The word *sauti*—Swahili for voice—captures the spirit of the Stanford Journal of African Studies. SAUTI is committed to ensuring that student and faculty voices are heard both within and without the Stanford community, as long as what they proclaim is of relevance to Africa. Through the reproduction of research compilations and personal narratives interspersed with special interest pieces, 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 and signposts of success. 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.
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Cover Photo: Tunisians at the January 14th protest. Hand signs communicate protesters’ fearlessness about the prospect of arrest. Photo by Issam Bouguerra. Edited by Jin Yu.

Back Cover: Michael Tubbs is a native of Stockton, California and is pursuing a BA in Comparative Studies in Race and Ethnicity and a MA in Policy, Organization, and Leadership studies from the School of Education. He wrote “History (Aka Know Better, Do Better in the Now)” after visiting the apartheid museum in Johannesburg and reflecting on the continuing salience of apartheid in present day South Africa.

Special Thanks: SAUTI would like to thank the Associated Students of Stanford University’s Publications Board for funding SAUTI for the 2010/2011 Academic year and to Prodigy Press for printing the Journal.
The past year saw incredible positive change in Africa: six of the ten fastest growing economies in the world were African; South Africa hosted a wildly successful football World Cup on African soil for the first time in the continent’s history; Kenya peacefully passed a new constitution limiting the powers of the executive; Niger conducted nonviolent elections that transitioned the country out of temporary military rule; Tunisia sparked a series of revolutions across the Arab world; and South Sudan’s peaceful referendum resulted in the birth of Africa’s newest country.

If you’ve read SAUTI before, you’ll notice that it too experienced a year of incredible change. This year, we have seriously reexamined SAUTI’s purpose, target audience, and appearance and have done major revamping to both content and form. In our discussions about SAUTI, we kept coming back to the question: “What will continue the conversation about Africa?” This question has become the lens through which we have read, edited, and developed each of our submissions.

We believe that each of our pieces this year—from Tohouri’s argument about Sarkozy’s negative influence on the Côte d’Ivoire crisis, to Bushra’s letter of farewell to his South Sudanese brothers, to Adogla’s energetic commentary on the World Cup Tournament in South Africa—will provide a launching point for continued discussion about Africa. We know everyone will not agree with every perspective presented here, but we do hope that points of disagreement, as well as places of agreement, spark reflection and conversation across the Stanford campus and, if we may be so bold, around the world.

In keeping with its name, this year’s SAUTI gives a voice to a myriad of people, issues, and experiences—from the undergraduate reflecting on a first-time summer experience, to the graduate student immersed in her doctoral research, to the student born and raised on the continent. The places from which our writers approach their topics are as diverse as the topics themselves.

We are really pleased with where our discussions have led us. We have greatly increased the number of articles and our writers have worked hard to make their pieces specific, informed, and accessible to anyone, from wherever a reader is entering a conversation about Africa. The final part of this transformation is our new layout, a look which synthesizes our creative new energy with our commitment to professionalism.

It is with most sincere pleasure that we present you with SAUTI 2010-2011. We hope it will lead to many fruitful conversations in the days ahead.

Sincerely,

Sarah Scheenstra

Hiyabel Tewoldemedhin

(Sarah Scheenstra (left) and Hiyabel Tewoldemedhin (right). (Photo credit: Celeste Noche))
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Summer in Accra

BY MARTHA MUÑA

This past summer, I was fortunate to be a part of the first group of interns to travel to Ghana with the nonprofit, KaeMe. KaeMe, which means “remember me” in Twi, works alongside the Ghanaian Department of Social Welfare to create a video-driven internet database of orphan children in Ghana in hopes of finding them homes. I spent ten weeks in the country, primarily in Accra, working in sixteen different children’s homes and profiling hundreds of orphans along with nine other interns. I can honestly say these ten weeks abroad changed my life.

Never in my life have I been in an environment where I encountered heartfelt compassion from people I hardly knew. Countless times, I was offered rides when walking from my hotel. Acquaintances would welcome me into their home without hesitation. Many of the children’s homes insisted on feeding the interns, even though food was not something they had in abundance. Aside from the warm and inviting culture, the work itself was also inspiring and meaningful. At each orphanage we were tasked with interviewing every child in order to catch a bit of each child’s personality on camera. Interviewing was quite the challenge, to say the least. Some children were too shy to talk, while others were too energetic to stay in one place. However, we gradually learned how to relate to the children in ways that made them comfortable enough to share small details about their lives with us. It was incredibly rewarding to connect with children who grew up oceans away from me in an entirely different culture.

What I took away from my brief time in Ghana was the importance of stepping outside my comfort zone and finding a way to engage with another culture on terms other than my own. It was not easy learning the way that life works in another country. A perfect example is the high value we place on punctuality in the United States in contrast to Ghana. I realized from my Ghanaian associates the importance of slowing down and viewing life as more than a series of meetings, appointments, and workdays. I also learned the importance of making others feel welcome and at-home even if they are unfamiliar to me. On the whole, I came back to Stanford a more relaxed, warmer, and happier person, which was a significant change from the uptight, pre-medical student that I had been. Spending time in Ghana brought perspective back to my life, and I am so grateful.

