SAUTI
The word Sauti - Swahili for voice - captures the spirit of the Stanford Journal of African Studies. Sauti is committed to ensuring that student voices are heard both within and without the Stanford community. Through the reproduction of research compilations and personal narratives of field experiences, we seek to highlight critical African issues, to ignite meaningful discussions and to invoke calls to action. Although Africa gains most of its global attention by virtue of its 'problems' and 'needs', the continent possesses troves of opportunity. It is our aim to present a balanced view of the continent, juxtaposing the ills that bedevil Africa with the awe-inspiring events and developments that are primed to propel the continent into an era where its troubles are but relics of history.

Eugene Adogla©SAUTI; Frontispiece photograph: Eugene Adogla©SAUTI. Copyright 2007.
Editors’ Note

The Articles presented in this issue have an exceptionally focused and detailed scope. Topics span African foreign policy, western media, black empowerment, and traditional African social patterns. As the authors pose their questions and voice their perspectives, it is the hope of the Sauti editorial team that their provocative writing inspires a constructive dialogue on Africa’s issues.

Stepping back from this argumentation, an important meta-question concerns how this dialogue should be carried out both within and outside our campus. In courses and speaker series, modern discourse on Africa tends to split between a narration of the history and proposals regarding its future. I propose that we shift the debate toward the latter. While I believe that there is a need to analyze and discuss Africa’s past and history to be able to understand current situations, there is also a danger of drowning an impetus for the future in disillusionment. The future we can change while the past we cannot.

Africa is in many ways an open canvas, filled with unrealized possibilities. It is a land of abundant resources, not least among them being its talented populace. But while we stand bickering about history and injustices, the powers of the world, from east to west, are plotting our continent’s exploitation. I say let us remember who we are and make Africa our own. Let the past be a bitter memory that solidifies our conviction. I say let us give this dialogue a sense of purpose and direction. While gleaning from lessons we have learnt from the past so that we do not make similar mistakes on the way to creating a new image that does not resemble the past, let’s dream of a pleasant future... and let’s share these dreams.

~Wilson Irungu

“I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past.” Thomas Jefferson
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Op-Ed

Is This Democracy? Lessons the U.S. can Learn from South Africa

By Christina Ward

As a student studying issues of democracy in South Africa, I have found that democracy can be a strong vehicle for creating social change. Yet as I examine the processes through which policies are developed in the U.S., we undeniably fall short of our younger counterpart in the African continent. Highly aware of its recent transition from the racist apartheid regime, South Africa has taken considerable strides towards including the formerly oppressed in shaping the policies intended to serve them. The U.S., in contrast, has cast the conversation around inequity such that upper-tier politicians discuss the underserved more than they consult them. The failure of No Child Left Behind is a perfect example.

As we examine the rhetoric of the latest policy response of the U.S. to historic inequities, it is clear who is behind and who is deemed capable and responsible for leading at the front. The poor, largely people of color, have had no say in the crafting of this policy. Rather, a fairly homogenous group of congressmen who consulted a few other experts presumed themselves to know best. The results thus far are not promising: the average African American or Hispanic student continues to have reading and arithmetic skills at the level of average white junior high students, with virtually no improvements between 2003 and 2005. I ask myself as I read through statistics reflecting this negative trend: did any one policy maker involved in crafting the bill ever visit any of the schools targeted by the policy to ask what their ideal strategy and performance targets should be? The shop stewards of South Africa, by comparison, are very well represented in front of Parliament, as I have learned through my research of working class representation in the policy process of developing the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE).

South African law requires that all policy affecting the working class must be reviewed by a policy forum with representatives of government, labor, business, and community. Task teams with every constituent produce a joint submission that must be integrated into draft legislation. Both the government department where the bill originates and Parliament, where the bill is finally passed, take this collective feedback into account. Thus, even with the much more formidable cultural and economic differences that South Africa faces, the policy process has effectively produced a collectively designed strategy for achieving greater empowerment for the underserved with the BBBEE Act. The policy is only beginning to be implemented in South Africa, but I am willing to wager that South Africa will make a lot more progress towards equity in the next ten years than the U.S. will make over ten years with No Child Left Behind as its guiding educational policy. The rigorous and inclusive process that has shaped BBBEE will make all the difference in the quality of content.

The issue that I am raising is one of problematic processes. Policies like No Child Left Behind will shape the futures of hundreds of thousands of children and their families. Yet it was produced purely from President Bush’s administration without so much as a focus group being conducted. What are policy makers saying to the poor people? That they are supposedly trying to serve with their actions or, worse, that the actions that we have allowed to become standard procedure among policy makers? That they have no voice, that the privileged can make a plan for our society, can plan your life’s path for you and, in fact, can plan it better without your input. We must hold our Congressmen and policy leaders accountable and demand that they create mechanisms for getting input from the ground where the impact of their policies are felt. Perhaps we, like in South Africa, should create a forum where task teams representing every stakeholder can provide their expert opinion as to how to improve legislation that will have a massive impact on citizens across the country.

As a senior writing a thesis in Public Policy, Christina participated in the Public Service Scholars Program, a hidden treasure of the Haas Center which prompts its participants to relate their thesis topics to a general U.S. audience. It was in that context that she began to think about the strong contrast that No Child Left Behind strikes against BBBEE and about how America’s democratic processes have taken such fundamentally different directions.
China’s Involvement in Africa

By Molly Roberts

Molly Roberts is a junior at Stanford majoring in International Relations with a focus in Chinese and Economics. After spending a summer in rural China teaching English and studying abroad for a quarter in Beijing, Molly became interested in China’s new position in international relations and its implications for world order. Working for the Carter Center this summer, Molly researched the effect of China’s rise on poverty in Africa, which culminated in this article.

When Chinese President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao made tours of Africa last year, they dubbed 2005 as China’s “year of Africa” (Xinhuanet). Indeed, Chinese investment in Africa has grown as suddenly as the Chinese economy, with a US$1 billion trade volume between China and Africa in 2000 growing to over US $42 billion by 2005 and $56 billion in 2006 (Xinhuanet). China’s involvement in Africa started after 1993 when China became a net-importer of oil and in 1998 a Sudanese oil field became the first large overseas oil field operated by a Chinese company (Pan 1, HRW). Today, 25% of oil imported to China comes from Sudan, Chad, Libya, Algeria, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Angola and a China-Africa Business Council (CABC) helps facilitate exchange between Chinese and African business (Asia News).

The extent of and motives behind Chinese involvement in Africa

The importance of economic success to the Chinese government cannot be overemphasized. For a regime that deals with over 80,000 instances of domestic social unrest every year, many analysts say that economic growth is the only security China’s Communist Party has against larger unrest akin to Tiananmen (Lum 2). Consequently, China’s reliance on Africa for natural resources and export markets makes the continent important to the Chinese regime, and China has been willing to offer almost anything required to create these relationships. Thirty percent of Chinese imported oil now comes from Africa, and it is expected that China’s demand for oil will continue its double-digit growth over the next 15 years. China imports 14% of its oil from Angola, its top oil importing partner. China also receives 4% of its oil from Sudan and 3% from the Republic of Congo (Trinh). China’s three largest oil companies have struck exploration deals in 17 African states, including Algeria, Gabon, Nigeria, and recently Mauritania and Kenya (Schiller 1).

Besides oil, China is the leading world importer of iron ore, manganese, lead and chromium, and depends on Africa for these imports. China imports 5% of its iron ore from South Africa and 37% of its manganese imports comes from Gabon, South Africa, and Ghana. It imports 85% of its cobalt from the Republic of Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and South Africa. In addition, China made up almost a quarter of world imports of wood in 2004, a large part of which China imported from Gabon, the Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Cameroon. African countries, notably Burkina Faso, Benin and Mali, also produce 25% of Chinese cotton imports, fueling China’s textile industries (Trinh). Chinese companies have also taken interest in African countries as export markets for cheap manufactured goods. Statistics show that most Chinese companies operating in Africa are Chinese transnational companies promoting goods to African markets (Wong 284). Chinese exports to Africa jumped 36 percent between 2004 and 2005 to $13.82 billion and China is now Africa’s third largest trading partner after the United States and Britain. These numbers are only expected to rise as China reduces restrictions on overseas direct investment. Only after 2000 did the Chinese government start encouraging businesses to invest in other countries, and only in 2002 did the government begin to allow businesses to obtain profits overseas without remitting them. Over the first ten months in 2005, Chinese companies invested a total of US$175...
million in African countries (Pan 2). China has also scrapped tariffs on over 190 kinds of imported goods in at least 28 African countries starting in 2005. Many African countries see Chinese business as the potential replacement for investment that used to flow in from the West (Alden 153). In exchange for trade agreements and natural resources, China offers loans, military sales, technology, debt relief, and large-scale construction projects to African countries. In June, China gave a $2 billion loan to Angola in exchange for an oil agreement, effectively replacing an IMF loan (Alden 151). China is involved in building infrastructure in many African countries; however, the nature of Chinese-sponsored programs demonstrates its interest in natural resources, as it usually invests in projects that help natural resource extraction (Eisenman 221). China is also involved in high-profile political projects, like completing Mugabe's $9 million mansion in Zimbabwe and launching satellites in Nigeria (Fortune). Since 2000, China has also taken measures to provide debt relief to 31 African countries, now totally almost $1.5 billion (Alden 51).

On the darker side, in exchange for political preference in trade agreements, China has made large military sales to many African countries, particularly those with large amounts of natural resources and those that the U.S. refuses to sell weapons to. Between 1998 and 2000, Beijing allegedly sold $1 billion worth of arms to both Eritrea and Ethiopia, funding the war between the two countries. China has also supplied President Mugabe with military radio equipment used to block transmissions by opposition parties (Amnesty International). Beijing has given Mali and Angola helicopters, Namibia and Sierra Leone arms, and Mozambique army uniforms (Alden 152). Most infamously, Amnesty International reported that Chinese weapons were used by the Sudanese government in Darfur. Although the Chinese government's objectives in Africa are primarily economic, the Chinese government also pursues political goals on the continent. The Chinese have precluded any aid to an African country with that country's refusal to recognize Taiwan. This has led essentially to a bidding war between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China for recognition in Africa. In 1980, 22 countries recognized Taiwan, but now only six have relations with Taiwan, Senegal being the latest country to switch recognition in 2005 (Liu 5). China has used its influence in Africa to its benefit in international organizations. Supported by numerous African countries, China has blocked human rights initiatives in the United Nations and gained the Olympics nomination for 2008 and African support helps China gain leverage in the WTO.

Is Chinese trade with Africa good for development?

Increased trade with China and reduced tariffs on both sides has undoubtedly led to a more efficient international market and created more opportunities for business. However, whether or not this new trade relationship is beneficial to the poor is a question raised by many African countries whose manufacturing industries have been closing due to increased Chinese competition. According to some statistics, between 2000 and 2005 China imported more goods and services from African countries than it exported to the continent (chinaview.com). However, most of Chinese imported goods from Africa are raw materials, whereas almost all of Chinese exports to Africa in 2005 were manufactured goods. For example, in 2005 South Africa exports to China were 73% from the minerals sector and 9% from the petroleum sector, whereas almost all of its imports from China were appliances, clothing, and light manufactures (Dawes). The extent to which this imbalance affects the poor is difficult to measure. Chinese and African export structures are very different, and therefore only the few African countries with decent-sized manufacturing sectors like South Africa, Ethiopia, and Nigeria experience considerable layoffs due to trade with China (Jenkins 21, 4). However, trade with China could prevent the development of a manufacturing sector in some African countries, which would potentially employ a lot of the poor population. Some African governments are afraid trade with China will perpetuate Dutch disease, where African countries are dependent on commodity prices and cannot develop their own industry. Exports of natural resources also mean greater funds for governments and elite, rarely employment of large populations of poor people. Whether greater government revenue is good for poor populations depends on the integrity of their government (Jenkins 4). Since China imports large amounts of natural resources from corrupt governments like Zimbabwe, Angola, and Sudan, many analysts are skeptical as to whether this will have a positive effect on the poor. That being said, some sections of Africa's poor have undoubtedly benefited from trade with China. In their report on how China's growth has affected poverty in the third world, Rhys Jenkins and Chris Edwards conclude that the lower prices of basic-need goods exported by China to Africa have a positive aggregate effect on the poor, even in countries with a manufacturing sector like South Africa and Ethiopia (Jenkins 26). Chris Alden of London School of Economics refutes the premise that Chinese investment in Africa only facilitates growth in elite networks because of evidence that introduction of Chinese technology has facilitated growth in many different sectors of the African economy (Alden 154). Chinese rising demand for cotton and agricultural products also has induced a rise in unskilled labor employment in some African countries (Jenkins). Chinese tourism to Africa has also grown, tripling in 2003, which could potentially spur economic growth (Alden 154). Perhaps a more legitimate criticism of Chinese trade with Africa is that, although trade with China has helped African countries as a whole, the Chinese could be doing a lot more to help lift Africans out of poverty. Chinese companies have come under criticism for bringing in Chinese la-
borders to work on infrastructure projects rather than employing locals (Setsiba). Around 80,000 migrant workers from China have moved to Africa, remitting their salaries back to China, which many Africans wish would be invested into the local economies (Eisenman 221). In Sudan, locals criticized Chinese oil companies when they brought in their own manual labor instead of hiring from the local population to develop oil fields. Indeed, Amnesty International says it suspects that China brought in prisoners that it didn’t have to pay in order to develop the oil fields more quickly (HRW 460). Part of the problem of the nature of Chinese investment in Africa is that most Chinese companies that invest in Africa are completely or partially government-owned. If the Chinese government finds that it has a political interest investing in a certain sector, the government will subsidize the company, enabling it to out-compete local firms competing for the same project (Zweig 26). The Chinese government also advocates vertical integration into markets to insure resource security, so often companies insist on owning all stages of production, thereby leaving African workers and investors out (Alden 149). There is no specific body in the Chinese government geared toward assisting or monitoring Chinese overseas businesses. Chinese companies have only recent experience investing overseas and the government has not set up laws and enforcement mechanisms for Chinese overseas investors, therefore Chinese companies often fail to make clear accounts of transactions and often fail to secure bank loans and investment insurance (Wong 278). As a result of this or what some call purposeful negligence on the part of the Chinese government, Chinese businesses are often involved in illegal resource exploitation (Dajiong 186, Wong 282). It is estimated that 50% of Chinese imports of timber from Africa are illegal and the Chinese have also been blamed for illegal ivory trade and cobalt imports (Johnson 1, Thornton 4). When Chinese companies do hire African workers, they have been blamed for treating them very badly and are accused of blatant racism towards blacks (Chicago Tribune). Although Chinese firms often flounder due to lack of overseas investment experience, Chinese trade with Africa has become so large in aggregate terms that analysts also worry about African dependence on Chinese demand and the health of the Chinese economy. Lately, as the Chinese have taken measures to slow their booming economy, African governments are increasingly worried that this will slow Chinese investment and thereby slow their own economies. Angola, Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Sudan all export over 25% of their oil to China. Zambia is highly dependent on China’s need for copper, Namibia on Chinese demand for fish, and Malawi sells much of its tobacco products to China (Trinh). A collapse of China similar to Japan’s financial crisis in the 1990s could have massive implications for an increasingly China-dependent Africa (Business In Africa).

Does China’s willingness to deal with rogue regimes threaten Western values?

While at times competitive with U.S. firms, Chinese economic policy in Africa does not pose a grave threat to U.S. and Western economies. The U.S. Congress recently released a report that Chinese involvement in Africa should not worry the West economically. Instead, the report stated that the U.S. should be mainly concerned with China’s ability to undermine Western values of good governance and respect for human rights by selling arms and loaning money without conditions.

The two most famous examples of China’s involvement in Africa challenging Western norms happened in the past year in Sudan and Angola. China, increasingly dependent on Sudanese oil, threatened to block a UN Security Council Resolution sanctioning Sudan until the draft was amended enough so it did not pose a threat to the Sudanese regime (Zweig 32). Second, China subverted IMF influence in Angola when it loaned Angola 2 billion in exchange for oil rights which in turn made Angola able to dismiss IMF stipulations to reform its government. In addition to these two examples, Chinese arms have been said to be used in human rights violations in Sudan, Liberia, Chad, Sierra Leone, the DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Zimbabwe. Because of these examples, Westerners fear that international institutions promoting good governance and human rights like the UN and IMF may be undermined when China decides to pursue an independent agenda in Africa.

An important point to stress is that China is not directly promoting ideology in Africa. Perhaps the biggest mistake in analyzing the Chinese-Western conflict is made

REFLECTIONS FROM AFRICA: KENYA

Wilson Maina

In 2002, Kenya had a historical election. There was peace and tranquillity during this election that facilitated democracy that was well deserved. A coalition party managed to beat the ruling party that was in power for almost 24 years. The new president and his cabinet have worked together to a large extent to keep the promises they made before the elections.

