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# Congoese Family Reunited With Help Of UNH Students, Congressman Bradley And Community Effort

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DURHAM, N.H.— Children from the Congo separated from their parents for more than two years because of civil war were reunited with their parents Sept. 10 thanks in large part to a year-long effort by an anthropology professor at the University of New Hampshire and her students, who were determined to bring the family back together.

Hubert and Helene Simwerayi of Manchester were reunited with their seven children Friday, Sept. 10, at Boston's Logan Airport. The effort to reunite the Simwerayi family was started by Nina Glick-Schiller, professor of anthropology, and her students in spring 2003.

"The depth of caring of our students and the important role public service plays in their lives are amazing. They were moved by the injustice that they witnessed and wanted to make a difference for these new residents of the Granite State. They are role models not only for their peers but for people everywhere, and I am thrilled that their efforts, as well as those of the larger community, have resulted in the reuniting of this African family that has been through so much," UNH President Ann Weaver Hart said.

In addition to the UNH student-led and communitywide effort, First District Congressman Jeb Bradley and his Manchester office staff were instrumental in working with immigration officials in the United States and two African nations to ensure all seven children were reunited with their parents.

"I am incredibly pleased to see Helene and Hubert finally reunited with their children," First District Congressman Jeb Bradley said. "I congratulate all of the people at UNH, especially Professor Nina Glick-Schiller and her students who took the initiative to reunite this family, as well as the Durham community effort organized by Dudley Dudley. They all have played key roles in helping bring this family back together. I wish the entire Simwerayi family the best and welcome the children to the Granite State."

In the fall of 2002, human rights worker Hubert Simwerayi, a bank employee, and his wife

Helene, a teacher, were forced to flee the Democratic Republic of the Congo without their children after militia seized their city of Goma. While the parents waited several weeks to get the money for their children's flight out of the Congo, they learned that the children's visas had expired. A separation that the Simwerayis thought would last only weeks has turned into years.

Soon after they arrived in Manchester the Simwerayis were in church praying for someone to help when they met Glick-Schiller. She told her anthropology classes about the Simwerayis' situation, which resulted in the forming of the Committee for Rights and Justice (CORAJ) in spring 2003. The UNH student-led committee soon evolved into a student, faculty and community member organization.

Glick-Schiller and Kelli Swazey, a senior at UNH and head of CORAJ, immediately began working to complete an application for Humanitarian Parole, which grants legal immigrant status in the United States.

"From the beginning we were told that Humanitarian Parole is very rarely granted," Swazey said. "There has to be extenuating circumstances in order to make an exception to the regular visa process, and we were very fortunate that an exception was made in this case."

In addition, Glick-Schiller and the 20 students on the committee began working with local charity Danny's Team and concerned citizens to gather donations for travel expenses and signatures for a petition requesting the children's parole applications be moved to the top of the application list.

According to Dudley Dudley, a Durham community activist who has coordinated the humanitarian effort, the response from the New Hampshire community has been "phenomenal." Local residents covered the costs of the children's airplane fares, interviews at the U.S. Embassy and passports. The family received pro bono legal help from Manchester law firm McLane, Graf, Raulerson and Middleton, assistance finding a larger apartment, a discounted vehicle from a Manchester auto dealership, and numerous donations of household items.