Martha Muña is a junior majoring in Human Biology with a concentration in Race, Ethnicity, and Community Health. Aside from working with KaeMe, she is a member of Chicanos/Latinos Health Education (CHE) and Stanford Talisman. For those interested in learning more about KaeMe, please visit: http://kaeme.beagooddoctor.org/home/home
A Week in Kijini
BY YU-JIN LEE

After reflecting on my time in Ghana, where I volunteered at the Royal Seed Home in Ofakoor two years ago, I returned to Africa last summer as an intern for the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in Zanzibar armed with a desire to provide more sustainable service. However, I knew that this desire would be tempered by my limited experience in Zanzibar and FAWE.

The week I spent during the summer in Kijini, one of Tanzania’s poorest communities, forever altered my perspective on international service work. FAWE Zanzibar chose Kijini to show the government that extremely traditional communities can be transformed and that self-empowerment is an important aspect of development. This transformation was to be achieved by a TUSEME (“let us speak out” in Kiswahili) workshop that empowers students, especially girls. The workshop trains students in valuable life skills, mainly voicing their own thoughts especially through theater, and creates a sustainable TUSEME club led by the students to further identify and provide solutions for community issues.

In the beginning, Kijini’s major stakeholders argued that its prevailing problem is the horrible road branching from the main road to Kijini. Indeed, as we drove to Kijini every day for the main part of TUSEME, I could tell when I was 45 minutes away from Kijini because I would be rudely jerked awake by the roller-coaster-like ride.

The TUSEME empowerment process culminated in student theater performances and post-performance discussions with community members to discuss topics including early marriage, child labor, and truancy from school. The root of all these issues was vocalized when a woman quietly entered the stage and stood silently. With her head down, she began her speech in Kiswahili. When she finished, everyone nodded in grim silence. Not understanding the language, I asked a FAWE member to translate. She told me that the woman had said, “I work hard to want to send my children to school, but that is not enough. Poverty is the main problem.”

Tears glazed over my eyes when I revisited my memory of the woman who dared to speak out for her children and to face the reality of her situation with such bravery. I felt so frustrated and dejected to imagine the state of her poverty. She was working so hard, but still did not have enough food. There I was as a Korean-American, someone who is relatively rich, taking videos of these student performances and discussions. I felt conflicted. I felt the countless Kari-bus ("welcome" in Kiswahili) slipping away. I felt the same guilt that I experienced in Ghana, where I was powerless to improve the standard of living for the children at the Royal Seed Home. And just as I did in Ghana, I reached the compromise that, for now, perhaps my purpose in Africa was more about learning than about sustainable service.

Yu-Jin Lee is a senior majoring in Human Biology with an Area of Concentration in Infectious Diseases in Global Health. She is interested in bridging the disconnect between academia and service, especially through the Public Service Scholars Program while writing an honors thesis on polio eradication. She hopes to pursue a career in medicine and focus on the disproportionate burden of infectious diseases.

Acknowledgements:
Yu-Jin Lee would like to thank Dr. Robert Siegel, Professor Joel Samoff, and Jeff Hawthorne for their frank advice and support throughout her fellowship. She would also like to thank the Haas Center for Public Service for funding her fellowship in Tanzania.
Enthusiasm for Democracy: Two Months in Accra, Ghana

BY OTIS REID

This past summer, with the support of a Stanford in Government fellowship, I spent two months in Accra, Ghana at the Center for Democratic Development (CDD), a Ghanaian think tank and advocacy group. This chance to live in Accra was my first visit to Africa and an incredible learning experience. I had some ideas about what to expect in terms of the work that I would be doing and the logistical challenges, but growing to understand the culture and environment was an ongoing experience.

Working for a think tank is an interesting way to see a country. In particular, my time at CDD exposed me to the complexities of Ghanaian politics—something that I might otherwise have missed. CDD works primarily on quality of democracy issues in Ghana, as well as in Africa more broadly, and I had the opportunity to work on a variety of projects, including reducing election violence through civic education, reforming the security sector through constitutional reform, and examining the progress of democracy in Africa over the past decade. Each of these projects gave me a chance to delve into current research about democratic development and educated me about the structures and intricacies of the Ghanaian government. My learning was not limited just to work, however. Interactions and conversations with my coworkers also helped fill in the gaps in my understanding of Ghanaian politics and history.

Several weeks after I arrived at CDD, I received a stark reminder both that when I was born Ghana was still a military dictatorship and that its governance has improved greatly since then. A radio news-caster was arrested for refusing to disclose the source of a story carried by his radio station, Joy FM. The arrest was made based on a law from 1960 – an era in which Ghana was an authoritarian state – which prohibits the publication of news that is likely to cause “fear and alarm” among the public. The reaction from the CDD was swift and critical: it published a press release condemning the action, which was subsequently republished in other media sources. In and of itself, this response was impressive. Rather than being cowed by the government’s action, the media responded with outrage.

Ghana is a country filled with great challenges, but even greater hopes. It was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving absolute poverty. Its statistical agency recently updated its method of calculating GDP and found that Ghana is almost 75% wealthier than earlier believed. An oil discovery off the Ghanaian coast could add $1 billion to government revenue every year over the next 20 years. Seeing first-hand the strides that Ghana has made in both the political and economic arenas was an amazing opportunity to come to grips with the challenges that remain. Additionally, seeing CDD’s effectiveness and the respect accorded it by Ghanaians and Westerners alike was a reminder of the importance of indigenous organizations in the country’s future. While there is a place for organizations like the World Bank or USAID in Ghana, the capacity building done by CDD and other indigenous organizations will truly transform Ghana. Only the long-term staying power and country-knowledge of indigenous organizations can ensure that Ghana remains a robust democracy over the next decades.