Though many people feel they have not performed as they vowed to, I believe that they deserve a pat on their back for some significant positive changes in the running of the government. Outstanding accomplishments range from the introduction of free and compulsory elementary education, to empowering and giving autonomy to different ministries.

Need I say that the economy of the country has consequently gone up a considerable percentage, mainly because of the investor friendly atmosphere that this government created in the country. This was done mostly through the stepping up of public security.

I have all reasons to be more than confident that under such a government as this, Kenya will cover social, political and economic mileage in no time. Having said that, I also have to mention that the government is not perfect, but the way they deal with their mistakes makes all the difference.
by drawing too many parallels between the future China-U.S. relationship and the past Soviet-U.S. relationship. Whereas the Soviets had a directly competing ideology to Western nations that it tried to promote in the third world, China’s foreign policy is almost completely based on economic interest. China’s foreign policy’s ultimate goal is to sustain the domestic economy and therefore the ruling party and not to actively promote corrupt regimes that commit human rights violations. However, since China does not have an ideology, it has fewer qualms than Western countries in providing immoral incentives to corrupt regimes who will in turn help China acquire valuable resources.

This observation implies that conflict between Chinese involvement in Africa and Western values is not inevitable. The result of Chinese involvement in Africa could take two diverging paths – when Chinese economic interests directly compete with Western good governance norms, conflict has emerged and will emerge. When Chinese economic interests are in line with Western interests of good governance and human rights, China could be a potential ally in promoting Western interests in Africa. If the West can find a way to manipulate Chinese economic interest in Africa to coincide with Western values on good governance, it will be successful in avoiding Chinese-U.S. conflict in Africa and in maintaining functioning international organizations (Alden 158, Jaffe 155).

Part of the current friction between China and the international community in Africa is that China is a latecomer in the oil market and therefore has limited opportunities to access places from which to import cheap oil (Financial Times 2). Chinese economic interest is to invest in oil fields where it has little competition and therefore invests in countries that either already have current sanctions or where Western companies expect sanctions and therefore avoid investment. Chinese policymakers often point out that U.S. policy sometimes “forces” these moves, for instance, U.S. Congress blocking Chinese acquisition of Unocal created fewer options for legitimate sources of oil and “forced” Chinese companies to look to rogue regimes for assistance (Daojiong 184).

The other problem with China’s later entrance into the oil market is that it is not incorporated into consumer alliances of oil-dependent countries. China has lately pursued bilateral agreements with oil-rich nations, making it very susceptible to blackmail and demands for arms from rogue regimes, much of what the U.S. experienced in the 1970s. Incorporation into alliances like the International Energy Agency (IEA), which counter blackmail by cooperation among oil consumers would make China’s economic interest more in line with the West and make it less susceptible to regimes’ demands for weapons in exchange for oil (Jaffe and Lewis 116).

Because China pursues bilateral agreements with oil-rich nations, in order to extract resources it constantly has to walk the line between bribing the regime with military sales or loans for oil contracts and ensuring that the country will remain stable enough so the resources can be obtained. Some analysts say that Chinese military weapons sales and unconditional loans to African countries cannot be maintained for long because such actions promote instability and corruption that is not conducive to profitable business. As a result, many analysts say that Chinese long term interest could very well meld with the United States’ interests. For instance, China, like the U.S., has an interest in the continued stability of the north-south agreement in Sudan. Although China sold many of the weapons used by Nepalese forces to commit massive human rights violations in Nepal, it criticized the Nepalese government for its crackdown on peaceful protests because it was concerned about order in Nepal. Some say China will grow tired of African (and Asian) corrupt regimes and learn that military sales and promotion of corruption are not good for long-term business interests (Jaffe).

That being said, while China’s policy in Africa is not in direct ideological conflict with the West, China definitely does not hold Western values of good governance and respect for human rights that will make it enthusiastically cooperate with Western liberalism in Africa. Right now, the West can try to incorporate China into international organizations that will give it economic incentives to acquiesce to Western policies. But in the long term, the best the West can hope for is the promotion of democracy and freedom of information in China itself. Only when the Chinese public themselves are concerned over what its government stands for overseas and can threaten the regime with public opinion will Chinese priorities abroad change.

Conclusion

In Zambia’s recent September 2006 elections, one of the most salient issues distinguishing the two candidates was their policy towards China. Incumbent Levy Mwanawasa advocated building a stronger relationship with the PRC, but his challenger Michael Sata said he would recognize Taiwan and deliberately alienate China. Chinese businesses employ over 10,000 Zambians, rising copper prices have made many Zambians better off, and cheap Chinese goods made a higher living standard easier to achieve. However, Chinese companies have recently been arrested for illegally mining copper, six Zambians were shot in a Chinese mine when they asked for better working conditions, and Zambian small business owners are angry that their companies are being put out of business by cheap Chinese prices (Chimangeni 1). While Mwanawasa won the Zambian election by a clear majority, the Zambian election illuminates the new conflict of Africa faces: dealing with China, whose involvement in Africa is motivated purely by economic interest. Chinese involvement expands the pie for Africans as a whole and has provided more business opportunities for many Africans, but it also often fails to distribute wealth and promotes illegal trade and awful labor conditions that hurt the poor. Furthermore, Chinese motivations to ameliorate dictators may not provide conditions for good governance that many Africans would like to see in their countries. Since China’s need for African resources will only increase, it will be up to Africa to figure out how it can best incorporate Chinese investment to alleviate poverty and find a way to give China a stake in good governance promotion in Africa.
Two people, sitting on short black wooden stools in the sitting room. Their settling feet shuffle over the dust on the cement floor; more blows in through the window from the unpaved road and fields. Dust blowing in thicker than rain, coating everything despite the daily sweeping. Around them are the shells of a living room sitting set without seats, and wooden chairs in their place. Behind them, a huge armoire for the dishes and food, out of place in its elegance, although the small sliding doors always come unhinged and fall heavily and noisily to the ground. Everything in the room is covered with brightly covered crochets, pink and yellow yarn. The smoke from the kitchen hangs in the air, warm smelling like a hearth but harsh on their eyes and noses in the small room. The radio blares something hip, maybe a British station, because Baba's out of the house and so they don't have to listen to gospel. Outside, the air is filled with water that hangs heavily and obscures the mountain that stretches up above the house. It doesn't look real sometimes, like unused play scenery half painted over with whitewash. Below the fog lays the hillsides at the foot of the mountain, split up and owned—patches of even, monotone shades of green with imported trees as boundaries. It's the rainy season now, and much colder than Tanzania is supposed to be. These two guests in the sitting room know each other well, have been living and working together. They speak slowly, she brokenly, exhausted to remember the grammar and words and he patiently to teach them. Her eyes are still slits from heavy sleep on a hard bed, he's awake, having woken up to bathe and warm the tea. Baba's gone to the hospital to see his daughter woken up to bathe and warm the tea. They try not to react to the child ambush as they drink, stare at their tea, or talk. The radio turns to American country, a man drones about a woman and then the record gets stuck on "I'm a shell-- I'm a shell-- I'm a shell..." They both look up and grin at the radio, nervous at the error. The droning parrot is faded out and a tinny guitar takes its place. The girl looks up thoughtfully, like it could be familiar. A man's voice makes its entrance, "When the rain is blowing in your face..." Her face lights up and she joins in.

"And the whole world is on your case, I can offer you a warm embrace," she stands up in the sitting room, excited, "To make you feel my love." "It's a nice message," the man in the red jacket says, smiling and slightly bewildered. The children watch her, confused; in their ambition to get a reaction, they never imagined something like this. She goes on, belting, voice cracking, mumbling on some lines and then picking it up again. She is laughing at herself and the words, making up hand motions for the lyrics. She remembers through the second verse, the bridge, and then the last verse: "I could make you happy make your dreams come true. There is nothing that I wouldn't do. Go to the ends of the earth for you, to make you feel my love." The song finishes and the radio moves on to something neither of them knows. She sits down again, grinning. Pleased with the spectacle she has made. To fly for days without carry-ons with undefined ideas and the hope to grow older with worldliness. To hear a song on the radio in a strange place, and to ride its chords and poetry on a brief trip home.
Wambui Otieno’s Recent Marriage: Reasserting the Female Identity Through the “Politics of Place” in Kenya
By Jessica Kinloch

In July of 2003, the national controversy centering about 67-year-old Wambui Otieno’s marriage to a stone-mason 42 years her junior illustrated the continuing tension between tradition and modernity, the public and the private, ethnicity and nationalism, as well as differing expectations for men and women between the generations in Kenya. Throughout her life, Wambui, a Kikuyu woman and a former Mau Mau freedom fighter, has made controversial public choices, keenly utilizing what Arturo Escobar and Wendy Harcourt call the “politics of place.” In their paper entitled “Power, Culture, Identity: Women and the Politics of Place,” Escobar and Harcourt define the “politics of place” as the multiple political activities carried out by women around 1) their body, the immediate site for struggles over traditional/modern identities, through which reproductive roles, sexual oppression, and traditional relationships are challenged; 2) the home and their environment or immediate community, in which women define their primary socio-cultural identity but often find the most antagonism; and 3) the public arena, or male-dominated domain in which women have limited access and in which their gender-based concerns are often silenced. This framework will be the basis of my analysis of Wambui Otieno’s recent marriage. It is what Dorothy Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy point out in “Wicked” Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa: “Whether accused of adultery, abandonment, or insubordination, their ["wicked" women’s] lives and actions often reflect and produce contradictions and contestations of power within the intersecting and shifting landscapes of the individual and a globally-constructed environment, critically engaging with modern/contemporary Kenyan society. These forms of marriage and unions are common at the coast as young men get hooked to...old women purely for commercial purposes.” By remarrying such a young man, especially as a 69-year old widow, Wambui had been dating for a year; they had met while he had been working as her fundi, or handyman. Needless to say, the socially-incorrect marriage spawned national outrage and shock amidst their respective families. The marriage was derided as “mid-winter madness,” “legal public adultery,” and “a mockery of the family” by prominent political activists, religious leaders, and psychologists alike. For almost a week after the wedding, Kenyan media broadcast interviews and commentaries from a diverse cross-section of Kenyans voicing their opinions on the marriage. The general consensus that their liaison was “repugnant” was voiced by Delion Onyango in an e-mail to the East African Standard. He wrote, “The marriage between Wambui and Peter is a sign of growing moral decadence in contemporary Kenyan society. These forms of marriage and unions are common at the coast as young men get hooked to...old women purely for commercial purposes.”

Jessica Kinloch is a second year Masters student in International Policy Studies. She became interested in Wambui Otieno after transcribing tapes of Otieno’s activism during the Mau Mau Emergency. In her spare time, she enjoys classical music and traveling. Jessica can be contacted at jkinloch@gmail.com

“She is a wealthy 67-year-old with nine adult children. He is a young nobody who grew up in a slum. The marriage of a former Mau Mau operative and her working-class toy boy has provoked a mixture of awe, outrage, admiration, and even jealousy from Kenyans of all walks of life.” On July 18, 2003, 67-year-old Virginia Edith Wambui Waiyaki Otieno married 25-year-old Peter Mbogu in a civil ceremony at the Attorney General’s Chambers in Nairobi. They had been dating for a year; they had met while he had been working as her fundi, or handyman. Needless to say, the socially-incorrect marriages spawned national outrage and shock amidst their respective families. The marriage was derided as “mid-winter madness,” “legal public adultery,” and “a mockery of the family” by prominent political activists, religious leaders, and psychologists alike. For almost a week after the wedding, Kenyan media broadcasted interviews and commentaries from a diverse cross-section of Kenyans voicing their opinions on the marriage. The general consensus that their liaison was “repugnant” was voiced by Delion Onyango in an e-mail to the East African Standard. He wrote, “The marriage between Wambui and Peter is a sign of growing moral decadence in contemporary Kenyan society. These forms of marriage and unions are common at the coast as young men get hooked to...old women purely for commercial purposes.” By remarrying such a young man, especially as a 69-year old widow, Wambui had disrupted a complex web of social relationships that defined certain roles for women as daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and lovers. These “appropriate” gender roles, Hodgson and McCurdy argue, carry with them a certain notion of “respectability” which reflects the dominant configuration of gender, “transmitted by socialization and internalization and reinforced by mechanism of social surveillance and control.” In this case, articulation of a distinctly national moral crisis over “repugnant” relations, reflected concern over shifting power relations and the dynamic nature of what it means to be a “wife” and a “husband.” Whereas traditional marriages in Africa are considered a life-long contract between...
families and communities, cementing relationships on a broader scale with little or no choice on the part of the people getting married, Wambui's individualistic marriage violated such expectations to fulfill larger societal obligations. Thus, initial questions were raised casting doubt on whether the marriage was even legal. The assistant minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs Njeru Githae clarified the situation: “There was no such law prohibiting older women from marrying younger men or vice versa. It may be against the traditional norms, but the marriage is perfectly legal.” As Githae commented, it may have been legal purely because they were both above eighteen and thus consenting adults, but their marriage seemed to defy all notions of African social, cultural, and religious contexts. For example, in traditional African marriages, the man is the head of the household, or as clinical psychologist Emmy Gichinga of GEM Counselling Center says, “In Africa, men are socialized to lead while women follow. This is the same in the Christian context. So far Wambui appears to be the leader while Mbugua merely follows.” She even went as far as to speculate that Mbugua’s marriage to Wambui was caused by a psychological abnormality. Her theory was based on the Oedipus complex: in Wambui, Mbugua found another mother figure, having come from a single parent family raised by his mother. Indeed, the possibility that their marriage was simply a union of two people in love, or a union of innocent companionship, was never taken seriously because the sacrilegious nature of the marriage was just too unacceptable. The fact that there was mutual consent, for whatever reason, was entirely skirted over. Many viewed this bizarre marriage as Wambui’s public engagement against custom and tradition, as a way for her to assert her more “progressive” values. This is evident in Gichinga’s accusation: “There are certain God-ordained roles that we can’t reverse. Marriage, one of them, is a sacred institution and not something you go into to prove a point. Marriage already has enough challenges of its own without bringing in cultural, intellectual, economic and psychological differences. Wambui is taking her gender liberation too far.” The focus, thus, was never on the marriage itself, but what the marriage meant in terms of society—what Wambui was trying to prove by marrying so unconventionally.

Age Difference and the Double Standard

Both Wambui and Mbugua knew, of course, that their marriage was the first such marriage in Kenya where the bride was more than twice the age of the groom; Mbugua was even younger than Wambui’s youngest child. The age difference between them was a substantial social and moral taboo, and the gap in age was looked upon as prohibitive to a successful marriage, as lovers or companions, because of their different maturity levels, interests, needs, and economic status. Furthermore, as young men are traditionally taught to respect older women, it is taboo for a young man to look at a naked old woman. Japheth Nyambane, assistant researcher at the Centre for African Family Studies, explains: “Because of respect, you could not develop a carnal mind for someone of your mother’s age.” In addition, according to biblical teachings, one observer argued, children are supposed to respect their parents and that anybody older than one by a wide gap should be treated as a parent. It was therefore morally wrong for Mbugua to have married a woman qualified to be his grandmother. Needless to say, the marriage divided Kenya’s churches on the correct biblical interpretation of marriage, with one senior Catholic priest describing the marriage as uncouth. From both the African traditional and religious (Catholic or otherwise) standpoints, the difference in age and the inability for Wambui to keep up with Mbugua, let alone procreate, made the idea of marriage ridiculous. The columnists had a point about the limitations of old age in a relationship: Wambui’s heart is regulated by a pacemaker, and the couple could not go on a honeymoon because of her heart problem. Wambui also admitted that the marriage to Mbugua was not so much based on physical attraction and love but companionship and help with daily chores. “He has been good to me. He has been cooking for me, washing my clothes, even my underwear.” Whatever their relationship was based on: convenience, companionship, and perhaps even love, Wambui was politically contesting the meaning of marriage, for the individual and as an instrument of social control. By marrying Mbugua, Wambui was asserting her individual choice as an aged widow and contesting the double standard: while African men can marry women old enough to be their granddaughters with little or no controversy, the same could not be said of the opposite situation. Wambui urged women to liberate themselves from the notion that they cannot marry men younger than them, commenting, “There are many young women who get married to older men. What is wrong when an older woman gets married to a younger man?” In the cases of Robert Mugabe, as well as Vice-President Michael Wamalwa’s recent marriage to a woman almost half his age, the age differences and the corresponding age-related infirmities were never made an issue. “Why are people speaking out against this? We have seen men as old as 90 marry very young girls in all our communities and this has not raised eyebrows. These are double standards which must be discarded. I do not think it is a bad idea at all. Men do it all the time,” said Dr. Esther Keino, a Kanu-nominated MP. Another leader, Ms. Cecily Mbarire described Wambui’s move as “brave, daring, and shocking.”

