

African Society aims to squash stereotypes

By **TOM OBRZUT JR.**

Times Leader Staff Writer

WILKES-BARRE — Painting a broader picture of Africa is the goal of a new group, the Northeastern Pennsylvania African Society, that met Thursday at King's College.

Organizer Joseph Madiany, an employee of Mellon Bank and professor at King's, said America's perception of Africa is fueled by mass-media coverage of events in Somalia, South Africa and Rwanda.

"It's CNN's view which people are accustomed to," he said. "We want to provide insight about Africa."

Goals of the group include: serving as an educational and social resource group for Africans, establishing social and entertainment programs to help Africans who move to Northeastern Pennsylvania and setting up a speak-

ers bureau to talk about African life.

Of the eight people who attended Thursday's meeting, each joined for a different reason.

Taj Rollins of Wilkes-Barre, an Ethiopian native, said cultural change is in the air in Wilkes-Barre.

"We want to further the cause of sensitivity and tolerance of other cultures," she said. "There are Africans that reside in Wilkes-Barre that hold different jobs and different positions in the community."

John Abdul, 26, of Wilkes-Barre said local Africans should unite and teach others about their multicultural continent.

"Many people around here don't know what Africa is," the Gambian native said.

Fellow Gambian Kunta Dabo, 22, agreed.

"People are misinformed," he said. "Africa gets a bad rap from

the mass media."

Madiany said some people would be surprised that Africa has cities much like New York and Los Angeles.

"You don't believe you're in Africa when you visit these places," the Kenya native said.

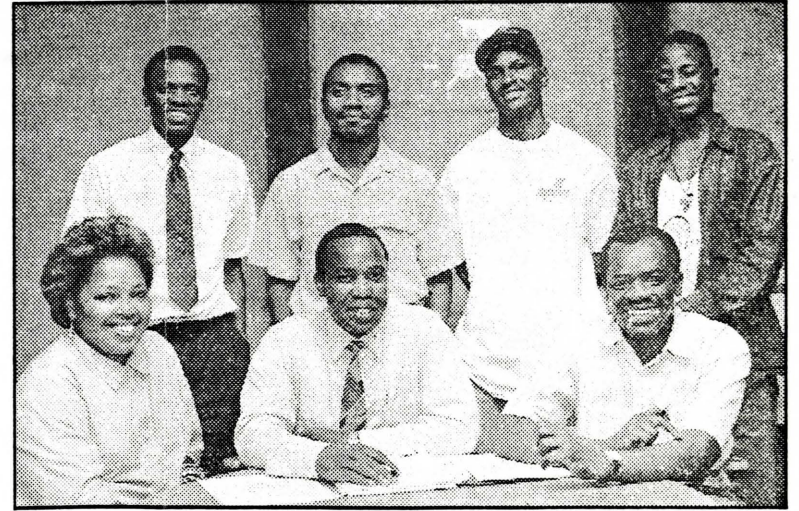
Arthur Mutaremwa of Scranton said the group will provide him with companionship.

The Ugandan native moved to the United States last August. He remembers the regime of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin, who ruled the country from 1971 until his overthrow in 1979.

"The horrors of his time are still vivid," Mutaremwa said. "There's much of his legacy that has stayed."

* Mutaremwa came to the United States to further his education and attends the University of Scranton.

Darius Kawanga of Scranton



TIMES LEADER/DON CAREY

Members of the Northeastern Pennsylvania African Society met Thursday at King's College. Front row, left to right, Taj Rollins, Joseph Madiany and Darius Kawanga. Back row, left to right, Joseph Rwabuhinga, Arthur Mutaremwa, John Abdul and Kunta Dabo.

came to America from Zambia ca. with no family or friends. The group will help him expand his base of African friends in Ameri-

Kevin Flippines of Wilkes-Barre said the group allows members to be themselves.

Times Leader 7/22/94