



## Dr. Erku Yimer

Dr. Erku Yimer began his work as a community organizer in Ethiopia. After resettling in Chicago, IL in 1975, Erku helped, found, and develop the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago (ECAC) in 1984. He became Executive Director in 1985 and continues to serve in that role, overseeing all of the agency's social service and economic development programs. Additionally, as Executive Director, Erku directs financial operations, prepares budgets and develop proposals, selects and supervises staff, relates the agency's mission to the larger community, as well as to founders and accredited institutions and continues to develop new programs and initiatives to meet the needs of his community. ECAC has served over 25,000 individuals in its 24 years history and serves over 4000 refugees and immigrants from Africa, South East Asia, the middle-East East Europe and the Caribbean and brings together the Ethiopian Community in Chicago area.

Mr. Yimer earned a Bachelor Degree in Social work in 1971 from Hileselasse I University in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He continued his graduate studies at the University of Chicago, finally earning a Ph.D in Adult and Continuing Education from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Erku has attended and participated in numerous national and international conferences including the Youth conference on population studies in Geneva, Switzerland (1973), the world religion centennial conference in Chicago, Illinois (1993), the world social forum conference in Bombay, India (2003), the strategic leadership conference at the Kellogg school of Management, Northwestern University in Chicago, Illinois (2004), and the annual Ethiopian Community Development Council's African Refugee conference in Washington DC (1995 – Present).

Furthermore, Erku has researched and presented papers in several conferences including: *The Plight of African Refugees*, presented at the Mid West Refugees Conferences in Chicago, Illinois (1986); *From Ethiopia to the USA*, presented at the Annual conference of African Studies in Chicago, Illinois (1988); *Community development and economic Issues for African refugees in the united states* (1992); *the effect of globalization and migration of Africa* (2007); and *Issues and problems facing African immigrants*, presented at the united African organization conference (2008). Mr. Yimer has also co-authored *African Refugees: The politics of Silence*, presented at the Growth in Ethiopia, published by Tufts University (1976).

Finally, Erku has also conducted and Co-authored A comparative study of Literacy programs in Ethiopia before and after the 1974 revolution, presented as his Ph.D. Dissertation at the University of Wisconsin, Madison (1987).



Mr. Yimer has participated in and taken leadership roles on numerous advocacy efforts in Chicago concerning refugee and immigrants communities. He has campaigned for policy changes, organized trainings, and advocacy seminars on issues including, but not limited to, refugee admission policies, female genital mutilations and affordable housing. Erku has provided effective leadership in creating significant public awareness concerning the plight of African refugees and famine victims, and these efforts have earned him numerous awards including: the **Education Award of Merits from the Chicago commission of Human relations** (1990); as well as the **Human Rights Awards** from Travelers and Immigrants Aid Society (1990); and the **Warrior for Affordable Housing Award from the Voice of the people** (1990); the **Award of Excellence** from the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago (1996); the **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Award of Excellence** from the Ethiopian Community Association of Chicago and **Award of Commitment and Excellence** from the Ethiopian Community Development Council (2008).

Erku has been a member and board member of several immigrant and refugee organizations including: Board Member – United African Organization; Steering Committee Member – International Homes Project, Chicago (1994-1995); Board Member – Uptown Development Corporation (2002); Founder and Member – Coalition of African Service Providers (CASP, 2002-2005); Board Member and Co-chair Mutual Assistance Associations of Illinois (1986-Present); and Founder and Member Coalition of Africa, Asian, European and Latino Immigrants of Illinois (CAAELII, 1996-Present). Additionally, Erku serves as a Chairperson of the Ethiopian National Congress, a civic group that has members and chapters internationally.