Pointing Fingers: Differential Social Status and Family Background

The fact that Wambui was a widow and Mbugua might have had a fiancé was fur-
they grounds to question the marriage. In the Luo tradition, it is common for women to lose their property and land on the death of their husband, becoming in turn the property of their spouse’s family. The Luo ethnic group in which Wambui’s former husband had belonged to immediately declared that the widow had no right to marry Mr. Mbugua, as she was still a “wife of the clan.” They urged her to return to Siaya in western Kenya to be inherited by her former husband’s relatives. Indeed, a widow in some tribes is forced to undergo a cleansing ritual which consists of having sex with a stranger or family member. Simply put, at this stage in her life, Wambui was tied to her deceased spouse’s family—who demanded that she marry one of his relatives—and should have accepted her place as an elder woman in that society. Observers speculated Wambui may have married Mbugua out of the need to be cared for and to avoid being buried in Nyalgunga. Further controversy arose when a 23-year-old named Anne Mugure claimed that Mbugua had been her fiancé; apparently they had lived together for two years and had planned to marry. She said that they had lived in a shack, making ends meet by roasting maize, selling vegetables, and for Mbugua, doing freelance construction jobs. She believed that Mbugua had married Wambui simply for economic security, further castigating his romantic intentions as a penniless young man into doubt. Indeed, the difference between Wambui’s and Mbugua’s respective social status and family background is in stark contrast. Wambui is a granddaughter of one of the most prominent and privileged families in central Kenya; she was a granddaughter of the legendary Chief Waiyaki wa Hinga, who reigned over the Dagoretti area in the late 1800s. She is the daughter of a former paramount chief, sister to a successful government minister, and is herself a political activist and businesswoman. In contrast, Mbugua is a stone mason. Before moving in their plush residence in Nairobi, he was living in a slum area in the outskirts of the city. He had dropped out of school after Standard Eight and enrolled as a mechanic before moving to Nairobi. His parents divorced when he was two years old and he does not know his father. What more could the two possibly have in common? As if to side with the negative press and popular condemnation, the newlyweds were ostracized from their families and bore the responsibility for “causing” the death of Mbugua’s mother. Just a couple days after the wedding, Florence Nyambura, the 53-year-old mother of Mbugua, died from what the press called “a broken heart.” The newspapers speculated that the shock of the wedding had killed her because Mbugua did not consult her before he wed (although he said he had), which is common in Kikuyu culture. Her response to his wedding was to go into mourning after his “death,” as her son had betrayed her. She also had appealed to the government to nullify what she termed a “fraudulent” marriage. She also charged that Wambui would ruin the life and prospects of Mbugua as a young man. Similarly, Wambui’s children openly expressed dismaya t Wambui’s interest in a man so young. Four of Ms. Otieno’s children publicly declared that they were “highly embarrassed by their mother’s wedding, calling her a cradle-snatcher.” Daughter Jane Otieno told The Daily Nation, “I could not just sit back and watch my mother moving around with a man who is younger than me.” None of her nine children attended the unusual wedding. Wambui said that her children’s absence did not bother her because they had neglected her. Wambui reacted by saying she had rewrote her will to leave her portion of the family’s wealth to Mr. Mbugua instead of her children. “Wambui reacted by saying she had rewrote her will to leave her portion of the family’s wealth to Mr. Mbugua instead of her children.”

Answering the Question of Why?

Despite all of this inevitable backlash and controversy, why did Wambui and Mbugua marry, fully knowing how many traditions they were breaking? The lovers, portrayed in several pictures of to-be marital bliss, seemed to be nonplussed. Wambui said, almost cavalierly, “I looked for an older man, a widower, but couldn’t find one since I am very famous. Then Mbugua came along. Now I know I can fall in love again.” After making some alterations to her home, Mbugua “finally confessed that he was in love. ‘Mrs. Otieno, I love you and I want to take care of you’” Mr. Mbugua glowed, “Ever since I met my lady here, we are such friends. People are saying she is older than me. It is nonsense. Love is what matters; love is blind.” And yet, perhaps it was as simple as deciding, as they said, to formalize their relationship, however intimate, because they were staunch Christians and did not want to live in sin. Mbugua is a Catholic while Wambui is a Presbyterian. Wambui said, “We kept on praying and resisted engaging in any extra-marital affair. Then as we prayed, Mbugua felt that God wanted us to get married.” Regarding the topic of children, Mbugua responded, “When a man decides to marry a girl he is not sure she will get children. Children come from God. Who tells you that God cannot perform a miracle and Wambui gets me a baby?” Mbugua’s emphasis on the power of God and his Catholic religion helped him justify his marriage in socially-acceptable terms and the possibility of the fulfillment of his duty to sire children. Regardless, the marriage was attacked by Catholic authorities. Otieno added that when her husband had died 18 years ago, she had not planned to remarry as she was occupied with raising their children. For the first time, she voiced the feelings and loneliness of a silent contingent of Kenyan widows who had been marginalized by their society: “For 18 years I have gone through the most difficult years in my life. I was sick and lonely. All the friends who used to flock to our home when my husband was there deserted me. Now that I have found a man who loves me for who I am, they are complaining.” Wambui said that the only person she was accountable to was her 100-year-old mother who had given her the marriage blessing. But Wambui was not only “proving” her political audacity, she was also simply speaking out as a widow, as a representative of a section of a society who often, in their loneliness, conducted secret liaisons with young men. By being honest, publicly conducting the marriage ceremony, and opening her reputation to attack, she was better than her peers: the “many elderly women who have secret affairs with young men while they are married.” Furthermore, her fiancé was 28, not below the age of 18, as she implicated in other relationships of this type.
Politics of the Female Body

Women’s bodies provide a conscious and material entry point to their political identity, which is usually the object of political control and external public regulation. But rather than instrumentalizing the body as an object, Escobar and Harcourt believe that it is important not to look at women’s bodies as objects but as subjects, taking into account women’s lived experiences as participating subjects in politics. In the African context especially, the body is inherently part of social and political participation, rather than purely mired in biology. Thus, the body is the first level of political struggle in terms of autonomy, reproductive and sexual rights, safe motherhood and sexual oppression. Decisions which contest prevailing social norms also quickly become the primary site for national struggles over identity. The centrality of marriages to male-female relationships in Africa and its highly regulated expectations and outcomes make it incredibly difficult to contest. In Africa and many Western societies, marriage is explicitly a social custom aimed at procreation. Fertility is the central requirement in marriage; the more children, the more successful a man is. Once a child is born, the marriage is complete. Because the Wambui-Mbugua union could not realize these expectations, Reverend David Githii of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa declared that the union was “un-African” and “unbiblical,” since Wambui was too old to give birth: “In Africa, we marry to raise families,” he said. Indeed, the mandate to procreate, so to speak, has been a defining feature of African marriages from the pre-capitalist era. Meillassoux writes that, “the reproduction of the unit, both biologically and structurally, is assured through the control of women considered as the physiological agent of production of the producer... Reproduction of life is a precondition to production. Their primary concern is to ‘grow and multiply’ in the biblical sense.” Thus, Wambui was being irresponsible by marrying Mbugua, a young and sexually-potent man, and removing him from the pool of prospective young women with whom he could fulfill his obligations as a husband and father. The failure of procreation in the Otieno-Mbugua marriage necessarily translated into a failure of intercommunity relations, social control, and kinship structure. In African societies, the survival of kinship in the social structure depends on marriage; marriage always establishes very strong bonds between different families and clans. The purpose of marriage is the social reproduction of the kinship group; Mbugua would not be fulfilling his duties to his kin and his community by marrying a barren woman. Meillassoux underscores that “They [fertile women] represent comprehensive, integrated, economic, social and demographic systems ensuring the vital needs of all the members—productive and non-productive—of the community.” This is the reason why the entire community, including living and deceased, must be involved in the marriage process. The highly ritualized and traditional aspect to marriage, such as certain taboos, respect of in-laws, and prayers and sacrifices for fertility and healthy deliveries provide the social framework for a successful marriage. The power Wambui exercised, then, over her body and over her husband’s body, was a direct assault to those that exercise control over and legislate the realm of transformative activities, for the express benefit of larger society.

Politics of the Home

First, the social roles of “wife” and “husband” in African marriages rest on a social structure of manifest inequality between men and women; as alluded to before, this is because “reproductivity is literally a matter of life and death, it must be controlled to the nth degree to maximize success.” Thus, Wambui’s higher social status than her husband further confuses the social norms of marriage. Wambui’s reclamation, so to speak, over the control of her body and her individual needs and desires thus trumped her husband’s social obligations to be a father and a respected member of his community. By turning the power structure on end, and by having her husband do domestic chores for her, Wambui was disrupting the sacred realm of the home. Furthermore, because women are traditionally defined and divided by periods of their life relating to age and reproductive function, Wambui’s status as an older female actually conferred upon her the responsibility of continuing social reproduction and relations. In Iron, Gender, and Power, Eugenia Herbert concludes that the “role of older women, one might almost say, the collusion of older women, in the maintenance of social and cosmological order” is key. “Older women who have successfully played their role in the drama of regeneration are as much involved in the control process as their male peers and have as much at stake in the status quo.” By marrying Mbugua, Wambui was not acting according to her age and her status as an elder; rather than living up to her role to reproduce the relations of production by transmission of ideology, she was actively contesting those social expectations. Herbert astutely adds, “Indeed, it is in old age that the axes of life and death, male and female, intersect: at the point of intersection, gender differences tend to dissolve.” It is during old age that gender differences for women dissolve as their reproductive function disappears. They can become active in politics and take their place with men as peers to reinforce social control. Wambui’s relationship with Mbugua, however, distinctly overreached that aim: rather than his equal, because she had the resources, the property, and the age, she had far surpassed her husband.

Politics of the Public Arena

People may label Wambui a “modern” trailblazer, and we have seen how Wambui Otieno has contested the political realms of the female body and the home. Yet according to the politics of place, one’s locale is distinctly important because it may confer upon them certain customs. As Doreen Massey, in her article “Spaces of Politics,” points out, places are no longer isolated, nor are they pure, static, or just traditional; places are produced in their encounter with the global—but this does not render places irrelevant for people’s life or the production of culture. Wam-
bui represents a growing community of elderly, urban women in Matasia who, to stem loneliness, are having relationships with younger men. In this case, then, Wambui cannot be called completely "modern" or "un-African" because relationships between older women and younger men are a growing trend where she is from. What makes her modern is the fact that she refuses to hide her relationship like the rest. And furthermore, one could ask, is Wambui "un-African," or is the trend "un-African"? Perhaps it is only un-African in the sense that maybe some Africans are unwilling to accept a changing context in a dynamic global community. Indeed, if Wambui is critically engaging with modernity while retaining the local beliefs that 'culture sits in places' then perhaps she could be labeled a "modern African woman"—if it wasn't for unacceptability of that concept in a male-dominated society. Wambui is from Upper Matasia on the outskirts of Nairobi, an area that is infamous for unconventional relationships between elderly women and "boys." In fact, cases of propertied older women "abusing" young, inexperienced, and unemployed men in Matasia, Ngiro, Ongata Rongai, and Kitengela areas of Kajiado District are soaring. An article entitled, "Please spare our sons, Kenyan parents plead with elderly urban women," recounts the experiences of several young men whose jobs as domestic worker progressed to that of companion and lover. Most of the elderly women, however, do not want the men to attach any seriousness to the relationship; they are still merely employees. One anonymous young man said that Matasia is the place for women taking young men as lovers: "They employ you as a domestic worker, show you everything in the house including themselves, and then say you should not ask for any payment as they themselves belong to you. This has happened to me twice and I am no longer looking for a job." Other arrangements entail women renting houses for their workers elsewhere to visit at their own convenience. For penniless young men, it is a win-win deal. One man said, "Most young men in Ngiro are no longer ashamed to go out with elderly women as long as they are provided with material things." Young men who have no money or job cannot afford a young girlfriend, while young girls prefer usually elderly men who are economically independent to support them. The same man explained that "Propertied elderly women have noted this and that is why they are going after us. Even married women whose husbands are too busy for them are going after us. You would be foolish to refuse a car, a house and money from a woman just because someone says it is wrong. It may be wrong for them but not for us. If it were us who were going for these women, it would be considered wrong." Essentially, for men, marrying an older woman is not as admonished as a woman marrying a younger man. That is, the young man who willingly married an older woman "Young men who have no money or job cannot afford a young girlfriend, while young girls prefer usually elderly men who are economically independent to support them."

merely for economic security is somehow divested of his responsibility in the union. The union may be labeled "un-African," but the spotlight unquestionably lands on the woman. As Carole Argyings-Kodehek wrote in The Standard, "speculation has been rampant that Wambui seeks the limelight after a barren period of obscurity, while few have hesitated to paint her groom as a gold digger." It is in this sense that African women are also subject to a double-standard, and it further speaks to the prevailing male-dominated frame-of-mind. The subtle difference is that not only are men "allowed to" marry younger women, when they marry older women, it is somehow not their fault.

The Prospects of Marriage

Japheth Nyambane, assistant researcher at the Centre for African Family Studies, says that the fact that Kenyans are speculating about their motives for marrying one another reflects changing views of marriage, as well as the structure and influence of the family. Marriage is evolving into an individual matter in which two people seek to get their needs met and meet the others needs. Another change is the awareness, and gradual acceptability of the idea that older African women can marry younger men. Nyambane said more such marriages are sure to follow. "This means that more ladies will be motivated to get younger men." He also commented, "In time, other women having secret liaisons will come out too... Only then will we begin to appreciate the revolutionary and trailblazer in Wambui Otieno, a woman clearly ahead of her time." Another employee of the Center for African Family Studies was excited by the implications of the wedding, commenting, "It makes us women more marketable." Others applauded Otieno for her boldness in rejecting the traditional lot of women, especially widows. In a column of a leading newspaper, The Nation, Macharia Gaitho remarked that Kenya was awash with lonely, wealthy widows. He wrote, "A good number are involved in secret affairs with much younger men. We understand—as long as they are extremely discreet and do not bring shame on the family name." By exploring Wambui Otieno's complex, multilevel strategies, in terms of different locations of action, engagement, and resistance, I can pinpoint specific ways in which Wambui has repeatedly pushed women's concerns to the fore in Kenyan debates about culture, tradition, and politics. This cultural politics, or the interaction between people with different sets of cultural understanding, takes place when the conflict between different cultural meanings and practices inevitably, implicitly or explicitly, redefine social power. The result is copious debate, as well as real change, through critical re-examination of the gender inequalities in Kenyan law, inheritance, and marriage. For whether by the colonialist or postcolonial patriarchal governments, women in Kenya have been constrained, both physically and ideologically, in achieving the same rights, freedoms, and respect that men have garnered for themselves. Furthermore, gender-based violence, whether domestic or sexual, is quite common in Kenyan societies. Wambui might be the notable exception to the idea that women are a lower class in Kenya, but as a strong, educated and politically aware woman able to buck censure, her decisions both represent and predict growing trends toward greater gender equality in Kenya. The Otieno-Mbugua union certainly is an illuminated look at age, gender, class, culture, the meaning of marriage and the intersection of global ideas with local trends.
An African Queen

I only saw her for a fleeting moment through the window of our speeding car, but her image was ingrained in my memory for days. We were driving through the rainforest of Cameroon, on our way to visit some friends in the village where they worked. The luscious green trees with leaves stained red from the dusty road formed impregnable walls on either side of us, but every so often we passed a clearing and a small village, and it was near one of these that I saw the girl.

She stood on the side of the road, about five feet tall. Her ebony skin, streaked with dirt and sweat, was stretched over a delicate but muscular body, the result of a life of hard work. She looked to be around my age, fifteen or sixteen years old, but she was young only physically; her situation spoke of maturity beyond her years. A baby was tied to her back with a length of bright fabric, and her stomach swelled out her soiled dress. Her neck trembled under the weight of the basin of water balanced precariously on her head. There are thousands of women like this in Cameroon; girls get married as young as twelve or thirteen and begin the arduous task of childbearing soon after. The only people who look forward to seeing are the African children. I like the girls especially, I suppose because I am one, but they really are adorable. Tiny little human beings wearing faded clothes that are either far too big or far too small, braids sticking out from their heads at ninety degree angles, delicate golden hoops in their ears, their fingers eternally in their mouths. I smile when I come across them, because I know that they will smile back, and they do, running to greet me and thrusting out their soiled hands for multiple shakings. “Bonjour, la blanche!” Blanche means novelty, and when they stare at me, it is with curiosity, not contempt or disdain. Although they don’t mean harm when they say it, the word blanche coming from their innocent lips still pains me, because it speaks of a world where past wrongs and present circumstances have taught children even from infancy that some people will always be different, that things can never change.

