MÊME LORSQU'ON EST MARIÉ.




"Avec la force que j'ai, je cultive la terre et je récolte de ma récolte, je suis donc jeune." Jeune homme de Difa
 "Moi, j'ai 25 ans, ma fille n'est pas encore mariée donc je suis jeune... Je sortirai de la jeunesse quand je la donnerai en mariage." Jeune femme de Zinder

2 CERTAINES FAÇONS DE FAIRE ET DE PENSER, CERTAINES RÈGLES DE VIE EN SOCIÉTÉ ENPRÊCHENT AU JEUNE DE S'EXPRIMER ET DE SE RÉALISER, C'EST POURQUOI LE JEUNE A L'IMPRESSION D'ÊTRE PIÉCHÉ DANS SON TERROIR.




"Je ne pourrai jamais pratiquer le bouchonnié ici. Pourtant, c'est ce que je fais quand je guéris avec village." Jeune homme de Desso
 "Je suis actuellement au chômage, mais pour rien au monde je ne vais faire la reconnaissance pour avoir obtenu la note de ma licence." Jeune homme de Tibibary

3 POUR S'EN SORTIR, LE JEUNE NE PENSE ET NE PEUT QUE FAIRE COMME CEUX QUI SONT SUPPOSÉS AVOIR RÉUSSI DANS SON MILIEU MAIS CERTAINS EXEMPLES DE RÉUSSITE NE SONT PAS TOUJOURS BONS.




"Je suis un commerçant et mon rêve est de connaître une grande maison, d'avoir un grand commerce." Jeune femme de Niamey
 "Je voudrais avoir mon véhicule 4x4 grâce à l'argent de ma vie pour transporter les gens vers l'Algérie." Jeune homme d'Agadez

4 POUR LE JEUNE, L'ÉTAT NE FAIT RIEN POUR QU'IL S'EN SORTE, SOIT PARCE QU'IL EST PERDU COMME ABSENT, SOIT QUAND IL EST PRÉSENT, SES INTERVENTIONS SEMBLENT FREDRE LA RÉALISATION DES ASPIRATIONS DU JEUNE.



"Dans le zone du lac, du en devenant la frontière, souvent il n'y a pas de gendarmes. Nous nous faisons attaquer par des bandes qui nous prennent notre bétail. C'est pourquoi beaucoup de jeunes sont armés pour se protéger." Jeune homme de Difa
 "Je ne souhaite pas travailler pour l'État, parce que l'État est corrompu." Jeune homme de Tahoua

5 BEAUCOUP DE JEUNES FEMMES PENSENT NE BIEN POUVOIR DEVENIR SI ELLES NE SONT PAS MARIÉES, CELLES QUI PENSENT LE CONTRAIRE ET/OU SE COMPORTEENT DIFFÉRENNENT POUR SE RÉALISER SONT MAL VUES.



"Je suis une femme protestataire tout simplement parce que je suis la dernière entre le Nigeria et le Niger pour prendre un village mes 7 enfants." Jeune de femme de Niamey
 "Mon rêve c'est d'avoir un grand salon de coiffure et d'y inscrire le nom de ma fille. Arrivé / Pour ma fille je serai capable de tout." Jeune femme de Niamey

Check out the key findings and read the whole report at:
<https://www.unicef.org/niger/participatory-survey-youth-niger-o>
 Thanks to Cheryl Turner for sharing this report

5) The Nigerien connection: The highest level diplomats between the U.S. and Niger are both University of Illinois alumni. Read the article in alumni news about Nigerien Ambassador-at-large Hassana Alidou and American Ambassador Eric Whitaker
<https://las.illinois.edu/news/2019-05-29/nigerien-connection>
 Thanks to John Baird for sharing this link



6) GET INVOLVED: Online Auction to benefit Hesperian – publisher of *Where There is no Doctor*

Hesperian is a small nonprofit with 15 employees and hundreds of volunteers, we depend on the generosity of our donors to develop, translate and distribute health information. For over 40 years, people worldwide with limited or no access to healthcare have been empowered to take control of their health by using our easy-to-read materials. In 86 languages, Hesperian's signature book – *Where There Is No Doctor* - is considered the gold standard in health books by the World Health Organization.

https://www.32auctions.com/Hesperian?utm_source=Bidding+for+better+health+-+9%2F16%2F2019&utm_campaign=Auction_2019&utm_medium=email&fbclid=IwAR3cMPtdo_FjTSvKffCcSpvtLpGUkfZJwBqeRcNvbOm7kIOKEwCDn-t6xhk

Some new titles they created include:

Helping Children Live with HIV

A Community Guide to Environmental Health

Where Women Have No Doctor

Disabled Village Children

Workers' Guide to Health and Safety

Where There Is No Dentist

Thanks to Cathryn Poff for sharing this link

7) Niger referenced in connection to current events—

Op-ed in the Miami Herald 7/16/2019. . Pulitzer Prize-winning author and journalist, Leonard Pitts
Dear Donald Trump: Years ago, I got to visit Kwethluk, an Alaskan town of fewer than 900 souls. It is an isolated place where the people, most of them Yup'ik and Eskimo, live on what the tundra provides: ptarmigan, moose, seal, salmonberries. I remember standing upon that snowbound landscape and marveling that I was further than I'd ever been from everything I'd ever known.

It was a feeling I'd had once before, at a village in Niger. But this was different, because I'd needed no passport to get to Kwethluk. Though I stood in a distant place with people who did not look like me and whose traditions were not like mine, the marvel of it was that I was yet standing with fellow citizens, together in our country.



Read more at . . . <https://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/opn-columns-blogs/leonard-pitts-jr/article232738672.html>

Here is the backstory of Leonard Pitts' visit and connection to Niger

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gnCZy-IR-yI>