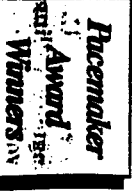


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Black-tie gala closes summit

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DFP Staff

Boston University's African Presidential Archives and Research Center celebrated its second successful year of service and the 79th birthday of its first president-in-residence, former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, at the Four Seasons Grand Ballroom last night, concluding a two-day summit of former African leaders.

APARC director and former United States ambassador to Tanzanian Charles Stith welcomed six former African presidents, six African ambassadors and more than 200 attendants to the black-tie gala by commenting on the historic nature of the event.

"On this night, in Boston ... we have more firepower from Africa than any other city in the nation," he said.

During his final address of a year that has taken him to cities across America, Kaunda reflected on the fulfilling experience he had in the United States and the insight he gained about the American population.

"Americans I did not know until this time," he said. "I have been around you

for some time now and now I know a little more about you people — great people."

As he has in speeches throughout the year, Kaunda also stressed the need to free the African people from HIV.

"We need to fight a disease called AIDS," he said. "And you can do it."

Kaunda ended the night by performing his signature song, which also focused on Africa's plight.

"In the name of great Africa, we shall fight and conquer AIDS," he sang.

Stith said he sees the success of the APARC as a statement of Boston University's pledge to the African continent. The six former leaders the center invited to BU show the center's seriousness, he said.

"These six leaders are folks who are reformers — they moved their nations forward," he said. "What we have done this week and here tonight is strong a reflection of the leadership and commitment Boston University has toward the study on Africa and its people."

BU provost Dennis Berkey assured the African leaders that the university

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BIRTHDAY

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BRANDON BODOW / DFP STAFF
APARC president-in-residence and former Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda.

will continue to assist both the center and Africa itself.

"Many people have tried to impress on me the worth of these last two days," he said. "We understand that at Boston University and we support it."

Along with supporting Africa by calling for the U.S. government to change its policy toward the continent from aid to trade, Berkeley said he and the university will continue to assist the APARC with help of the Lloyd G. Balfour Foundation.

The event made Her Excellency Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika, Zambia's ambassador to the United States, speechless.

"I can't even put it in words," she said after the speeches. "To see six former presidents of Africa sit at one table is a powerful sight. They are men of great experience and commitment."

Mbikusita-Lewanika said she believes the two-day summit made great progress in the fight to inform the West

about the problems Africa is currently facing.

"As an ambassador, they are making my job easier," she said. "America's image of Africa is so negative."

The Honorable Joe C. Keshi, Nigerian ambassador to the United States, agreed that Americans look toward Africa pessimistically.

"All Americans hear is war and pain — they don't know the joy that triumph Africans enjoy," he said.

Keshi said he fears America will take advantage of the continent's current state of weakness and create abusive policies that will only bring about short-term changes or no change at all.

"If America will stay with us, she will find that she has an amazing opportunity to seize in Africa," he said. "Take this chance and let the African flower bloom."

Mbikusita-Lewanika said she agreed with Kaunda's characterization of Africans as great people, but said they need

to learn about Africa in order to help it.

"The ordinary American is great — if they are informed," she said. "But without educating the West, there is little that can be done."

Event attendees included Boston-area community members, many of whom paid \$250 to come, BU officials and APARC staff members. For the staff, the event ended the center's second academic year.

College of Arts and Sciences senior Alice T. Kabwe, an APARC intern, called her experiences at the center "amazing." "The whole event was really cool," she said. "I wish more students would take an interest in Africa and this center."

As a native to Africa, Kabwe said she identifies personally with the power and esteem of the gathered leaders.

"I'm from Zambia — he is my former president," she said referring to Kaunda. "To see him talk and to see him work as been amazing for me."