I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: I’m bullish on Ghana. I’ll also say this: sub-Saharan Africa is rising. To be sure, such a generalization papers over the heterogeneity of the continent, which still has the Zimbabweans along with the Ghanas. However, it’s still high time that Americans and the international community awaken to the new realities of the continent. Africa is rising and stars like Ghana are showing the way.

Otis Reid is a junior majoring in Public Policy and Economics, with a concentration in International Development. After his summer in Ghana, he spent the fall in Washington, DC at the Office of African Nations, at the US Department of the Treasury, working on food security. In his free time he loves running, reading, and writing about Stanford for Fiat Lux, the blog for the Stanford Review.
My time in Egypt and my internship with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) last summer can best be characterized as a series of adventures.

Growing up largely outside of the U.S. eased my adjustment to a new country. To my advantage, I didn't stand out as the typical foreigner (apparently I resemble southern Egyptians), but the preferential treatment allotted to tourists over Egyptian nationals was evident throughout my stay. Despite the 110°F heat, Cairo had a bustling nightlife, amplified by the World Cup games—a truly social event. If you don't mind 3AM traffic and suicidal street crossing attempts, driving through Cairo among thousands of lit minarets can be mesmerizing. While I was there, I also had amazing adventures traveling throughout the country. During my visit to the Sinai Peninsula, I was able to swim in the notorious 130m deep sinkhole known as the “Blue Hole” in Dahab, a world-renowned diving location. I rode an excessively air-conditioned overnight train compartment on my way down to Luxor (the former capital of Ancient Egypt), yet soon found myself on the verge of fainting in the 110°F heat in the middle of the desert amongst the ancient temples and pyramids.

My internship at UNICEF was another fascinating experience and adventure. “In America, you have freedom,” was a statement I frequently heard from taxi drivers in the traffic-jammed streets of Cairo. Their words highlighted the absence of freedom in Egypt at that time and emphasized the importance of basic human rights. An interest in these issues and human rights had spurred my desire to intern with UNICEF in Egypt that summer through the Stanford Human Rights Fellowship. UNICEF has been in Egypt since 1952, and over the years has established a multitude of programs in the country. My placement consisted of a rotation between the Social Policy, Child Protection, and Adolescent Development divisions.

In one of the projects I worked on for UNICEF, I helped create a video demo on the Egypt Child Poverty Study, reflecting the eight dimensions of poverty in Egypt, to launch to the private sector (ranging from telephone companies, to banks, to individuals) in the hopes of raising awareness and funds for our programs. However, some of the most rewarding experiences I had were during field visits to Alexandria to tackle the challenges of youth unemployment. The inability of new college graduates (including Stanford alumni) to obtain employment is a colossal problem in Egypt and was also a major catalyst for the recent popular uprising. I observed this frustration about unemployment on a daily basis, both through my work and in discussions with the Egyptians I met.

As the first family member to revisit Cairo since my great-grandfather served as a key member on the American University in Cairo’s Board of Trustees in the late 1800’s, I felt as though I was not only starting where he left off, but also molding a new future path for myself in which Egypt and the Arabic language will feature prominently in my career as a diplomat.

Alicia Robinson in front of the pyramids of Giza.
(Both photos on this page provided by Alicia Robinson)
Ahmad Chalabi, an Iraqi national and an early Bush ally for the Iraq invasion, is remembered in U.S. political circles as “Mr. Wrong” for President Bush, for he is alleged to have misled the Bush administration with false information that led to the Iraq invasion. Similarly, President Sarkozy of France is, perhaps, misleading the Obama administration in its foreign policy decisions in the Côte d’Ivoire political crisis.

Charles De Gaulle, a former French President, once observed that, “countries have no friends, they have interests.” France, in particular, has been protective of its interests on the African continent and used any means necessary to economically control its former colonies, including Côte d’Ivoire. One key benefit of France’s tight grip on its African colonies (FrançAfrique) is that France annually withholds over 50% of its colonies’ export revenues in its treasury as collateral for pegging their CFA Franc currency against the French Franc. This economic benefit, in excess of $16 billion a year, exceeds the public debt ($12 billion) of Côte d’Ivoire—the 86th highest public debt according to the CIA’s World Factbook. $16 billion would guarantee nearly a year of income to 38% of African citizens of all former French colony members of the CFA Franc Zone who live on less than $1 a day. In essence, 5% of the African citizens would benefit from a substantially better standard of living, equivalent to a change from a base of zero to $1 a day. The $16 billion approximately represents four times France’s annual aid to sub-Saharan Africa ($4.2 billion–OECD Statistics); that is, for every dollar of export revenue withheld in its treasury, France loans back 25 cents to its former colonies in the form of development aid.

Financial incentives and other “colonial perks,” including speaking for its colonies at the United Nations, have led French officials to blatantly rig elections by selling computer software with secret codes to election commissions in FrançAfrique. Patrick Benquet, a French national, revealed some of these techniques in his recent documentary, “FrançAfrique.” In the documentary, which vindicated the opposition’s claim of stolen elections in Gabon, Michel de Bonnecorse, the former senior advisor for African affairs to the then President Jacques Chirac, admits that Ali Bongo, the son of the former President of Gabon, was not the winner of the 2009 elections as he only scored 25.88%. However, his opponent’s score (41.73%) was attributed to him and thus he was declared President. This speaks volumes to the type of “democratic transitions” favored by France in FrançAfrique.