I wish I could walk down the street someday unnoticed. I wish that the prejudices on both sides could disappear, that I wouldn’t look at an African and think “poor, uneducated,” that they wouldn’t look at me and think “rich, spoiled American.” I don’t know if that is possible. For now, there is an insurmountable barrier that Cameroonians have erected between themselves and me, an invisible line that cannot cross, and they have accomplished this in one seemingly innocent word: blanche.

The picture of her standing there, as if frozen in time, with the jungle behind her, the sounds of birds and gurgling water in her ears, and stray rays of sunlight shining on her braided hair and glittering on her gold earrings, was as vivid in my mind as if I could still see her through the window. For one instant our eyes had met, mine warm brown and hers brilliant black, and our worlds had connected. She was my age, but she was a woman and a mother, running her own household and working from dawn to dusk, while I a lazy American girl. She was carrying water from the river, a daily chore in a life I knew nothing about.

People outside of our shared moment would say that I was much more fortunate than she. I was in a car; she was on foot. I was clean and relaxed; she was dirty and tired. But something in the way she had stood there, the confidence and poise in her manner, the intelligence in her eyes, made me absolutely certain that this was not true. She had looked at me, but she had not smiled; her full lips had remained in a firm line. She had challenged me with her eyes and it was as if she was saying “Do you think you’re better than me, because you are white and I am black? Come here; hold my baby; carry my water…then see if you are better than me.”

My family, if they had seen her at all, would have seen a poor, unfortunate African woman. I saw more than that. I saw an African Queen. And she was beautiful.

Blanche

If my life so far were a month, it would be August, hot and humid and on the threshold of change; if it were a language, it would be French; if it were a color, it would be white. Blanche. It is interesting how one word can hold in its letters so much emotion and significance, so many memories all tangled up into a single syllable. Blanche is the color of my skin; blanche is the color of snow, a strange form of precipitation that reminds me of home; blanche is what sets me apart from the people of Cameroon. Every time I walk down the street, the red dust staining my white feet, the sun beating down on my head, groups of African children stop talking and stare at me. And then it comes: “Eh! La blanche!” I stare straight ahead and pretend I don’t hear them, or at least that I don’t understand. Laughter invariably follows, followed by a barrage of African French that is too fast for me to follow but that certainly doesn’t sound complimentary.

The connotations of “la blanche,” though never flattering, differ slightly depending on the speaker. My walk to school follows a road lined by outdoor bars that seem to always be filled with Cameroonian men. Their drunken slurs of “La Blanche” are usually followed by marriage proposals or crude comments, and sometimes, depending on how drunk they are, they reach out to touch me. Tomen, blanche means money and power, an intriguing product of the Western world’s sexual revolution. It means they can say whatever they want, they can do whatever they want, and no matter how I react it’s ridiculously funny, because, in the end, what right do I have to be in their country anyway, after what my people did to Africa.

I pass women on my walk, too, strong, beautiful women carrying basins of water on their heads or carting loads of produce to the market. They don’t call out to me as the men do; they have no need to assert their power. Instead, I can hear them whispering to their companions. Look at la blanche. The word is dripping with disdain. Does she think she is better than us because she has clean clothes and a school to go to and her skin is white? Put her in our place and see if she could do what we do for even a day. To them, blanche means weakness.

The only people I look forward to seeing are the African children. I like the girls especially, I suppose because I am one, but they really are adorable. Tiny little human beings wearing faded clothes that are either far too big or far too small, braids sticking out from their heads at ninety degree angles, delicate golden hoops in their ears, their fingers eternally in their mouths. I smile when I come across them, because I know that they will smile back, and they do, running to greet me and thrusting out their soiled hands for multiple shakings. “Bonjour, la blanche!” Blanche means novelty, and when they stare at me, it is with curiosity, not contempt or disdain. Although they don’t mean harm when they say it, the word blanche coming from their innocent lips still pains me, because it speaks of a world where past wrongs and present circumstances have taught children even from infancy that some people will always be different, that things can never change.

I wish I could walk down the street someday unnoticed. I wish that the prejudices on both sides could disappear, that I wouldn’t look at an African and think “poor, uneducated,” that they wouldn’t look at me and think “rich, spoiled American.” I don’t know if that is possible. For now, there is an insurmountable barrier that Cameroonians have erected between themselves and me, an invisible line that cannot cross, and they have accomplished this in one seemingly innocent word: blanche.
Who Will Save Darfur?

By Seepan V. Parseghian

Seepan Parseghian is a senior from Los Angeles majoring in Political Science with honors in International Security Studies and a minor in Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. His past research and public service experiences in Armenia, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Washington, DC have inspired his interest in ethnic conflict and the phenomenon of unrecognized states. For his senior thesis through the Center for International Security and Cooperation, Seepan will be exploring post-conflict state building processes and life expectancy of unrecognized states. He became interested in the Darfur conflict after taking “PS114T: Major Issues in International Conflict Management” with Prof. Steven Stedman. Contact Seepan at seepan07@stanford.edu.

In a controversial op-ed that appeared in the New York Times in May 2006, Assistant Professor of Public Affairs at the University of Texas Alan Kuperman chided the Save Darfur movement and advocates of UN intervention in Darfur for being shortsighted and ignorant of the reality on the ground in the conflict-laden region of Sudan. Kuperman dispelled what he calls a “simplistic morality tale” advanced by humanitarian NGOs and the media, which portrayed Darfur’s blacks as victims and nomadic Arabs as the oppressors. Kuperman’s argument reveals not only the complex nature of the Darfur conflict, but also the seemingly impossible conundrum facing policymakers and advocates of peace, even in light of the agreement that the Sudanese regime in the capital of Khartoum endorsed in April 2006.

Consistent with the opinion of Alan Kuperman, I will argue in this paper that the international community should indeed respect the state sovereignty of the government of Sudan (GoS), and should allow the GoS to manage “recalcitrant rebels” and potential spoilers of the recent peace agreement. Departing from Kuperman’s argument, however, I will argue that this policy should not rely upon the adherence of the GoS to human rights. I will contend, instead, that this policy is the most viable one whether or not the GoS commits war crimes, because there is a high likelihood that a future UN peacekeeping force will act impartially, and with a limited mandate. As the international community witnessed in Somalia and Bosnia, such a peacekeeping force can have catastrophic humanitarian consequences.

To develop this argument, I will first examine Kuperman’s rationale for recommending that the international community allow the GoS to enforce the peace agreement. Second, I will suggest that Kuperman should expect the GoS to commit war crimes, but that this reality still does not call for an international intervention. By alluding to the failed interventions in Somalia and Bosnia, where impartial efforts with limited mandates actually worsened the conflict, I will demonstrate the high probability of a similar outcome occurring in Darfur. Third, I will discuss the implications of non-intervention in Darfur, and will consider autonomous recovery as the long-term solution to the cessation of violence. Finally, I will treat from the violence it has facilitated, and allow the GoS to enforce the nascent peace agreement. Characterizing the Save Darfur movement as a resource base for the rebel forces, who, he contends, have only desired tribal control rather than the end of the genocide, Kuperman demonstrates that the humanitarian intervention to stop the genocide has actually legitimized the rebels’ cause. As Gerard Prunier explains, the UN, the media, and NGOs all blur the actual nature of the conflict with resolutions, countless reports, and front-page headlines. Yet, Kuperman expresses hope that there remains a chance to end the conflict in the recent peace agreement signed by the GoS and one of the rebel factions. He contends that the international community must allow the GoS to capitalize on this opportunity to contain and eliminate potential spoilers instead of orchestrating another failed intervention like that in Somalia. Nonetheless, Kuperman conditions his recommendation on the ability of the GoS to avoid committing war crimes while enforcing the peace agreement.

However, a look at the type of conflict in Darfur and the government mechanisms in Khartoum renders Kuperman’s condition useless. As an insurgency staged by multiple rebel forces, the Darfur conflict will be difficult to resolve without the capacity to use excessive force, no matter if the wielder of force is the GoS or an international peacekeeping force.”

“An insurgency staged by multiple rebel forces, the Darfur conflict will be difficult to resolve without the capacity to use excessive force, no matter if the wielder of force is the GoS or an international peacekeeping force.”

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ficult this type of conflict can be to resolve, even for the global military superpower. For the Arab minority-ruled GoS, which Prunier describes as "one of the last multinational empires on the planet," violent counter-insurgency is the most effective option in Khartoum’s bid to end the conflict. Of course, this does not justify the genocidal acts of the regime, but if Kuperman wants the GoS to enforce the peace agreement, he and the international community should expect the worst from the GoS and a short-term resumption of violence. Considering the likelihood of violence and the subsequent "responsibility to protect" that arises, an international peacekeeping force could not effectively intervene, because such an intervention would only prolong the conflict, and would confirm yet again the weakness of negotiated settlements in halting violence.

An intervention in Darfur would face four major challenges: a high number of warring parties, the absence of a peace agreement signed by all significant parties, a collapsing state, and a high likelihood of spoilers. Moreover, the most influential global leaders have only demonstrated a weak interest in this remote region of Sudan, and several key actors on the UN Security Council like the US and China have shown their unwillingness to pacify Khartoum in exchange for support in the war against terrorism and oil exports. Therefore, the high possibility of continued conflict and the low willingness of the international community to intervene suggest that an international peacekeeping force in Darfur would be neutral to the warring parties, and would carry a limited, under-resourced mandate.

As precedent, similar peacekeeping forces in Somalia and Bosnia not only failed to achieve their mandates, but also arguably worsened the conflicts by the time they left. After successfully providing food aid to famine-stricken Somalis in 1992-93, the US realized that its pullout would allow the artificially induced famine to resume. Working in an uncoordinated fashion with the UN Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM), US forces assumed the task of restoring civil order, but stopped short of imposing peace upon the various war-lords. Failing to arrest Mohammed Farah Aideed and suffering embarrassing casualties, the US presence ended as more Somalis were dying and Mogadishu was slipping into the anarchy it is in today. Similarly, in Bosnia the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) mandate to protect safe areas like Srebrenica was too weak to fulfill its objective. Members of the Security Council, most prominently France and the UK, were reluctant to use the "dual key" strategy, through which NATO forces would launch an air campaign while UN forces protected the safe areas on the ground, despite repeated Dutch contingent appeals for its need. Such a limited mandate and a lack of resources led not only to the Srebrenica massacre in 1995, but also to the de facto partition of Bosnia into Serb and Muslim-Croat parts that are only held together by the NATO occupation. Without partial intervention on the side of one of the warring parties and without a well-resourced mandate, an international peacekeeping force would be unlikely to succeed in resolving the Darfur conflict.

"Without partial intervention on the side of one of the warring parties and without a well-resourced mandate, an international peacekeeping force would be unlikely to succeed in resolving the Darfur conflict"

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In this paper, I have shown that Kuperman is correct in asserting that the GoS should enforce the recent peace agreement that attempts to resolve the Darfur conflict. Alluding to the failed interventions in Somalia and Bosnia, I have also demonstrated that an international peacekeeping force should not enter the conflict for it would only worsen the situation. Instead, Darfur presents a convincing case for autonomous recovery to establish lasting peace.
Tug Of War
By Simone Asare

Off to study mom” Simone mentioned as she headed to her room to start her homework. “That’s my girl,” said her mother, “remember Simone, whatever you know today, you have to know more tomorrow.” Simone nodded in affirmation as she went up the stairs; she had heard that adage multiple times throughout her childhood. Simone’s mom beckoned to her “Could you please wipe the dishes to help with dinner’s preparation?” Quietly Simone complained “Mom, I told you I had homework to do”. Her mother only stared in amazement and shook her head saying “If only you grew up in Ghana.” This scenario gives an accurate account of various facets of my childhood. As seen in the story, my Ghanaian mother praises me for my desire to pursue education yet feels disheartened by my lack of willingness to perform domestic duties. With the example, balancing the dichotomy of domesticity and education remains a complexity for females of my generation and those of previous generations. This paper focuses on how the degree to which education and domesticity are valued has changed for West-African women in the post-independence era and what factors cause those changes. Since domesticity represents an important facet of womanhood, when examining how the roles of west-African women have evolved, it is pertinent to not only look at how educational opportunities have changed but to understand the direct implications those changes have had on domesticity.

Simone Asare is a junior majoring in Human Biology. After always hearing her parents inform her that her life as a female would have been different if she lived in Ghana, she decided to conduct research to understand the premise of their assumption. She wanted to understand the emphasis placed on domesticity and academics for West-African females and their American born first-generation daughters. The research was indeed worthwhile since she gained a better sense of the view of what females are supposed to be in these varying cultural contexts.

Methodology

In this paper I examined how domestic and educational roles changed for west-African women of the post-independence era. I looked at three generations and for the purposes of this paper, I have defined them in different categories. Generation A represents mothers in west-Africa during post-independence; these women are of my grandmothers’ generation. Generation B represents the daughters of Generation A who migrated to the United States; these women are of my mother’s generation. I fall into this last category, Generation C, which represents the first-generation daughters of Generation B; these daughters are American citizens but of west-African descent and are females of my generation. Part of my methodology for this paper was to conduct interviews with females of Generation C on campus to better understand their views on domesticity and education. I sent out e-mails to a variety of lists, but only received responses from students of Ghanaian or Nigerian descent. Although it may appear limiting because I received information only about these two cultures, I believe that these two countries symbolize good sources for the project since they are extremely progressive nations within west-Africa. Politically, these cultures juxtapose traditional and modern thought about their various societies and this discourse fosters an atmosphere of differences in opinion which can help these nations look at aspects of their culture from various angles. This open mind to tradition and modernism places females of Nigerian and Ghanaian descent in a better position to assess the dichotomy of traditional and modernist thought regarding domesticity and education due to the progressive mentality prevalent in those West-African nations.

Liberty from Oppression

While saddened by their inability to attend the academic school of their male counterparts, this oppression did not prevent women of Generation A to feel a high degree of self-importance regarding their roles as homemakers. Because education was solely provided to males in west-Africa during the pre-independence era between 1930 and 1955, females could not concern themselves with academics and instead were required to learn about the female’s position in the home. Under the education policy established by the colonial administration of west-Africa, boys were favored to go to school since they provided man-power for machinery that the government utilized. The situation for Generation A differed greatly since they were taught cookery and home crafts which provided them with a sense of what being a west-African wife and mother entailed. Christopher Mojekwu argues that the government implemented these educational policies in order “… to make the African girl the western idealized form of the home-bound and dependent wife and mother”. After only having exposure to domesticity, Generation A capitalized on this knowledge that would better prepare them for their roles as mothers and wives and also found pride in their domestic duties. Although they were limited in their academic capabilities, these skills regarding household duties would prove to be beneficial for their future and they found comfort in knowing that only their gender could perform these necessary duties at the greatest level. Some of the roles that west-African women were required to fulfill were to maintain the upkeep of the inside of the house by sweeping and cooking as well as fulfill her duties outside of the house which revolved around agriculture. Some members of Generation A used their knowledge about planting and harvesting crops in an economical way by starting their own businesses. From selling crops some women gained a sense of economic security and these agricultural females, despite lack of education, could possibly...
profit from their business independent of their husband’s earnings with his “academic” job. With these new opportunities, west-African females found a source of liberty by having the ability to provide for their families without the financial aid of their husbands. It then became clear to society that although females did not have the same academic opportunities as their male counterparts, their domestic roles were just important as the professional roles of their husbands. Mojekwu explains how Among Africans, a wife is as much a provider for their family as is her husband. African familial roles are highly segregated along sex lines with men performing what are recognized as men’s roles and women, women’s roles’ but both sets of roles are such that they complement each other. 2 Mojekwu’s assertion regarding the complementary qualities of female and male roles helps us understand why these west-African women taught their daughters the importance of domestic duties. They found fulfillment through these homemaking responsibilities and this liberating feeling defined womanhood since only the upkeep of the house was solely performed by females.

