

NINA MOINI: A new coalition has launched to bring together the African diaspora community in Minnesota. The Pan-African Leadership Coalition will work to address challenges that affect Pan-African communities. Joining me now is Habon Abdulle. She's the President and Chair of the organization's board and also a founder of the nonprofit Ayada Leads.

Thank you for being with us, Habon.

**HABON
ABDULLE:** Thank you for having me.

NINA MOINI: Congratulations on this new coalition. Your official launch event yesterday. How does it feel to have this organization become a reality?

**HABON
ABDULLE:** It feels really good. The launch of the Pan-African Leadership Coalition was a milestone for Minnesota's African diaspora. It reflects the collaboration and shared vision for all of us, our collective leadership. And I want to see this organization, what impact it will create for our community here in Minnesota.

NINA MOINI: And tell me about why you saw a need for this organization. Why is it important to come together in this way?

**HABON
ABDULLE:** Yeah. Again, it's a conversation that has been happening for a long time as a community here, the African diaspora, whether we are immigrants or refugees, we call ourselves diaspora, meaning we want to create this bigger umbrella, where we can congregate and have that real conversation we need. And that is because there is-- we engage in any aspect of our state, whether that is civic and political life. We often participate in policy discussions through broader coalition, focus on racial equity and immigration rights and so on and so forth.

While these partnerships are amazing and valuable, many African immigrant leaders have expressed a growing need for an unified and independent voice, one that speaks directly to our community's unique challenges, values, and aspirations. That's why we wanted to come together and create this coalition.

NINA MOINI: Yeah, I hear you saying so many things are about policies and politics. And there are also everyday needs and people's real everyday lives. And people need resources. So pooling resources and coming together seems helpful in that way. What are some of the things that you hope the coalition can address just in terms of people's everyday needs?

**HABON
ABDULLE:** Yeah. We have some strategic focuses that we have been discussing since the community leaders coming together. The first thing we actually want to start with is the research and data collection. We want to strengthen the data on African immigrants in Minnesota. We know that there is a certain number of immigrants that are from African and from Africa who are now living in Minnesota. And we also have been hearing others doing the research that are telling that Minnesota is home to one of the fastest-growing of African immigrants population. But all those research, while that there are some of it, we haven't had a wave of-- we haven't have ways of contributing what the solution is of the research and things that have been happening in our community.

If I can give an example.

NINA MOINI: Sure.

HABON ABDULLE: What we are experiencing as a community is not one issue, two issues. It's complex and cumulative and issues that are interconnected. Oftentimes, we talk about the lack of affordable housing. And whenever that comes up, that issue, the people who we-- and the policymakers and the philanthropy, those who are interested, when we have that conversation, they know the needs, but they will then address that issue as isolated, as an isolated issue.

For example, there is a family that lives in Brooklyn Park. They need affordable housing. Those families have a support system that has been helping them. Whether it's the dads or mom are coming home late, they know who will look their kids or who will pick up their kids from school. If those who are addressing housing issues, they will build a house in Shakopee, which is affordable, that family and housing affordability is addressed in that way but then they will lose the entire other system that they built in that other location.

NINA MOINI: I see what you're saying. So if they're moving to another location that's more affordable for their family, they are also losing some community or the people around them that were going to step in. I'm just re-summarizing what you're saying because I'm having a little trouble with your audio quality.

So you just launched the organization, very exciting. How was that, and how can people get involved?

HABON ABDULLE: It was amazing. We have many people, friends, community, African diaspora community, allies, and partners who attended. It was amazing. Again, it was a milestone because we have been working for quite some time.

And how people can connect is we have a website. Please, go to our website, and share how you can contribute, whether that is in a financial way or voluntary way, or even just supporting us as we keep up the good work, so we wanted people engage and being a partner with us.

NINA MOINI: Habon, thank you so much for stopping by *Minnesota Now* and telling us all about it. We're really happy for you, the Pan-African Leadership Coalition. Congratulations.

HABON ABDULLE: Thank you for the opportunity. Appreciate it.

NINA MOINI: Habon Abdulle is the President and Chair of the Pan-African Leadership Coalition.