To most Americans, including President Obama, neophytes to the unconscionable dealings of FrançAfrique, the political crisis in Côte d’Ivoire is viewed as just another African “dictator” hanging onto power. For FrançAfrique veterans, several clues are a harbinger of typical FrançAfrique elections:

First, there is the hand-delivered letter of President Sarkozy to Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, president of the Independent Election Commission (IEC) of Côte d’Ivoire on December 1, 2010. It is documented that the night before the expiration of IEC’s three-day deadline to announce the election results, Sarkozy sent a letter to Youssouf Bakayoko pressuring him to announce the results.

The French army (Licorne), part of the Côte d’Ivoire UN operations, initiated their first attempt to hand-deliver the letter at the IEC headquarters, but the Ivoirian security forces denied them access. In the letter, Sarkozy assured Bakayoko and the would-be “elected” government of the “irrevocable” support and protection of France and the European Union.

Second, there is the news breaker media France 24, the French television network that first announced the Ivorian presidential election results to the world. It is not a coincidence that France 24 was at Ouattara’s (Gbagbo’s opponent) election headquarters when Bakayoko was allegedly ushered hand-deliver the letter at the EC headquarters, but the result was published only after Ouattara was declared the winner by the EC. The mysterious result was then broadcast to the world.

The “Ben why isn’t it moving anymore?” A cartoon suggesting that the West is out of touch with new African realities. “FrançAfrique is over?” Sarkozy asks Ben Ali, the former President of Tunisia. (Credit: Pakman, bakchich.info)
The loss of income from cacao, coupled with the surprise closure of these banks without the return of deposits to their customers, has deprived many individuals of their only means of acquiring essential goods and services, including food and medical care.

While it is understandable for President Obama to maintain strong ties with the US’ old allies such as France, he must do so in strict respect of the American values of democracy and justice for all. Most importantly, Obama must remain truthful to his pledge made to Africans before Ghana’s parliament in which he promised that “America will not impose any system of government to any nation—the essential truth of democracy is that each nation determines its own destiny.” The recent unwarranted boycott of the Ivorian cacao by the US and European Union, and the unlawful confiscation of Ivorians’ savings by US and French banks to starve the people of Côte d’Ivoire and coerce them to a revolt resemble the unconscionable POW waterboarding interrogation techniques used during the Iraq war. The loss of income from cacao, coupled with the surprise closure of these banks without the return of deposits to their customers, has deprived many individuals of their only means of acquiring essential goods and services, including food and medical care. Helping an old friend like France is expected, but in doing so, America cannot shirk its character and fail the moral test that made it a “Shining City upon a Hill” through generations. Obama should take lessons from the French who, by not siding with the US in the Iraq war, have proven that occasional disagreements are healthy for true friendships.

To craft implementable solutions for the Côte d’Ivoire crisis, Obama should balance his administration’s insights with dissenting opinions of the Ivorian Diaspora, such as my own. Practical, sustainable solutions should be anchored in the laws of Côte d’Ivoire and thus strengthen local institutions for repeatable violence-free transitions. The resolution of the Ivorian crisis is a major test not only to Obama’s resolve to promoting democracy in Africa but also to his capability to deliver on his campaign promise of leading a world where the voices of the weakest will not be drowned out by those of powerful, well-entrenched self-interest groups.

Law, justice and common sense should prevail over politics as usual. The people of Côte d’Ivoire whose deep yearning for democracy resulted in a record voter turnout of 83.5% are waiting for the man in the White House who declared that “Africa does not need strongmen, it needs strong institutions,” to take a principled stand and create a major foreign policy legacy in Africa.

Born and raised in Côte d’Ivoire, Gnokouri Tobouri migrated to the US in 1990 and pursued an MBA at the University of Chicago. His professional experiences encompass investment banking, private equity, strategic planning and academia. He works to raise awareness about critical African issues through public forums and acted as a panelist at the Stanford Africa Business Forum in May 2010.
The systematic failure of African developmental states over the last 50 years is hard to ignore. In an era when the rise of China, Vietnam, Brazil and India, among others, is forcing most people to ponder the relationship between wealth creation and regime type—whether democratic or authoritarian—Africa stands out as the perennial underachiever.

What, you may ask, was the difference between Chile under Pinochet and Zaire under Mobutu? What sets apart Lee Kwan Yew’s Singapore and Theodore Obiang Nguema’s Equatorial Guinea? Or to put it differently, why did Africa’s experiences with your run-of-the-mill dictators like Idi Amin not lead to the economic achievements realized under equally repressive and murderous rule elsewhere in the world?

Sub-Saharan Africa is the only region in the world in which per capita GDP has stagnated or declined in the last half century. In terms of the UN human development indicators, the fact that, out of the 40 worst performing countries, only two are non-African says it all. Excluding South Africa, the whole region, with a population of 787 million, has a nominal gross economic output of US $678.4 billion. This is $255.6 billion less than the GDP of South Korea, a country of 50 million people that is often cited as having had more or less a similar per capita income level as Ghana in the early sixties.

Throughout the region, from Senegal to Somalia, Sudan to South Africa, socio-economic stagnation and misrule predominate. The only success story worth mentioning is Botswana, a middle-income country of less than 2 million people. But even then, life expectancy in Botswana is 55 years and over a quarter of its adult population is infected with HIV. That is Africa’s success story.