Education as an Escape

Despite this empowering feeling of worth for Generation A, some of these women still felt slighted in regards to their education. The inaccessibility of education to Generation A made these females yearn for the academic knowledge that they were told they could not have; they saw it as an outlet to their forced life of homemaking and would do anything to live in the shoes of their male counterparts, since they had the luxury of pursuing education. This desire for education made Generation A instill the value of education within their daughters. Generation B. Evidence of this can be seen through Generation A’s instruction to Generation B. From interviews with women of my mother’s generation, my findings show that the majority women of Generation B attest to their mothers’ emphasis on education. When asked about the role of education in their lives, Generation B women replied in the same manner. My interviews with my mother, my aunt and our other Ghanaiian family friends clearly revealed Generation B’s dedication to education as a result of their mothers’ demands. My mother believes that “…education was slightly more important to her [my grand-

mother], evidence of which is the fact that all 6 of us attended college”. As seen from this example, education played a strong role for Generation A mothers since some of them made all of their children attend college. These mothers explained this acquisition of knowledge as a method which would allow their children to lead a pleasant and easy lifestyle as seen with “My mother stressed education very much in my life. She always said ‘You need something to fall back on when the going gets tough…education is a key to a successful future”. Therefore, Generation A mothers viewed education as a worthy aspiration to pursue and did all that was necessary so their daughters could obtain it and not lead the domestic lifestyle they were forced to lead; they viewed education as an alternative world which would enable them to leave the mundane yet necessary work of domesticity.

“*This socio-economic driving force for immigrants to leave their country of origin directly relates to professional and educational advancement.*”

Duality of House Keeping and Higher Education

Even though Generation A mothers explicitly emphasized education’s value to their Generation B daughters, their non-verbal inferences showing domesticity’s importance revealed that it was a woman’s role to fulfill her destined duty in the kitchen and the home. When Generation B daughters returned home on vacation from boarding school, it was these females’ roles to maintain the upkeep of the house as explained in “she made sure we attended good schools and always provided for us but during the holidays, I spent about 70% of time in the kitchen”. If Generation A mothers truly stressed education, they would have let their Generation B daughters study during their holidays; yet their teachings of them to work in the domestic sector showed their thoughts about homemaking as well. Therefore, Generation A mothers valued education due to its absence in their lives yet still thought it essential to maintain a home since all they were exposed to was domesticity. Both aspects were relevant for females to have but just different. The longing for education resulted in a shift in value regarding domesticity; homemaking had significance nonetheless, but Generation A mothers did not see it as important as pursuing education.

Immigrants Pursuing the American Dream

“Oh my Stanford child- I am so proud of you” said my mother as she ecstatically waved the acceptance letter in the air. “Thanks mom” sincerely stated Simone. Simone’s mother continued: “It isn’t easy being immigrants you know- making sure you guys have the best, always sending money back home; it’s difficult. But this event, getting into Stanford, proves how it has all been worth it.”

This hypothetical situation draws on many truths that I have seen in my life. My parents’ desire that my brother and I have the best possible education was always discussed in every way possible throughout my childhood. I understood that my father’s mission in migrating to the United States was to create the building blocks for a better future for his children and family. Education’s promising path to success resonates with many immigrants and for the most part is a main reason for migrating to a developed country. According to Carola and Marcelo Suarez-Orozco “throughout human history, immigrants have been driven by twin forces: powerful socioeconomic factors as well as individual agency and motivation”. This socio-economic driving force for immigrants to leave their country of origin directly relates to professional and educational advancement. Immigrants hope to better themselves in these roles and believe that their third-world country does not have the necessary resources that will enable them to succeed. They hope that with the solid education received in the developed country, their life will be better due to a higher standard of living. Suarez-Orozco describes how “changes in cultural models about what is a desirable standard of living have figured powerfully in the history of immigration”. Thus because societal standards of how one should live have changed, immigrants are more inclined to adopt that new mentality therefore of their motherland for a more financially stable future.

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Generation B and Education

Throughout their upbringing, the incessant discussions regarding obtaining a good profession illustrated the significance of being well educated for Generation B women. This value of education was especially heightened when these women experienced racism in their professional and educational roles in the United States. Accessibility to non-domestic education first appeared to women of my mother’s generation. These females of Generation B knew that the status quo for progressive women of that generation was to attend the best schools in their motherland. My mother’s first encounter with school was with one of the best private schools in Ghana at the time and occurred at age four; this early exposure to the prestigious schools illustrates the mentality of society at the time. Due to this social context, it is not coincidental that Generation B women prioritize education with regard to womanhood. Yet it was not only the mentality of their societies that caused them to prioritize education but also their interactions with racism empowered them to embrace education. My graduate experience was very difficult. Being in a White institution, it was like, what is this girl doing here? I lost my identity. I became the Black girl. A lot of them assumed I couldn’t understand English. After the first semester, their attitudes changed. This quote highlights the inner and outer conflicts Generation B women have which stem from sexism and racism. Generally, they are considered to have inferior education and thus people never hesitate to question their authority on matters. The sexist environment present in America does not help these women in their pursuit of education since the male-dominated environment views them as incapable of doing their jobs well. Generation B women therefore have a harder time proving their worth within their academic arenas in the United States than in their motherland due to overt racism. This tenacious pursuit for education proves to be difficult for Generation B women at times. Although many times these females feel discouraged from these upsetting events, they are diligent in their pursuit of education because they know that being educated in the United States will open so many educational and professional doors to them.

Domesticity and Duty

Generation B women grew up performing domestic duties and constant exposure to that lifestyle made them place significance on domesticity. I recall multiple times my mother describing domestic duties she had to perform at boarding school during her childhood. At age four, she needed to know how to make her own porridge, clean her living area and make her bed. Exposing young girls to this aspect of womanhood reveals domesticity’s importance within Ghanaian culture. The women I interviewed, in retrospect, do not believe that domestic duties have changed for them since they were children in their various West-African homelands. They still see it extremely essential for females to maintain their homes. The only difference for these women is that they now have professional roles that require attention which make the basic domestic duties of cleaning and cooking a little more difficult. A Ghanaian family friend believes “my duties here don’t really differ from my duties in Ghana. For example, I still play a great role in managing the household but now I also have a career.” This comment reveals that the additional responsibility of working can be difficult for Generation B women to perform their domestic obligations in the best possible manner. My mother thinks “domestic duties do not differ from what they were in Ghana. If anything at all, they are more intensive due to the fact that there is not the privilege of external help like it was in Ghana.” In both scenarios these mothers feel that the additional task of working and pursuing educational opportunities makes domesticity more difficult to handle. My mother’s point regarding lack of external help refers to the fact that in West-Africa, she has her extended family that could potentially help her with the upkeep of her house while she pursues her professional career. Yet due to migration, all of those helping hands remain in Ghana, and she must solely carry the burden of being a domestic and career woman simultaneously. Although performing domestic duties is taxing due to ramifications of migration, Generation B women still prioritize their domestic roles due to their cultural upbringing; the demanding professional obligations from living in an education superpower country as well as lack of familial support have changed the nature of domesticity for these women.

Pressures due to the Past

“So you’re at Stanford right?” the familiar stranger asked Simone. “Yes.” She replied. “Good for you. You’re doing a great job-setting an example for the younger ones. Keep at it. Don’t let anything distract you and do your best at all times to succeed. You’re doing it for us” Simone politely nodded in affirmation as she said “Thank you.” The pressures to achieve success that Generation C children face stem from fear of disappointing their immigrant families. This idea of achieving success through education motivates Generation C daughters to educate themselves in the best manner possible. As seen with the example above, this scenario has been true for me. I felt inspired to be persistent in my studies since I knew that my family as well as Ghanaian family friends were counting on me to be successful in life because my individual success would give hope for other Ghanaians. Just as the scenario above resonates for me, a Ghanaian, it also holds true for Nigerians. When reflecting on how mothers talked to their daughters about education one Nigerian student responded “my mother has always made my education paramount. I can even get away with skipping church on a specific Sunday if I have to get a paper or a project done.” Another Nigerian believed “education was definitely the most emphasized in my household because my parents said it was the most important responsibility. For example, if I had to do homework that would take precedence over any chores or anything.” Both examples highlight how education overrode non-academic events since non-school related events could distract from learning and thus attainment of future success. The sayings of parents can

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reveal how much education is valued.

Differing Views on Domesticity

While Generation B mothers value domesticity due to their exposure to it during childhood, their Generation C daughters’ value for domesticity has shifted due to the constant emphasis on education. These familial pressures to succeed make Generation C daughters neglect or marginalize their domestic responsibilities. I interviewed mother-daughter pairs and from the jarring different responses, I realized the difference in opinion for the two generations regarding domesticity. A Nigerian mother stated “Be good in both. They will be your keys to success.” Her daughter stated “I will definitely stress education over anything else…as my children their main obligation is do well in school.” These similar differences can be seen for Ghanaianmothersanddaughters. Onesuch immigrant Ghanaian mother stated “Always remember that education is the most important thing…at the same time, don’t forget how to maintain your household so that it is a comfortable living space.” Her daughter’s opinion on the matter was “It is always good to be dutiful to your family but don’t let that get in the way of your educational aspirations.” In both quotes, Generation C daughters acknowledge the importance of domesticity for females but because performing homemaking duties will not aid them in their pursuit of success, they don’t see it as valuable as education. Similarly for Generations A and B, domesticity’s importance depends on the value of education during each generation.

Status Quo, Implicit Learning, Naivety

The shift in value of domesticity for Generation C females could not only stem from pressures from immigrant families but could result from the success-craze within the United States during this generation, the implicit mentality that the burden to maintain a home lies on females and possibly inexperience of providing for a family. American culture for Generation C dictates that success is key in achieving any recognition. There is a plethora of mediums which portray pathways to success. For example Fred Gratzon and Lawrence Sheaff’s The Lazy Way to Success is a book which describes how to achieve success in an easy manner. Another example is Paramount Picture’s “The Perfect Score” in which high school students plot to steal the SAT test in order to attain the highest score possible, aiding them with acceptance into the college of their choice. These bombarding messages describing how to achieve success push Generation C daughters more since the messages filter themselves into mainstream society.

A more interesting possibility as to why Generation C daughters’ values on domesticity have shifted could be due to the implicit nature in which domesticity was taught to them. With Generation B women, their Generation Amothersstatedand demonstrated that they needed to fulfill their homemaking duties; this was not the case for Generation C women. Generation B mothers attempted to teach their daughters that women were supposed to fulfill domestic duties, however Generation C daughters never fully understood their mothers’ attempts since their mothers never articulated their messages but instead led by example; because the importance of domesticity may not have been explicitly stated but merely implied, Generation C daughters could not understand the concept of a woman’s roles in its entirety. A Nigerian student feels that “…because my mom doesn’t explicitly say it, I feel like I especially should help out in the house, I would expect my daughters to help me in the kitchen etc. when possible.” This quote captures the essence of the idea of expectations; essentially societal norms in African cultures and elsewhere dictate that solely women should bear the responsibility of fulfilling domestic roles thus there be no need to discuss this implicit social construct. Due to the lack of explicit articulation of the necessity of domesticity, it is understandable that Generation C daughters will not clearly understand their Generation B messages. The young age of these Generation C daughters possibly could affect their responses and thoughts about domesticity. Because they are unmarried women without children, they may not fully understand the essential nature for women to upkeep their homes. Only after experiencing marriage and motherhood may they fully understand this concept. This inexperience may cause them to ignore domesticity since they do not see the immediate benefits.

Conclusion

After having dealt with the dichotomy of domesticity and education the majority of my life, I was curious to see how West-African women of different generations felt on the issue. My findings show that for each generation values of education directly impact one’s value of domesticity. Contrary to my upbringing, the majority of Generation C daughters were only taught implicitly of the necessity of domesticity. I hope there will be further research done to understand the rationale behind Generation C daughters’ mentality which downplays homemaking. The concept of downplaying non-educational roles can be seen when Ife argues “…major areas became the exclusive preserve for men leaving women with only the governance of a small private world-the home.” This quote highlights the mentality that making females’ dominion in the kitchen was belittling; however I have shown that with Generations A and B, domesticity had value and thus Generation C should consider that and not neglect domesticity entirely. I would caution Generation C daughters to stray from the mentality which downplays domesticity because everyone, even men, need to understand the significance of domesticity. In all, research regarding these subjects is pertinent so as to monitor the trends of values through generations and make West-African societies aware that although the value of domesticity shifts due to emphasis on education, domesticity still has relevant standing regarding the concept of womanhood.
Innocence
By Dithapelo Medupe

Turner’s fall, Massachussetts
Little girls in white fluffy bunny costumes hopping about the vast stage
A performance where no coordination whatsoever makes it even more memorable
More precious

Maun, Botswana, Africa
My little sisters five and nine in a school play
My digital camera will not switch on
Dead batteries
I am glad

Sounds evil, I know
But they are five and nine, singing about promiscuity
Singing about having one sexual partner

They sing so well
Their teacher is at the back of the stage beaming with pride
It could be precious
If they were dressed up as wolves and sheep and puffing and baing
Or singing about a summer at a farm with grandfather and grandmother
But it makes my heart swell up with pain

INSPIRATION FOR THE POEM

I went to high school in Massachusetts for a year and during this time I saw a lot of community theatre productions which I felt allowed children to be children. When I returned to Botswana for the summer I went to my little sisters’ play at their primary school and instead of them acting as wolves or rabbits they were involved in a very well organized play about someone getting AIDS and dying. This made me weep for the innocence children born into an AIDS afflicted society will never know. I felt like while on the one hand it is good to start AIDS education early in a child’s life it can deprive the child of their innocence too early on the other hand. I think at age five, children need subtle messages about AIDS like a teacher could write a play in which the children wear sheep or wolf costumes and then the wolves attack the sheep. This would let the children have fun and be creative without having to deal with issues they are not old enough to comprehend. The teacher could mention AIDS as a theme whenever they discuss the play without making AIDS the only dominant theme driving the storyline. In my view this would allow the children to enjoy acting and not just view it as a way of showing people just the bad aspects of their society.

If we want to produce good African writers and actors we should not program children to think that people will hold your work in great regard only if you write about terrible things. As a product of this system of making children act in plays where AIDS and other problems like poverty are represented as insurmountable social ills, I find it really hard to write stories about happy people because I was introduced to heartbreaking themes at a time when I was trying to form my own perspective of the world. There are happy things to write about but for most African writers they seem trivial yet they are important.

I was surprised that my little sisters could sing so well during the play because at home they would not rehearse the songs. My five year old sister told me that the lyrics embarrassed her while my nine year old sister did not want to talk about the play or the songs in the play. My poem contrasts the lives of American children and African children not in a way that says Americans are at fault but just that children in America enjoy childhood the way it should be enjoyed and in Africa we have to find a way to inspire children to view the arts in a positive light.
Movements, Diasporic Homes and Trafficking: A Nigerian Travelogue

By Erica Lorraine Williams

Erica Lorraine Williams is a 4th year PhD Candidate in Cultural and Social Anthropology at Stanford University from Fayetteville, North Carolina. She is currently in Salvador, Brazil conducting ethnographic research on the relationship between sex tourism and the commodification of Afro-Brazilian culture within the tourism industry.

Arrival. Early on a June morning, I search the crowds of people for a placard with my name on it. So this is it. Nigeria. A home-coming of sorts, though not in the cheesy Motherland kind of way.

Crossing borders often leads to unintentional loss of Self. In the U.S., I am an African-American woman from a low-income background, but with transnational movement I slough this off like a snake sheds its skin, revealing the slimy, gleaming scales of privilege. I have been transformed. To Nigerians, I am a rich, white, privileged foreigner – moving through the seas of brown faces in the street, at the market - a living, breathing dollar sign. Dropping dollar bills with every step I take, random guys toss out marriage proposals at me. I turn and see the green glowing in their eyes.

I promise, I had no Afro centric notions of Nigeria as “the Motherland.” I knew full well that there was a massive ocean and centuries separating African-Americans from Africans. I had no romantic hopes of being embraced warmly as a sister. I had an inkling that people might question my racial identity, but I had no idea that I would be white here. I didn’t realize that I would be called ‘Oyinbo’ (white/foreign) by bus conductors, taxi drivers, drummers at parties, and passersby. I didn’t foresee that children would stare and point at me, or that a teenage girl would ask my host-sister “Why don’t you take her in a taxi? White people’s legs aren’t made for walking.” I would have never imagined that a guy would hit on me by saying he needed some white skin to cure his black headache! It’s a mind trip when you’re in a place where how you identify yourself is the exact opposite of how people identify you; when how they identify you negates your background and experiences and places you in the privileged category that you and your family have been subjugated by for your entire life. How does one negotiate that?

Perhaps I spent too much energy trying to work out my Motherland expectations. Perhaps I didn’t pay enough attention to my global sisterhood yearnings.


Since my early exposure to Black Feminism, I’ve often wondered what an African feminism rooted in African women’s experiences and cultures would look like. Interestingly, the participants in the workshop never once used the word “feminism” in their discussions. This made me wonder if Nigerian women activists, professionals, and academics who place gender at the center of their analyses consider themselves feminists. Have they shunned feminist ideology, theory, and practice as a Western women’s thing - as something that is foreign and alien to their cultures? Or have they created their own unique version of feminism and christened it with a different name, just as women of color feminists have done in the U.S. and Europe? On the other hand, I realize that naming oneself a feminist may not be as important as simply doing the work, as many of the participants in this conference were doing.

I’ve come in search of something. Sleepless nights of grant proposals, hours of intensive Yoruba language study, days mulling over research questions, all led me to this point. I traveled thousands of miles to find sisters and solidarity - to help empower a global home. I’ve come to get to the bottom of stories like this one:

Rachel, from Benin City, Nigeria was approached by a man and asked if she would like to go abroad and earn money by buying cosmetics. She agreed and was taken to Italy via Ghana. Once in Italy she was... forced into prostitution. The Madam, Agnes, told Rachel that she owed 90 million lire for her travel expenses, and that she would be expected to pay that back... she would also have to pay 50,000 lire a month for room and board and 200,000 lire to rent the corner where she would wait for customers... Rachel had to have sex with at least ten partners per day in order to make her daily repayment to Agnes... She was forced to work 22 hours per day on the street, and... she was repeatedly beaten into submission, until she finally managed to escape with the help of an Italian NGO.

As anthropologist Asale Angel Ajani warns us, not all examples of transnational movement can be seen as liberatory, and not all traversing of borders is a “celebration of a cosmopolitan freedom” because of the policing and harassment of racialized Others. Rachel’s story is an example of a growing form of what some refer to as the “new slave trade” – the trafficking of women and children. My reading had indicated that women were forced, deceived or coerced into traveling abroad, and that once they arrived at their destinations, they had to endure debt bondage, forced servitude, and slavery-like conditions. Nigeria has been called the most “donating African country in the global sex industry,” as estimates show that nearly 70,000 Nigerian women have been trafficked to Europe. Most end their perilous journeys in the Italian towns of Livorno, Torino, and Genova, where UNICEF states that eighty percent of young women engaged in pros-
Visa or a Nigerian passport. dia Renais permission in order to apply for a foreign that unmarried women have their parents their efforts to curb trafficking by requiring motion official who interviewed boasted of migration warning women not to believe SAYS NO!! There’s a billboard at a major SLAVERY: SEX FOR EXPORT, LET’S organization in Benin City, Nigeria, has a brochure community of Women (COSUDOW), a Catholic The Committee for the Support and Dig sent abroad, actually sought out sponsors for their daughters. in fact, Girls Power initiative, a non-governmental organization in Benin City, Nigeria, found that most women and girls who were trafficked from Edo and Delta States were introduced to spon- sors by parents or relatives.

Reflection:

Another arrival. A young, slim Nigerian woman steps off the train in Rome. She has been traveling for days on end – by bus through West Africa, up to North Africa, flying into another European country, then taking a train to Rome. She has passed through many hands and the passport she is holding does not have her real name on it. The Italian police detained her because they thought she was suspicious. They think all African women are drug traffickers or prostitutes. She has gone in search of opportunity, a better life. Maybe she knew what they had in store for her, or maybe she honestly believed that she would be able to go to school and work as a nanny or in a supermarket. All she wanted was a chance. That’s all any of us want. Who can fault her for that?

The Committee for the Support and Dignity of Women (COSUDOW), a Catholic organization in Benin City, has a brochure that says: NIGERIA CAUGHT IN NEW SLAVERY: SEX FOR EXPORT, LET’S SAY NO!! There’s a billboard at a major intersection warning women not to believe people who tell them about opportunities to live and work in Europe. The Immigration official who I interviewed boasted of their efforts to curb trafficking by requiring that unmarried women have their parents permission in order to apply for a foreign Visa or a Nigerian passport. Idia Renais-

sance, another Nigerian NGO attributes the involvement of women in “international prostitution” to “weak family ties, poor upbringing, unbridled craze for material acquisition, poverty and ignorance.”

“Unbridled craze for material acquisition.” In a place where the electricity is off more than it is on, where college graduates languish in their parents’ houses unemployed, where even those who work don’t make enough to support themselves because of currency devaluation, these women are called greedy, crazy, money-hungry because they take a risk in search of an economic opportunity. They are called ignorant because they hope for the best and take a leap of faith. They are said to have weak family ties and poor upbringing when they probably wouldn’t go abroad at all if it weren’t for betterment of their families – to pay for younger siblings’ school fees and build their parents a house.

Anger is displaced when all people see is money and movement, as if poor Nigerian women have no right to travel abroad and take their futures in their own hands. No harsh words at the pimps, hustlers, Madams, agents, and traffickers who facilitate this migration, who “deceive” these women, who rape them when they are unwilling to engage in sex work, who beat them in Italian brothels, prohibit them from seeking health services, and snatch money from their hands as soon as they earn it. No harsh words against these people, just moralizing about women who were only trying to find a solution when no one else had one.

6/17/2003 Blog

My first introduction to the phenomenon of trafficking in women and children was from a sensationalist news article about Nigerian sex workers in Italy. What I didn’t know before pillaging WOCON’s bookshelves was that internal trafficking of women and children from rural to urban areas in Nigeria for work as unsalaried nannies, shop keepers, and domestic workers was a problem long before the media ever noticed. Trafficking also affects children from Benin Republic, Togo, and Ghana who are trafficked into Nigeria for domestic work, sex work, farm work, and other forms of labor. The outcry over trafficking only came after external trafficking to Europe for sex work began to draw international shame to Nigeria. This raises many questions. First of all, why is it that trafficking only becomes an issue when it involves the sanctity of European borders? Secondly, why is it that trafficking for sex work in Europe has received more international attention than trafficking for domestic work, forced labor and sweatshop labor? Is it that sex work is truly the worst form of labor or is this assumption based on moralizing judgment calls? Is there a genuine concern for the plight of foreign sex workers who may be victims of trafficking, or are they seen rather as vectors of disease (HIV/AIDS) from whom society needs to be protected?

Going to Nigeria was a home-coming of sorts. Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham, Pearl Primus and Melville Herskovits initiated me into a Cultural Anthropology that explored the African influences on the Americas. For years I had read about traditional Yoruba religion and its transformations in Brazilian candomblé and Cuban santería. At some point, I decided that I wanted to maintain that as a personal interest separate from my research, but I went to Nigeria on a spiritual journey nonetheless. What I found in urban Lagos and Benin City were Christians and Muslims who jokingly ridiculed the old, evil, backwards babalawo from the rural areas. I found people who knew about Obatala as a myth and Oshun as a deity in which only old, uneducated, illiterate, “ignorant” people believe. For women who have been trafficked and who are repatriated back to Nigeria (or deported from Italy), they may end up in a “rehabilitation” center run by Catholic sisters, in which they are taught to sew and cook and encouraged to repent for their sins. I don’t know who their gods and heroes are. I know that I couldn’t find mine in Lagos.

I have been moving since my earliest memory and even before that, as retold by my parents. Born in Virginia, I moved to North Carolina after a few months to live with my grandparents while the Navy had my par-
And going to Nigeria was a home-coming of sorts. I wasn’t looking for a Motherland or an origin story, but I went to do research with women’s rights NGOs because I hungered for feminist solidarity across differences. I knew some might say I was “the West” and they were “the Other,” but I yearned for mutual respect and recognition as all being committed to the same struggle.

What happens to home in the context of transnationalism and globalization? In her dissertation, Asale Angel-Ajani describes the complex situation of Esther, an incarcerated West African woman in Italy, who traversed two international borders on foot before arriving in Nigeria, and there worked as a prostitute to feed her children. When she was arrested in Italy with false documents, she became a stateless individual. In a letter to Esther, Angel-Ajani writes: “Home has a different meaning for you now…I wonder, if you, or the other women, can go home as a woman released from prison, an ex-convict, an ex-drug trafficker, an ex-prostitute? Will you ever be forgiven by the many who will condemn you? And if you ever locate your children, will they understand?...This is why, after sitting and thinking about your staying in Italy, I understand why going home is an impossibility for many reasons.”

If victims of trafficking are uneducated, then they are seen as coerced, duped, tricked, or forced into migrating, which clearly demarcates their victim status and is all the more reasons for the human rights movement to rally around them. On the other hand, if they are educated, they are rational-thinking agents who made a choice to migrate, though perhaps they weren’t aware of the kind of work they would be engaging in. Describing “victims” of trafficking as “poor, uneducated women” allows us to distance ourselves from their realities, thereby re-creating the stereotypical juxtaposition between Western and Third World women.

I went to Nigeria to find traces of these women who had packed their bags full of dreams and dared to venture into the unknown. It could have been me—If I were in the wrong place at the wrong time around the wrong people. Coming of age in Fayetteville, North Carolina with a compelling desire to see the world but a lack of resources to do so, if someone had approached me with an opportunity to work abroad as an English teacher, an Au Pair, or even in a restaurant, I would have jumped at the chance. A few years ago there were American women who responded to a call for singers and performers in Japan. Upon arrival, they discovered that yakuza, the Japanese mafia, intended to use them as sex workers. It was only their privileged race and nationality that saved them. So what will ‘save’ Nigerian women – education, or the abolition of the system of racialized sexism that creates a market for women of color in the European sex industry in the first place? In a world without passports and visas, with open borders, and no such place as a “Third World” country, trafficking would not exist.

**“I knew some might say I was “the West” and they were “the Other,” but I yearned for mutual respect and recognition as all being committed to the same struggle “**
IMAGING WEST AFRICA
By Tina Cheuk

Wedding Dance in Agandez, Niger
This photo was taken in deserts north of Agadez in Niger, West Africa. The young women is of the Fulani tribe, known for their nomadic cattle herding in the Sahara. She is in traditional Fulani attire, dancing and celebrating her wedding day. The dancing, drumming, guitars, and trumpets continued into the night.

Butre, Ghana
To the right is the Porte to Butre Beach and below is Butre Beach. The town of Butre is located in the Western Region of Ghana, West Africa. It is a small fishing village located at the base of Fort Batenstein. This photos were taken from the vantage point of the Fort with a grand view of the Gulf of Guinea.
Djenne, Mali

This is the mud mosque that Djenne is famous for. As a woman and a non-Muslim, I was not allowed to enter, but its imposing magnitude here belies the actual energy and interconnectedness of this village, which was actively preparing for the next day’s weekly market. As I walked around the city with a local guide, we would pause at every available television set to catch small bits of the World Cup Final game. Later that night, resigned to the bustle of this little town, I joined a large and eclectic group of Malian locals, English-speaking guides, and American and European tourists in a local hotel. Our collective appreciation brought us together, and we watched into the sunset as Italy defeated France to win the 2006 FIFA Cup.

Fontainhas, Cabo Verde

This is the village of Fontainhas in Cabo Verde, which I passed through on a coastal hike around the island of Santo Antao. This photo fails to capture the total beauty of this tiny village, which is perched precariously on the edge of an very steep mountainside that dips directly into the frothing waves of the ocean below. The hike was one of the most challenging I have ever done, and it mystifies me how the villagers manage it every day, let alone were able to build into a harsh and natural setting such a wonderful place to call home.

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso

I took this photo one morning from the rooftop of my hotel while suffering from the terrible after-effects of street “poulet bicyclette” and a much-too-long bus journey from a naturally lush Bobo. Since I didn’t have the energy to go very far, I thought I could “explore” the capital city from above. What struck me the most was a feeling of uncanny orderliness and strange quietude that left me wondering about modernity’s place in Burkina.
The Art of Persuasion: how Media Images on Famine in Africa are Produced and Consumed

by Wilson Irungu

“Seeking relief from the sight of masses of people starving to death, he [Kevin Carter, a South African Photo Journalist covering the 1993 famine in Sudan] wandered into the open bush. He heard a soft, high-pitched whimpering and saw a tiny girl trying to make her way to the feeding center. As he crouched to photograph her, a vulture landed in view. Careful not to disturb the bird, he positioned himself for the best possible image. He would later say he waited about 20 minutes, hoping the vulture would spread its wings... Afterward he sat under a tree, lit a cigarette, talked to God and cried.” (MacLeod)

The resulting image shocked the world and did much to raise awareness about the plight of the Sudanese. The Photo Journalist, Kevin Carter, won a Pulitzer Prize for it. But did this image help the victim or did it just reinforce an unfair and possibly racist stereotype? According to Claire Short, the British Secretary of State and International Development at that time, such imagery of starvation has a counterproductive outcome since “the pictures hurt and upset [the public] but they feel it keeps coming around and it seems to be hopeless and they flinch and turn away,” affirming the position of Africa as a place of hunger, misery, and hopelessness, in which solutions to the crisis can not be found (Campbell, 70).

How do the media use images to persuade?

Given how widespread it is, mass communication media can persuasively alter people’s attitudes. For example, by attending to the superficial aspect of the disaster rather than the logic or cogency of a recurrent problem, the western media often uses emotional imagery to persuade people to take action regarding a famine in Africa (Gilovich, Keltner & Nisbett, 271). The reason why the media prefers such an approach is mainly because information on famine in Africa lacks personal relevance or consequence to the western audience since it does not necessarily bear upon their goals, concerns, or well being (Gilovich et al, 370). Accordingly, even though famine is a mass event, most vivid images focus on the suffering of individuals.

Picturing individuals rather than masses.

The media usually identifies the feeblest individuals in a society and uses them to represent the entire population (“How is death pictured?”). This is mainly because in general, it is much easier to picture suffering of one person rather than that of millions, given that most people do not pay as much attention to social situations (Gilovich et al, 272). As such, this reasoning suggests that the audience would rather observe the superficial aspects of the message that are tangential to the image rather than scrutinize the message with care and thoughtfulness. In trying to both raise awareness and solicit for donations, the media therefore constructs and presents images that evoke compassion and pity from the audience. Such images depict individuals rather than masses and highlight the plight of starving children and helpless women.

Figure 1: Southern Sudan, 1993
Figure 2: Camp in Sudan, 1998

In figure 1 above, we see an image of a small girl being followed closely by a vulture. In figure 2, we have a similar image.
of a young boy looking up to a well-nourished Sudanese man who just stole his bag of maize. Both these images evoke a heightened sense of hopelessness and desperation due to the presence of a single individual, an identifiable victim out of the millions. Indeed, the repeated and consistent focus on individuals in these pictures lends support to Gilovich’s theory on the identifiable victim effect – people tend to be moved by the image of a single, vivid individual more than they respond to an abstract representation of the masses (Gilovich et al, 277). The presence of a single individual makes us see their situation as a soluble problem, and we are thus obliged to help. This feeling of responsibility could be due to the fact that, when we are presented with a single person’s problem, it seems less complex. As such, we become engaged and pay more attention to the logical relevance of the situation (Gilovich et al, 271). In figure 3 above, we see an image of mothers and their hungry children besieging the feeding center during food distribution in Chad. While this image still presents an obviously desperate condition, I would expect it to be met differently by a media audience mainly due to what I term “the statistical victim’s effect.” This term refers to the case when there are too many victims seeking individual attention and thus, helping each one of them seems beyond a single viewer’s capability. It is for these reasons that the media capitalizes on a single story to captivate their audience.

Presenting images of children and women

According to Gilovich, women generally receive more help than men in desperate situations (Gilovich et al, 538). In fact, during times of hardship, women and children are considered to be passive victims, while the men are the active protagonists. As a result, one could argue that the notion of mother and child weakness and vulnerability is very natural. This explains why the media consistently uses images of mother and child to persuade their audience. Images of suffering children evoke compassion and pity. According to Gilovich, “unlike many mammals, human infants are born with few developed survival skills. They cannot flee predators, find food or feed themselves… evolution has led infants to have traits that promote parent-offspring attachment, including … baby-faced features that evoke love and devotion” (Gilovich et al, 142). Physical attributes such as large eyes, large head, and looks of innocence in babies evoke positive emotion and attachment both from their primary caregivers and from other members of the same or different species. Their baby-faced features compel adults to try protecting them from harm. This explains why the audience tends to sympathize and offer help to the suffering child even in cases where there is no biological connection between the audience and the imaged victim.

What psychological effect do these images have, and why?