Even by so-called “African standards,” Africa is doing very badly. The accepted go-to rubric for those seeking to lift Africa out of the miasma of endemic poverty is the creation of democratic and accountable government. But even if the supposedly democratic Kenya of today transforms itself into Sweden tomorrow,
one key question remains unanswered. Why have autocratic governments elsewhere produced economic miracles like China while the Idi Amins of yesteryear performed so poorly? A half-century or more of brutal autocratic leadership on the continent has produced no Chiles, Vietnams or Singapore. Something about Africa’s dictators sets them apart. The answer to the puzzle appears to be in the particular variety of the African dictatorship.

African dictators tend to be arbitrary rulers plagued with intellectual and ideological vacuity. China’s 12th successive 5-year plan contrasts sharply with Nigeria’s bungling and perennial under-performance. Independence in the 60’s brought little else besides coups, gross economic mismanagement, declining standards of living, political ethnicity and general mediocrity. All this while other newly-independent states in other regions of the world sped towards sustained socioeconomic and cultural development with systematically planned and executed development plans.

Unlike their counterparts elsewhere, African autocrats have failed to achieve progress with rule by law, let alone rule of law. Given its level of development at independence, autocratic rule ought to have helped Africa implement the painful policies—such as sacrificing consumption for investment, long-term planning, rationalized land redistribution, etc. These may not necessarily be possible under its (pseudo or inchoate) democracies today. This is not necessarily good news since autocratic governments are fast going out of fashion and “democracies” today far outnumber their authoritarian counterparts. The last half-century in Africa has been an era of wasted dictatorships.

As a young East African in the United States, I am constantly confronted with the uncomfortable question of, “why Africa?” The question becomes particularly touchy if raised in the presence of my East and South Asian friends who take pride in their respective nations’ gargantuan achievements on the economic front. Instead of discussing high speed rails, turbo-charged economic growth rates and the potential for a reverse in the brain drain phenomenon, the discourse on my home continent is often clouded by stories of famine, illiteracy, economic stagnation, disease, and misrule, among other evils. My attempts to answer the “why Africa” question have generated a number of case-contingent answers, but the one answer that invariably comes up, in all the cases, is bad leadership.

Writing in 1983, Chinua Achebe, the celebrated Nigerian writer, aptly noted that, “The trouble with Nigeria is simply and squarely a failure of leadership.” This conclusion is not exclusive to Nigeria. Africa’s biggest tragedy has been its inability to produce leaders with the sort of composition that drives history. Many of its leaders opted to be passive agents in the great game of history. Instead of a rational and purposeful approach to government, African leaders resorted to running their states like personal enterprises. Sani Abacha, the infamous Nigerian kleptocrat, faced a menu of options that included not stealing billions of dollars of his country’s oil revenue. He was not a hapless victim of neo-colonialism. The buck stops at the desks of African leaders. Casting political correctness aside for a moment, the fact that autocrats elsewhere have completely outperformed their African counterparts on the development front is hard to miss.

Serious attempts at ideological, intellectual and policy coherence reinforced by rule by law have characterized most non-African dictatorships. Chile under Pinochet had the Chicago boys. The East Asian autocrats relied on Confucian administrative discipline. African autocrats, on the other hand, remained mired in a culture of arbitrary rule and anti-intellectualism that stifled both debate and rational policymaking. Not having spent much time in a classroom themselves, these autocrats did not see the need to provide any intellectual or ideological justification for their misrule. To this end they jailed, exiled, or killed most of their countries’ intellectuals, with disastrous consequences.

Relying solely on raw power devoid of any rationale, arbitrary rule (with a dose of crass tribalism) in Africa has meant the appointment of close relatives and cronies to key security, cabinet and parastatal positions without much consideration for either accountability or qualification. The resulting incompetence of the domestic leadership class has resulted in a collective crisis of confidence and the tendency to “outsource” their plans to “policy experts” brought in by donors. The result is that African dictators spend a lot of their time with “development experts” while skipping cabinet meetings—where policies ought to be discussed—for months at a time. All this while continuing the marginalization of African intellectuals who have the most incentive to end Africa’s reputation as the sick man of the world.

As India and China become more assertive on the global stage, the incompetence and general failure of African governments will stand out even more. It’s time for Africans, including those living in autocratic quarters, to eschew moral absolutism and start thinking of ways of making autocracy work in Africa. Democracy-promotion remains a noble goal that we should all aspire to, but wishful thinking aside, the truth is that the likes of Zenawi, Kagame and Museveni are here to stay. The only option in most African states remains to make the best of the situation, as happened in the dictatorships that developed the East Asian tigers. Let’s get on with the growth program.

Ken Opalo is a graduate student of Comparative Politics in the Department of Political Science. His academic interests include the comparative politics of development, political ethnicity, and citizenship leadership accountability mechanisms. Ken maintains a blog at http://kenopalo.wordpress.com/. For more from Ken, see page 54.
Praise, Apologies, and Goodbyes

BY SHADI BUSHRA

I just finished reading What is the What, in which author Dave Eggers chronicles the life of Valentino Achak Deng, a Sudanese refugee now living in America. This book was inspiring in its content and beautiful in its delivery. If I don’t read any other books for pleasure this quarter, this story will be enough. Towards the end I started reading more and more slowly, rationing out the pages like the last drops of a well’s water. Just a few chapters each day, only enough to whet my appetite for more and satisfy my burning curiosity about what would happen to Deng next.