The use of emotional images to raise awareness and generate funding elicits diverse responses from audiences, depending on their preexisting beliefs. It does not seem unreasonable for an average westerner to see Africa as a single unit that is mainly besieged by dangerous diseases, wars, and famines, among other things. The westerner therefore views the continent through a prism of misery and this view defines his/her attitudes towards Africa and Africans. Therefore, the images of starvation not only awaken some sort of altruism from the westerner but also create and encourage stereotypes that tend to dehumanize the Africans in general; the images take away the rights of the pictured individual to be seen as something other than another starving African (Campbell, 70). Most westerners’ negative attitudes are engendered by the fact that these solemn images are their only connection to Africa. The images therefore define how they see the continent and the different peoples who inhabit it. Indeed, it may well be because of these images that media audiences lose any sense of Africans as being real people who experience life just as they themselves do. To them, Africans are vulnerable and hopeless in the absence of western aid. In addition, since these images focus mainly on women and children as we saw earlier, they serve as icons of a feminized and infantilized place, “a place that is passive, pathetic, and demanding of help from those with the capacity to intervene” (Campbell 70). Another contentious aspect of these images is the kind of attitudes they engender in both children and people who have not been to Africa: people who have not seen how the other significant population of Africans live. Such people grow up embracing the iconography of suffering and misery presented by the media. Once these people buy into this false notion of “almost all Africans are poor and starving,” it is very hard to break such an attitude later on since people are often very stubbornly resistant to changing their opinions, especially when the new opinion does not bolster their pre-existing attitudes (Gilovich et al 266). While these images of “Starving Africa” transform westerners’ attitudes towards Africa and Africans, they also have negative consequences on Africans’ views and attitudes towards themselves. To the victimized African, the images represent a particular kind of helplessness and reinforce colonial relations of power (Campbell, 73). Attitudes which implicitly suggest that foreign aid is indispensable present suffering as a natural and almost acceptable phenomenon. It seems plausible that subscribing to this notion of the indispensability of western aid would impact negatively on the political and social progress of African countries, and of the continent in general. The unfortunate element about such
new attitudes, both in the foreigners and natives of Africa, is their impact on the future growth and economic development of Africa. For Africa to develop, direct foreign investments is an absolute necessity. However, when stereotypes in the mainstream continue to represent Africa as a dangerous destination for investment, no foreign investor will be interested in putting their money in Africa: “where will they [investors] send their money? To a refugee camp? To a game park? What else is there?” (Pineau). The display of iconic images of Africa fails to offer even a glimpse of modern African life and hence ends up representing Africa as devoid of an economic life. In so doing, it hampers economic development and progress.

What should the images look like to achieve a more optimal psychological effect?

So are vivid images of human suffering still the best ways of raising money? No, I do not think so. The media should in fact engage in more positive advertising: presenting images that portray a broader view of current conditions rather than focusing on individuals, and also provide a selection of images that offer a glimpse of modern African life that is all too rarely covered. This is not to say that African wars, famines, and other natural or man made disasters should not be covered. Indeed, these too should be covered since they desperately need international attention. But not covering the functional part of Africa is, and may have been, extremely detrimental to Africa’s growth (Pineau). As we saw earlier on, images that depict the masses tend to have a more subtle effect on audiences as they lack an identifiable victim and as such might evoke less pity and compassion. However, these images will contextualize the situation and probably encourage people to acknowledge that a more effective way these cycles of famine and disaster could be broken is through infrastructure change rather than contributions to individuals. Such a message might initially alienate individuals elsewhere but in the long run, it may alter the way people think about their role in empowering Africa. Lastly, images of African cities, cultures and diversity, and economic progress have large potential benefits. The relentless association of Africa with famine and disaster, as we saw earlier on, discourages investors from investing in Africa. According to the UN trade agency, UNCTAD, Africa offers the highest return on direct foreign investment in the world, far exceeding all other regions (Pineau). This shows that there is a lot of potential in Africa. What negative images show us is that more than half of Africans live on less than a dollar a day. What they do not tell us is that the other half does not, and that they are hungry for products and services.

REFLECTIONS FROM AFRICA: GHANA

Ato Ulzen-Appiah

Ghana is seen as a beacon of sound governance, a fledging democracy and a peaceful nation. I think the best thing Ghana has is its people which has maintained peace inspite of various experiences, differences and conflicts. The country is however suffering from bouts of unpatriotism, mediocrity and a lack of support for homegrown efforts and solutions.

The government is employing various economic policies which seem to be taking care of the bigger macroeconomic factors like the strength of the currency, inflation, investment, etc. I think more must be done to create the infrastructure that would allow various industries like communication, transport, production, entertainment, health, education and tourism to boom. The government has been concentrating on winning elections and governing the country to keep it afloat but I feel it must take a few more risks and push a national vision and orientation to its citizens. The majority opinion seems to be dominating decision-making without much room for debate and choosing options that would lead to the collective betterment of the people. The country has become democracy and many issues are politicized. Ghanaians as a people have to resist supporting what is good for their souls and champion what is good for the whole of society.

So far as we are able to maintain peace, rally the nation under one umbrella and not along political or tribal lines while showing a genuine interest in promoting Ghanaian excellence and wealth creation, Ghana should be on the way to economic prosperity and socio-economic development where its people would feel good about the nation and willing to serve it.

If nothing changes, I see Ghana still being a model that Western institutions can call a success in 10 years. However, Ghanaians should not be judging their success based on what outsiders think. In the same way, Ghanaians should not celebrate mediocrity. With the necessary changes, policies, leaders and attitudes, I see Ghana maintaining its position as the gateway to the sub-region and Africa at large, with a unified populace who are comfortable with the wellbeing of its people and a country they can be proud of on days other than independence and national holidays.
Entertainment Briefs
By Christine Mhongo

The Prince of Nigerian art

Unesco named Twins Seven Seven the Artist for peace in 2006, handing the Nigerian artist another stamp of international approval. Prince twins seven seven has had exhibitions around the world, in the United States, Europe, Australia and Japan. Some of his works tackle politics and social issues in Nigeria, others simply feature everyday life scenes. The artist himself is not bound by any one style as he uses a number of methodologies in his paintings. The paintings are said to tie to traditional Yoruba myths, religion and the artist’s personal experiences.

Prince Twins seven seven refuses to be categorized and knows no bounds in his paintings. However, his paintings seem to be an extension of his dynamic persona. Twins seven seven is what some would call multi-talented, lending his talents to dancing, a band, politics and entrepreneurship.

Albums

Miriam Makeba, 1960
The World Of Miriam Makeba, 1962
Makeba, 1963
An Evening With Belafonte/Makeba (with Harry Belafonte), 1965
The Click Song, 1965
The Promise, 1974
Country Girl, 1975
Pata Pata, 1977
Sangoma, 1988
Welela, 1989
Sing Me A Song, 1993
Live From Paris & Conakry, 1998
Homeland, 2000
Keep Me In Mind, 2002
Reflections, 2004

Miriam Makeba takes her final bow

After captivating the world with hits as the timeless “pata pata” and the Tanzanian “Malaika”, a legend has taken her final bow. At 74 and after dedicating five decades of her life to music, Miriam Makeba said goodbye to her fans at the 2006 Cape Town International Jazz festival. Makeba is said to be the first African vocalist to gain international recognition. A career that took her from South Africa, around Africa, to America and Europe certainly evidences her international success. Miriam Makeba was not only an artist, but also found herself an activist against the injustices in apartheid South Africa. Her activism resulted in a life of exile from the home she loved so dearly. Mama Africa is an inspiration to African music and a timeless voice that will ring through the ages.
Film in Africa

Nollywood and African movies and how much the country could make South Africa and Nigeria are arguably the biggest film producers on the continent. Nigeria has been dubbed Nollywood and claims to be the third largest film industry in the world after Hollywood and Bollywood. Nollywood has attained considerable popularity internationally. South Africa has a critically acclaimed film industry that recently brought home an Academy Award for Best foreign language film of the year.

South Africa is reported to produce at least a dozen high quality features a year, most of which cannot make it to neighboring countries such as Botswana. Video clubs in neighboring countries are dominated by new releases from the United States and other countries indicating neglect of high quality African movies by other African countries. Only internationally acclaimed movies such as Tsotsi gain attention from the rest of Africa, indicating a serious problem in the film market in Africa.

Nollywood however does not face the same problem. Nigerian films are widely distributed in Africa and all over the world. Over 2000 Nigerian movies are being licensed every year Nigeria has been dubbed Nollywood and claims to be the third largest film industry in the world after Hollywood and Bollywood. Nollywood has attained considerable popularity internationally. South Africa has a critically acclaimed film industry that recently brought home an Academy Award for Best foreign language film of the year.

It appears the two powerhouses; South Africa and Nigeria have much to learn from each other and much to teach the rest of the continent about the film industry. Nigeria can learn form the critically acclaimed industry in South Africa on the production of better quality and how far quality production can take the industry. South Africa can learn much on distribution and marketing from Nollywood and therefore not have to wait for international acclamation to market its movies to the rest of the continent and the world.

Freshly ground

As the world waves good bye to Mama Africa, Miriam Makeba, South Africa brings forth another force to reckon with. Freshly ground is South Africa’s latest assertion that South Africa is African Music’s powerhouse. To make this fact undisputable, Freshly ground took home an Mtv music award this year for “Best African Act”.

Freshly ground balances catchy melodies with very mature and thoughtful music, whilst managing to keep that distinct sound that is South African music. The group is the epitome of what the rainbow nation stands for, tolerance and diversity. The group itself is a fascinating mix and couldn’t be categorized in any particular way. Freshly ground cannot even be categorized as strictly South African as one of its members is not a native of South Africa. The group mixes so many of the different sounds that could come out of South Africa and seems to have a little bit of everything. Freshly ground has forged an identity that many South Africans can identify with and many outside the borders of South Africa can identify with.

Politics, humanity, and a sense of identity are some of the themes of freshly ground’s music. Their most popular hit, “Doo be Doo” incorporates a variety of sounds, talks of love, is infectiously catchy and keeps that identity that is uniquely South African. Freshly ground promises to be another legend from South Africa.

A 25-year-old jewel

Acaye Elizabeth Pamela is a 25-year-old artist from Uganda. Acaye’s Dawn of the Pearl is a poetry collection from this vibrant young woman. She writes of her experiences and the experiences of other people around her. The collection was translated into a musical that received overwhelming responses from women who said that Acaye had brought their everyday experiences to life in her work. People that attended the musical in October of this year are said to deem her work the best theatrical production from Uganda in a very long time.

This young woman not only turns ordinary life into art, but also educates young girls on sexual health, self-esteem and communication. She has also worked as an intermediary for orphans and their donors in the United States and the United Kingdom. Acaye Elizabeth Pamela not only writes about social issues, she takes part in efforts to deal with social issues. She is said to be a woman whose life and work are well beyond her numerical age.
Entertainment Briefs

Painting Ethiopia

In a world that is obsessed with youth, Adamu Tesfaw shows the world it is never too late for a person to dedicate their life to their passion. After 34 years of service, Adamu Tesfaw left the priesthood of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church to concentrate on the love he spent a lot of his time dreaming about. Painting became Adamu Tesfaw's primary focus in life.

Adamu Tesfaw, whose father was a priest, was born into a religious family. He grew up and was schooled within the church. He eventually became a priest. True passion always wins out in the end. His real love took over 34 years after joining the priesthood and painting Ethiopia is the culmination of that love and passion in painting.

His work reflects his background, that of an Ethiopian Christian and tells the story of Christianity from an Ethiopian point of view. It also tackles secular life in Ethiopia. Whilst there are a number of contemporary painters in Ethiopia, Adamu is considered an outstanding talent in Ethiopia and his work very unique, demonstrated especially his color palette.

Painting Ethiopia is Adamu Tesfaw's first exhibition in the United States. Viewers in its Los Angeles exhibition were mesmerized and Painting Ethiopia is now showing in San Francisco until March of next year.

Left: Saint Yared w/ the HolyFamily
Adamu Tesfaw, 1993

Black gold

So many of us drink coffee whilst we are half asleep. That may be why we do not really smell our coffee and some of the foulness that may be part of its awakening scent. Nick Francis and Marc Francis take it upon themselves to bring new meaning to that old adage “wake up and smell the coffee” in the documentary “Black gold”. Coffee has never smelt quite as foul, tasted quite this bitter or been quite as wakening.

Black gold brings to light some of the injustices that are part of an industry that gives so many people around the world their boost of caffeine every morning. Black gold shows struggles faced by coffee farmers and exporting countries such as Ethiopia in earning fair revenues from coffee they sell. The government of Ethiopia is currently trying to gain more control of its coffee trade. This has resulted in some conflict with coffee giant Starbucks. Ministry of foreign affairs in Ethiopia estimates a potential $88 million for the country if trademark specialty coffee names are not blocked by Starbucks.

Black gold highlights some injustices that haunt trade between the developing world and developed countries. It is a glimpse onto international trade floors and as such a must see for anyone who really cares about development in the developing world. Black gold uncovers some of what keeps the developing world exactly where it is, “developing”.

Left: Saint Yared w/ the HolyFamily
Adamu Tesfaw, 1993
Wole Soyinka, an artist, an intellectual and an activist

Wole Soyinka is the first African to receive the Nobel Prize in literature. He is an artist and a political activist. You must set forth at Dawn is Soyinka’s latest offering. This memoir is a follow up to “Ake”, an acclaimed childhood memoir. Chris Abani with the San Francisco Chronicle states that this is not only an important book, but a book that must exist. The memoir is a reflection of Wole Soyinka’s extraordinary adult life. His journey takes the reader from intervention in the Biafra war, defiant broadcasting of election rigging, mediation in South Africa’s struggle against violence towards the end of apartheid and even to the vaults of the British museum. Such extraordinary dedication to justice is a challenge to all leaders and such literary passion, a challenge to all artists.

Soyinka remains an important commentary on African politics, human rights and justice. He continues to do so, even outside the borders of Nigeria. The Nobel laurette recently attacked Zimbabwean president, Robert Mugabe and Sudan’s Omar Bashir for committing atrocities against their own people. He also called upon artists in these countries to use their imaginations to expose the evils in their societies. Wole Soyinka’s dedication to justice is not restricted to any particular country or region, making “You must set forth at dawn” the memoir of a man whose dedication to justice is unwavering and whose reluctance to point out injustice is non-existent.

Entertainment Briefs

Artists for change

Artists can be a voice of the people and sometimes a voice to the people. They speak to people’s hopes, sorrows and aspirations. Artists around Africa are taking it upon themselves to be the means of social, political and economic change.

Ugandan artists from different categories of music have come together in an effort to spread the word about prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. “All stars struggle against Aids” is the project and “a little bit of love” is the song marking the arrival of this particular project on the fight against aids campaign. The song speaks of the need for love, need for hope and the need for caution. Twelve tracks on the album will be the artists’ contribution to the fight against the epidemic.

Zimbabwean musicians have taken it upon themselves to fight a battle against a different destructive force as they record a protest album. Ngazvitaurwe-Lingathuli (Speak out) is a social commentary on the social, economic and political chaos that has erupted in Zimbabwe. This is a compilation brought forth by some of Zimbabwe’s leading musicians. A ban is expected on the album on national airwaves in Zimbabwe but the album is likely to succeed in sending a message to many Zimbabweans regardless. The album asks Zimbabweans to speak up and keep hope alive.
Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment in South Africa: The Need for a More Aggressive Progressive Policy

By Christina Ward

BBBEE captured my attention well before my first visit to South Africa. In my junior year I was given the opportunity to visit twice: first with a pilot OSP program focusing on community development and primary health care, and again to conduct field research for my thesis on BBBEE. As a Public Policy major I can not recall encountering a policy so comprehensive and ambitious in its effort to systematically create social change. I study issues of social justice and organizational strategies for catalyzing change, and this has been quite a fascinating case to study.

Affirmative action in South Africa is being comprehensively defined for the first time since the end of apartheid through the Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act (BBBEE). In this critical period the policy remains highly vulnerable to the dangers of inadequate benchmarks, unintended consequences, and overall weak implementation. The “broad based” emphasis expands the 1980s concept of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) to underscore the need to not only create economic opportunities for educated blacks, but for all who were disadvantaged under the previous regime. However, the central criticism of BBBEE implementation thus far has been that the primary beneficiaries have been a “narrow” set of educated and politically connected blacks.

Many accuse the government of being complicit in maintaining systematized inequity within the country. The transition to democracy, in fact, was negotiated on the premise that Africaners would continue controlling the wealth of the country. Nelson Mandela, the first president, spoke of building upon the past to create a better future, dispelling the threat of nationalization of large industries or re-distributing resources. Ever since, wealth disparities have only risen. Now, as the government makes its first attempt to shift responsibility onto the business sector to create inroads into the first economy for blacks, its strategy is being characterized by many trade unionists (or labor unionists, as they are known in the US) as a “softly, softly” approach.

The following discussion is based on fieldwork I conducted in the summer of 2006 interviewing trade unionists, government officials, and business representatives regarding the involvement of the Congress of South African Trade Unions in the development of BBBEE policy. Along with a background to the structure of the Codes and analysis of several of labor’s contentions with the proposal of government, I pose the issue of how aggressively the South African government aught to pursue transformation.