It wasn’t until I picked it up today to read the last twenty pages that I realized the coincidence of the date. Today, January 9th, 2011, happens to be the day that Deng and millions of other South Sudanese have been waiting decades for, if not centuries. It is the day for which rebels spilled blood, the day that kept the hopes of so many alive, the day that will change Sudanese history forever. Today is the beginning of a week-long voting process to decide whether or not the South will secede from its own country, ending centuries of Northern interference from Khartoum, forced Arabization, and Muslim preference in South Sudan. By no means is it a panacea for the South’s issues, and many problems will in fact get worse in an independent South, a point I’ll expound upon later. For now though, I want to focus on the fact that, for better or worse, the South will finally have the opportunity to make decisions for itself. A phrase I often heard while I was in South Sudan this summer was “Better anarchy/tyranny under ourselves than slavery under the North.” This sums up much of the South Sudanese fervor for self-determination.

In addition to appreciating the struggles of those like Deng who left Sudan for America because of the war, the coincidentally concurrent end of Deng’s story and the beginning of an independent South has pushed me to reevaluate certain aspects of my life. Those who know me know that I wanted nothing more of this new year than to be in South Sudan during the referendum. This was a goal I often had to defend, particularly to those living in Sudan. Why would I pay thousands of dollars to leave the safety of California, Minnesota, or Oxford for the unknown dangers of Sudan?

In the end I didn’t go because it wasn’t financially possible—a dream without means can only go so far. But the question of why I would want to go to Sudan was in many ways a valid one. South Sudan is barely in this century in many aspects, and many live with the perpetual paranoia of a region accustomed to a half-century of civil war. Last August, I was fortunate enough to spend five days in Juba, the capital of the autonomous region of South Sudan (soon to be the independent state of South Sudan). While there, I was almost arrested for espionage and nearly framed for attacking an officer. Both situations were initially aggravated by my smart mouth and eventually solved with a few well-placed Sudanese pounds. Less dangerous but just as palpable were the barely disguised looks of hate by police, former rebels, and even children whose families may have been raped, enslaved, tortured, or murdered by someone who looked just like me.

But at the same time, I saw a people who wanted nothing more than to be left alone, but instead were dragged into war by the racism and inequities of the Arab-dominated government. They had survived some of the worst atrocities I’ve heard of. Some still bear the branded seal of their enslavers on their flesh. Many are short a leg, an arm, an eye, a father, mother, sister or cousin. Countless have lost their childhood to war. Every one of them is burdened by the psychological scars of racism and conflict. Yet, in spite of these handicaps and these lows, or perhaps because of them, they still push on and want to experience what it means to love their country deeply. In turn, their resilience is what makes me love them and their potential.

Despite all that the government and Northern ethnic groups have done to them, and despite the fact that I (for the most part) look and talk like those same people, I was largely welcomed during my visit. The looks of disdain were the exception rather than the rule, and some were undoubtedly figments of an overly self-conscious imagination. Many were curious about why I was
there and what they could do to help me. Some were even willing to sit down and talk to me at length about their experiences, a privilege I could never repay, try as I would. The youth in particular were forgiving and conciliatory. One young man, who had been a soldier since he was twelve-years-old, was well aware that Northerners were also oppressed by the government in Khartoum. Arabs continue to steal from Arabs and Muslims continue to kill Muslims.

That reality is perhaps the saddest part of the referendum process for me. Before 2011 is over, there will be two Sudans and neither will be very viable. Both will likely be stricken by poverty, hunger, and poor education. The North will probably become a theocracy along the lines of Iran or Saudi Arabia. The South will have to deal with nonexistent infrastructure; in Juba, the most developed city, most still have no access to running water, electricity, or paved roads. Both regions have internal ethnic and regional tensions (Darfur and East Sudan for the North, problems of Dinka hegemony in the South). And most frightening, conflict over oil and water resources is probable.

Meanwhile, in both the North and the South, the coming generation does not have that same hate instilled in them for the other. Our current generation could have made peaceful, unified coexistence a reality. To be honest, past generations could have made minor changes to accommodate one another. But now, having seen what war has brought Sudan, if the country was to remain unified for another ten or twenty years, I believe both sides would improve their lot. The South would have access to the technical expertise and educational opportunities of the North, and the North would have a valuable counterweight to Bashir and the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) in the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM). Instead, the country will be sheared in two, each embarking on its own path, and neither likely to be particularly successful.

Nevertheless, I understand the urgency on the part of Southerners. They have been told to wait over and over again. They were told they would have a say in an independent Sudan after the end of British colonialism. They were told they would share in the resources of a united Sudan. They were told that the peace of 1972 would be permanent and that their grievances would be addressed. They were told the introduction of Islamic law during those peaceful years would not affect the South. Now, after living through another twenty years of war and lies after that ill-fated peace accord, they are done waiting. To not secede now means to squander the only guaranteed opportunity to do so. In ten or twenty years, the international community will not be watching to make sure Khartoum follows through on promises, they will not have the inertia of decades of struggle and strife to push them forward. In their minds, and, perhaps, in reality, it is now or never.

One of the most educational moments of my time in South Sudan was August’s Referendum Day in Juba. The ninth day of every month, the government and other groups would organize the event on the mausoleum grounds of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA’s) founder and leader, Colonel/Dr. John Garang. Thousands poured onto the parade grounds that particular rainy August day, stomping through the thick mud to celebrate their newfound peace (the war ended five years ago) and look forward to the prospect of self-determination. There were speakers, traditional dances and music, food, and much revelry. Slogans such as “Self-determination is our destination,” and “Vote for separation for the sake of the coming generation” were plastered throughout the city and on buses. Orange separation shirts littered the audience. It was clearly a biased sample, but nevertheless it was clear that they not only wanted separation, but that they hungered for it and needed it. If they were denied such an historic opportunity, there was no doubt they would return to the terrible, dark days of war.

This piece began with the desire to praise Eggers’ book and Deng’s journey. Reading that story has reinvigorated me to take full advantage of my situation in life and my good fortunes thus far. I’ll approach my studies, my practices, and my relationships with the same intensity of a boy running from his village amid automatic gunfire. I’ll try to tell my own stories and share my own pictures of Sudan to complement those of Deng and others and to help educate the world about our country that is known for nothing but war and poverty. The story has reminded me what can be done through sheer determination and a small amount of luck.

However, by this point this piece has largely become a letter of goodbye to my Southern brethren. I know that this week will result in a vote for separation. I know that this is a joyous and exciting time for most, a dangerous and uncertain time for all. I also know that with your departure my own family and friends will be in greater peril as Khartoum refocuses its repressive apparatus on the Muslims of the North. I know that without the strength of the SPLM, Bashir will make moves unchecked. I know that the futures of both Sudans will be precariously fraught with strife. But I also know that the South has spent decades fighting, hoping, and working for this opportunity. Having grown up as a black man in America, I feel like our experiences have had many parallels, but just as many divergences. Suffice it to say that I know that it is not up to myself or anyone else to tell you what to do with it, or to pretend to be able to understand your struggle. I apologize for what those who have hijacked the Arab identity and the Muslim faith have done to you over the years. I thank you for understanding that they are not representative of all Arabs, Muslims, or Northern Sudanese. I pray that you will learn from past mistakes and not let hot tempers prevail when cool words will do, that you will recognize the value of diversity and equality, that you will defend your rightful democracy. And most importantly, I hope you understand that when your cause is just, whether we are one country or two, you will have the support of Northerners like myself.

Good luck brothers. Good luck sisters.

Many are short a leg, an arm, an eye, a father, mother, sister or cousin.

Shadi Bushra is a Sudanese-American junior studying International Relations and Human Biology. He has been in the United States since he was three, but regularly returns to Sudan to visit family and, most recently, write for an English newspaper there. He is currently writing an honors thesis within the Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law on the role of youth in promoting democratization in Sudan. For more from Shadi, see page 26.
Reflection on Ethiopia's Doctor Drain

BY HIWOT ARAYA & EHETE BAHIRU

During our lunch break at the ALERT hospital cafeteria one Tuesday last summer, we were surprised to run into Dr. Yohannes, a general practitioner just a couple of years out of medical school who we had said goodbye to the day before when he enthusiastically departed for his annual leave. Dr. Yohannes planned to work at a private clinic in order to earn some needed extra money during his break. Now he was back. He explained that he had been unexpectedly called back into the office and ordered to stay due to a shortage of medical staff. He was gravely disappointed that his plans to make some money during his break would not be realized. Dr. Yohannes was typically cheerful, but over the course of the summer, he began revealing a sense of hopelessness and dissatisfaction with his career in Ethiopia. Being from a middleclass family, he had had the privilege of attending a private school before starting medical school; he had wanted to become a doctor from an early age. “Doctors got a lot of respect,” he told us, “but now I know that means nothing.” With his $200 a month salary as a general practitioner, he was unable to support himself and still lived with his parents. We found Dr. Yohannes’ story to be very telling of the experiences of most doctors in Ethiopia, a topic of particular professional and personal interest for us as medical students.

We spent the summer of 2010 in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, doing a research project on HIV/AIDS at the All African Leprosy, Tuberculosis (TB), Rehabilitation, Research, and Training Center (ALERT) Hospital. Upon our arrival, a medical doctor associated with our research project told us, “When I graduated from medical school twenty years ago, there were about 2,000 doctors, today we have the same number of doctors, if not less.” His claim mirrors the World Health Report, which shows that there were 1,936 doctors in Ethiopia in 2006, or about two or three physicians for every 100,000 people; these figures are demonstrated in the overly crowded hospitals and overworked health care providers. A majority of the country’s doctors practice in Addis Ababa, the capital city, where there are more opportunities and a market to start one’s own clinic. They serve only about 10% of the total population. Like in many other developing countries, there are several organizations and foreign doctors that organize yearly medical missions. Even though these can provide short-term medical and surgical care, these efforts are not sustainable, which is why it is important to focus on building and developing health infrastructure regionally.

In addition to these challenges, there are a plethora of others faced by health care professionals—especially medical doctors—which greatly contribute to the doctor drain in Ethiopia. These challenges pertain both to the professional and personal lives of doctors ranging from the challenges of working in very under-resourced healthcare facilities to being grossly underpaid. Several days after our arrival, Dr. Yohannes gave us a tour of the ER and some of the inpatient wards. The condition of the ER was especially revealing of the minuscule resources that were being funneled toward emergency care in Ethiopia; it looked like an abandoned hostel with old curtains. The ER beds were unadjustable, metal frame spring beds with various missing parts, some with no mattress. Many rooms lacked medical equipment, even devices as simple as a kit to perform a proper CPR. The most disconcerting aspect of all is the fact that ALERT is a major public hospital that serves approximately 700,000 people from the surrounding community.