The Argument

Government drafters of BBBEE claim to have carefully crafted an optimal set of guidelines for implementation, called the Codes of Good Practice (the Codes), which they are confident will elicit the intended changes in the behavior of businesses. By using an incentive system of government contracts rather than strict enforcement, the currently proposed Codes will facilitate change without disrupting the economy. Representatives of labor, however, argue that the vagueness of the proposed Codes and weakness of the incentive system allow the most difficult and most important elements of the Codes to be neglected. Indeed, preliminary moves by large businesses to implement BBBEE indicate that the skills development, employment equity, and procurement Codes are the least likely to be effectively and progressively implemented. In fact, their been properly enforced by government or heavily pursued by inclusion of the former two Codes are expansions on legislation from 1998 that have not business since their passage. Leaving these Codes minimal in expectations and weak in incentives would invite more of the same.

Background

The Codes set up standardized steps towards transformation. By identifying what characteristics of business should be changed and to what degree they should change, the Codes aim to elicit specific adjustments in businesses practices that serve the long-term development agenda. Current target areas proposed within the scorecard, which quantifies progress in selected areas, include preferential procurement, enterprise development, equity ownership, management and control, employment equity, and skills development (Balshaw and Goldberg 2005). A “residual element,” which is defined differently in each sector of the economy, is also included in the Codes. An ideal per-
percentage of employee representation or program investment is assigned for each target, and points are awarded relative to that target. The resulting quantitative matrix, the scorecard, allows businesses to measure their total progress towards becoming a black empowered business (Balshaw and Goldberg 2005).

These Codes have not yet been finalized, and the Act allows ten years before high scores become strict criteria for receiving government contracts and licensing. Still, many businesses have begun to implement the draft Codes so as to make themselves more competitive for government contracts, and the choices being made now may be highly indicative of patterns of behavior that will become entrenched within the business community.

Government, labor unions, and business agree that the BBBEE Act should serve as a central pillar to the broader growth strategy. Whether the proposed Codes will sufficiently advance the broader development agenda is a shared concern among policy makers and labor advocates. Labor believes that the Codes as they are currently defined will merely change the racial distribution of the system without changing the system of class inequality. This is because the incentive system within the Codes is biased towards the least transformative elements of the scorecard (Hassen 2006). The more easily satisfied elements, namely the management and ownership requirements, can be easily defined and evaluated in terms of the percentage of management positions or shares held by blacks. Yet these are the least progressive elements, as only blacks who already have money and education are in a position to benefit. Those without access to finance, i.e. the unskilled and unemployed, are further marginalized as management and ownership become the central thrust of BBBEE policy. Elements like skills development will have a much broader impact on a larger and more disadvantaged demographic but also require more investment to plan and evaluate. Yet they are weighted as heavily as management and ownership. Assigning a heavier emphasis on skills development as well as job creation would provide incentives for business to truly transform. This is because rather than replacing whites with blacks, they would actually be building the capacity of the workforce, enabling a greater percentage of South Africans to be productive contributors to the economy.

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), drafter of the Codes, in contrast, argues that the Codes are at an optimum in terms of ambitiousness and comprehensiveness. While skills development and employment creation are very important, changes in the racial composition of management and owners of businesses are also requisites of transformation. Even now, several years after the passage of the BBBEE Act, only one in thirty executive positions of Johannesburg Stock Exchange companies are held by blacks (Mail and Guardian 2006). Thus, weighting one element more than the other in the scorecard would dilute the emphasis on equally necessary items on the scorecard (October 2006).

Labor argues further that in addition to heavier weighting, certain key dimensions of the scorecard require further definition to prevent any misuse of the BBBEE Act. One frequent example of “perverse incentives” built into the BBBEE Act is that businesses can gain points for procuring from disadvantaged demographic but also require more investment to plan and evaluate. Yet they are weighted as heavily as management and ownership. Assigning a heavier emphasis on skills development as well as job creation would provide incentives for business to truly transform. This is because rather than replacing whites with blacks, they would actually be building the capacity of the workforce, enabling a greater percentage of South Africans to be productive contributors to the economy.

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Labor argues further that in addition to heavier weighting, certain key dimensions of the scorecard require further definition to prevent any misuse of the BBBEE Act. One frequent example of “perverse incentives” built into the BBBEE Act is that businesses can gain points for procuring from service providing agencies rather than hiring full time workers. The idea originated as a part of the government’s initiative to encourage the development of small and medium micro enterprises. However, in practice it has led to outsourcing, creating jobs with lower employment security and lesser health benefits for employees of companies fielding outsourced contracts (Makgetla 2003). The Codes should promote job creation and come up with measures to prevent procurement schemes that harm employees.

The DTI argues that such issues are highly specific to each sector and should be addressed in the Sector Charters rather than in the generic scorecard. Sector Charters devolve responsibility to the ministry governing a given economic sector to add definition to the Codes. Otherwise, dealing with the Codes on too detailed a level would burden the DTI personnel and would be highly inefficient. Adding more details to the generic scorecard would also make the policy too unwieldy and costly for businesses to understand and implement effectively (October 2006). Overall, the government is operating on the premise that no major improvements can be made to the proposal they have devised, a counterproductive position to take at this formative stage in the policy’s development.

Most radical of all, labor thinks that implementation of the BBBEE Act should be required rather than optional. The transformation process has made little progress over the past 12 years and will continue to move sluggishly unless more assertive measures are taken (Paulus 2006). The DTI holds that more stringent enforcement would meet great resistance from business, which would lead to a bumpier transition and harm the economy. Their chosen gradualist approach, they argue is the only economically feasible and fair approach to pursue. As Deputy Director-General at the DTI Lionel October argues, one cannot force an entire system to change. Rather, one must change the parameters of the system to make it in the best interest of those maintaining the system to change their behavior to a pattern that benefits the broader society (2006).

Addressing the problematic dimensions of business practices as squarely as pos-
sible now is imperative, as this legislation will in part determine the nation’s developmental priorities. As the Codes aim to create whole new patterns of behavior, ensuring that these new patterns do not have any unintended repercussions should be a central priority. This debate also has implications for how effective incentive systems modeled off capitalism can be in eliciting change, which is the more fundamental ideological debate between government and labor.

Analysis

The following analysis will discuss why it may be the case that the Codes and their enforcement mechanism are too weak. More specifically, this analysis will address the “soft” approach to enforcement, the argument for Sector Charters, and the issue of resource limitations within the DTI and businesses. This analysis is limited in that it compares two arguments, that of the DTI and that of labor, that lack quantitative analyses to reinforce the respective positions. While the DTI does rely on analysts from the Treasury to support their points, analyses have not been made widely accessible. Each side relies on citations of broad trends in the economy and on general observations seen of the implementation of the BBBEE Act so far. Thus, the following analysis is largely normative by necessity.

This analysis assumes that an increased emphasis on fairness and inclusion does not require a de-emphasis on efficiency -- the two priorities need not be in competition. Indeed, the BBBEE Act acknowledges that greater efficiency can only be achieved once more blacks are integrated into the mainstream economy. Although the DTI does argue that weighing down the implementation guidelines with too many parameters will neutralize the net impact of each parameter, this article argues that prioritizing both fairness and efficiency more effectively advances the stated goals of the Act.

The “Softly, softly” Approach

The DTI’s chief reasoning for using only incentives for enforcement derives from market incentives theory: the idea that winning support rather than forcing reform will produce more significant and lasting change. The more the landscape for operating a business is shaped such that businesses change on their own prerogative, the easier and smoother transformation will be (October 2006). Yet the concern that businesses will be resistant to the concept of BBBEE seems slightly exaggerated, as “everyone agrees that it should be done, it has to be done, (and) it should be done efficiently,” including businesses (Chabane 2006). The real issue is that businesses are reluctant to take individual responsibility and that government is afraid of deterring investment, both domestic and foreign, by making regulations too stringent. COSATU Provincial Secretary of the Western Cape argued that although “[government is] obliged to implement those policies [that most benefit their constituents], they don’t do that. The reason they say the don’t do that is ‘we don’t want to scare off investors,’” (Ehrenreich 2006). Making the BBBEE Act a requirement would force businesses to take ownership of and responsibility for their community and society, a reasonable expectation that would honor the interest of the voters who have supported the governing party.

The idea of stringent control over businesses’ behavior to the degree that the Codes would require if made into enforceable law might also resemble an undemocratic encroachment on the freedom of entrepreneurs. At the same time, “incentives” are effectively requirements in certain industries. In the mining industry, for example, a company must be fully BEE compliant to even get a government license to open a mine (Rocha 2006). Consequently, industries that have less interaction with the government, such as retail, are playing a lesser role in contributing to societal transformation (October 2006). More stringent requirements in place of incentives would ensure progress across all industries.

Additionally, Frans Baleni, General Secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, notes how giving too much leeway to businesses leads to ‘narrow’ implementation of BBBEE, where businesses will focus on engaging with already successful blacks. “The argument which government and the President has made [is], ‘We can’t stop any black person who gets a deal with Company A . . .’ We are saying there are limitations because these companies [should not] get recognition on the basis of broad BEE. [However, currently] as long as it is a BEE company, they get recognition from government departments,” (Baleni 2006). DTI Deputy General Lionel October noted the issue of some industries claiming the lack of qualified black applicants to fill certain roles. “That is why it is a five to seven year [implementation] process. [With] management you have to trust that person, invest in them,” (October 2006). However, defaulting to the same select handful of applicants demonstrates a lack of commitment to finding the other qualified applicants that likely exist and who will surely exist ten years from now. When the Codes become a firm standard for tendering for government contracts, tens of thousands of blacks will have tertiary degrees. Thus, variations in demand for skilled labor across industries will become an insignificant factor.

“In the mining industry, for example, a company must be fully BEE compliant to even get a government license to open a mine”

“Overloading” The Scorecard

All BBBEE stakeholders have voiced the practical concern of the Codes getting so detailed that they become too overwhelming for businesses to understand and implement properly. According to the DTI, “. . . big business had more concerns about the technicalities of the doc-
... and the fact that we had too many variables to measure. So it was a cost on companies to be able to do certain things,” (Hafizulla 2006). Indeed, the complexity of the Codes, has led to the creation of a whole new industry, BEE verification agencies, which are costly to employ. The DTI claims that some of the problems noted by labor should be addressed through government regulations other than the Codes so as not to “overload” the scorecard. “The problem . . . is that you have very strong levers under BEE, so people want to attach more to it. . . Our argument is to use other levers we hav. So local [procurement], for example – why don’t we ask [local government] to pass a law to use more local content . . .

So our argument isn’t that it musn’t be done, but just to use a different and, in fact, more effective instrument;” (October 2006). Indeed, some highly progressive provinces have created mechanisms to address BBBEE issues like local procurement (Baleni 2006).

However, extending the very powerful levers of the Codes would better serve the full mission of the BBBEE Act. While overloading the scorecard is a valid concern, several strategically added details would not make the policy unbearably onerous. In fact, these details should add clarity and provide greater direction for businesses around some of the vague but important goals of the Act. Without identifying what the “other more effective levers” it claims to exist are, responsibility for addressing labor issues experienced at a national level should still default to the Codes. Numerous stakeholders have cited that the details determine the ultimate success of any piece of legislation (Coleman 2006, Labuschange 2006, Makgetla 2006). The DTI must be more receptive to fine-tuning those detail-specific issues once they are exposed.

Lastly, the DTI argues that the current scorecard represents a balanced set of priorities, as efforts must be made on all the key fronts simultaneously. Transformation in the “less important” areas, like management and ownership, are equally as requisite as, for example, skills development. After all, “BEE does not need to happen on the shop floor because everyone is already black,” (October 2006). Yet despite the broad dimensions of the proposed Codes, businesses continue to make management and ownership the top priorities. Deputy Coordinator of the COSATU Parliamentary Office pointed out that, “[While] the act does not merely talk about ownership . . . it does not follow that the implementation will take care of every aspect,” and that thus far implementation has focused on “transfer or sharing of ownership of private entities [given] what the scorecard . . . provides for,” (Kgara 2006). This conclusion was shared by all of the representatives of labor who were interviewed. Thus, the DTI’s claim that “when we solve our black problem (in management and ownership), we solve our class problem as well,” (October 2006) is overly simplistic.

If the implementation guidelines are too weakly defined and supported to achieve the stated goals of the policy, then the policy is essentially useless. Giving business too much space to implement BBBEE according to its own agenda would lead to change that is relatively minimal and cosmetic, a point strongly argued by the Deputy General implementing the Codes in the mining industry (Rocha 2006). If loopholes in the Codes are allowing people’s rights to be compromised, as exemplified in perverse procurement strategies that have emerged which minimize employee benefits, then the Codes must be refined to close those loopholes. Similarly, if skills development is not occurring because the guidelines are insufficient to spur action, as is evidenced in the slow progress along this particular dimension, then greater value must be placed on this element. As these are the two areas that have been identified as seriously lacking, a response by the DTI in both areas is imperative.

The Critical Question

Some of the problems that labor exposes around the benefits of stronger enforcement and greater weighting and definition around the most transforming elements of the Codes are irrefutable. Yet continue to be debated between the government, business, and labor. The likely reason that these debates have continued is that by beginning with the enforcement strategy of an incentives system, the DTI is completely reliant on buy-in from business to make any serious changes. Where
business sharply disagrees, the government is likely to bend in their direction. This raises the critical question: does a very business-friendly approach make sense for South Africa to the extent that it acts against transformation?

In comparison to the U.S. policy process, the policy process in South Africa is impressive in the extent to which labor and community advocates are included in fine-tuning legislation. The U.S., by comparison, has done little to empower the underprivileged. While we are one of the richest countries in the world, we do not provide things as basic as universal health care. Though completely within our financial capacity, lack of aggressive commitment from both the people and the government has let the prospect slip through our fingers. The government has greater commitments to pharmaceutical companies, and the poor and the marginal bare the brunt of that political decision.

South Africa is in a similar but more challenging predicament. With unofficial unemployment rates as high as 40%, mostly unskilled blacks, the architects of BBBEE are right to assert that transformation will take commitment on the part of both the government and businesses. However, as change will affect dividends, business can not come up with an objective implementation strategy. They will always work to cut costs over maximizing societal benefit. Businesses biggest quibbles over targets within the Codes were in relation to the numbers associated with targets, (Chabane 2006), not the goals. Government has the general support of business and must therefore not be afraid to be more forceful in BBBEE policy to achieve results. For the benefit of the nation the government should make BBBEE a strict requirement and should add detail and weighting around the more ‘broad based’ elements of the Codes, procurement and skills development.

Some might question why it is important to decrease socio-economic inequity. While I think this is important in all countries, I think that this cause is woven into the Constitution of South Africa, which binds the country’s commitment to undoing systematized discrimination. While economic growth may make a country an international power, it is of little real significance to the vast majority of citizens who are not Bill Gates or Warren Buffet. We can see the impact that disparity in places such as India is having on susceptibility to health epidemics like the AIDS as well as black market activities such as human trafficking. A slightly more modest growth rate with a more equitable distribution would help create a more healthy society.

“Change is happening, slowly.” I heard this from interviewees in every stakeholder category. It is too easy to make excuses for not serving the poor and marginal and for letting the status quo persist. Any well-to-do person can dismissively say, “wait a little longer” comfortably say, from their warm home with complete amenities. But after twelve years of democracy, perhaps a little more than just incentives for government contracts is needed to get businesses to serve their fellow South Africans. Even small changes like using tax as an enforcement mechanism and heavy weighting on broad based elements of the Codes like skills development and corporate social responsibility would demonstrate that the government really means business with BBBEE. South African government has always been very progressive in its policy agenda, but it is about time to get more aggressive with implementation.

There is definitely a lot of hope for Kenya and I see good things for the country in the next ten years but this is contingent on two major issues. Firstly peace and stability must come to the Horn of Africa. If Kenya’s neighbor Somalia was to finally find some peace and a central government this will mean great things for the whole East African region. Secondly a new crop of honest, hardworking young Kenyans need to be elected in the 2007 general elections to the lead the country forward. The current party in power consists of a large proportion of septuagenarians and their leadership in the last few years has been old fashioned and ineffective. They have failed on many of the promises that got them into to power not least in writing a new constitution that the people can accept. There is a overarching feeling within the country that enough is enough and people are finally starting to speak out and stand up against corruption at all levels. There is new generation of intelligent Kenyans ready to take on the challenge to bring Kenya into a new age of prosperity. I have a great deal of optimism for the future and hope that it is not purely that, but change happens.
China’s Involvement in Africa

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Fig 1: http://www.kevincarterfilm.com/synopsis.html

Fig 2: http://www.imagining-famine.org/sudan/tom_stoddard/gallery1_sudan.htm

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BBBE in South Africa: The Need for a More Aggressive Progressive Policy

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