As medical students training at Stanford University, at the frontier of medical innovations, we have been exposed to high-tech medicine such as robotic surgery and cyber-knife technology. We see various life-support technologies that keep people alive under unlikely circumstances. Recognizing how much human and material support is needed to deliver what is considered standard care here in the United States, it makes us
wonder how doctors can practice proper medicine in a setting like ALERT. The doctors had the clinical knowledge and adequate training, but often times they felt disempowered and unable to apply their knowledge due to a lack of resources and manpower, which greatly added to their frustration and hopelessness. As we continued our tour of the HIV/AIDS and TB in-patient wards that day with Dr. Yohannes, we walked into a room shared by ten patients who did not even have curtains to protect their privacy. Both the staff and patients were at great risk of exposure to infections for lack of proper medical precautions such as TB masks, hand sanitizers, and functional hand-washing sinks. Due to these circumstances, it is not uncommon for staff members to contract TB from patients.

In addition to the above-mentioned challenges, one of the major sources of unhappiness for doctors in Ethiopia is their salary. A primary care doctor working in a public hospital makes about 2,500 Birr per month, which translates to about $150—a salary that can barely support one person, let alone a family. Most doctors must establish means to supplement their income. Dr. Yohannes still lives with his parents and picks up extra shifts at another private hospital in his spare time to make ends meet. Dr. Gebru, who is the head of the Pediatric AIDS ward, has a wife and a child to support and he is grateful that his situation is slightly different.

“I am better off than most other doctors because I am employed by an NGO that collaborates with ALERT,” Dr. Gebru told us. “I have a better salary but I still struggle to make ends meet. I will not encourage my child to be a doctor. Why would I, when he can live a better life doing something else?” Dr. Gebru’s pessimistic attitude represents the feelings of most doctors towards a career that they were once proud of. Most Ethiopian doctors leave the public sector for better salaries at private hospitals or NGOs. Others relentlessly look for ways to get to Europe, the U.S., or other African countries in search of a better life and opportunities. At the end of our tour, Dr. Yohannes secretly revealed to us that he was applying to a combined residency program in Ethiopia and the U.S. with hopes of opening doors to a better future. Dr. Yohannes wasn’t the only one seeking opportunities abroad. While we were at ALERT, several healthcare providers approached us with enquiries and curiosity about ways to get a residency permit in the U.S.

After witnessing an extremely under-resourced work environment and the lack of financial incentives, particularly in the public sector where greater than 75% of the population get medical care, it was not hard to understand the high physician dissatisfaction and attrition rate that the country is facing. In the last twenty years, about 73.2% of Ethiopian doctors have left the public sector to either practice in private/NGO hospitals or out of the country. According to a study conducted by Dr. Berhan, a physician at one of the major medical schools in Ethiopia, the annual physician attrition rate, which is the number of graduating physicians who leave the country every year, has reached as high as 54% in the past 10 years. In the face of exponential population growth and public health crises such as HIV/AIDS, it is not only unsustainable to the health care system but also unacceptable to lose physicians trained free of charge at the expense of the public at such a high rate. There needs to be strong policy implementation and investment to address this issue, which is also quite prevalent in most sub-Saharan African countries.

Some experts argue that developed nations have a moral obligation to turn away doctors from African countries seeking opportunities abroad.

Some experts argue that developed nations have a moral obligation to turn away doctors from African countries seeking opportunities abroad. Increasing the number of medical schools to train more doctors, however, will not make a dent in the problem unless those doctors are able to stay and practice in the country. There should be a concurrent effort to address the issues that are prompting many physicians to leave the public sector. Otherwise, the government will only be spending more money to train physicians who will primarily cater to the private sector or other countries. More efforts need to go towards addressing the needs of doctors and recognizing their crucial roles. Some avenues that have been suggested include salary increases, bonuses, and housing tax subsidies. Valuing physician roles and contributions by rewarding them accordingly could play a significant role in reducing the “doctor drain” that is currently plaguing Ethiopia.

Hiwot Araya is a second year medical student at Stanford School of Medicine with a scholarship concentration in Bioengineering and Global Health. She is interested in global health issues such as limited access to basic healthcare, inadequate man-power, poor healthcare infrastructure, and the efficacy of foreign assistance in addressing these issues.

Ebete Bahiru is a second year medical student at Stanford School of Medicine with a Health Services and Policy Research and global health scholarly concentration. Her interest consists of studying cost-effective methods of delivering health care in under-resourced settings.

Reference:
Renewable Energy Resources in Africa
BY ROBERT KABERA

This year’s Energy Panel at the Stanford Africa Forum (January 29th, 2011) highlighted successful ventures in hydro-based, electricity-powered portable lights in Kenya, a micro-smart grid in Rwanda, and a community run bio-fuel plant in Uganda. The resounding message of this energy panel reflected what inspired me to study Energy Resources Engineering, namely, that there are abundant renewable energy resources and needs in Africa that necessitate innovation.

Lack of Access and Renewable Energy Solutions:
Renewable energy can help Africa gain the access to electricity it currently lacks. While we take access to electricity for granted, as of January 2011, only 7% of Rwanda’s population was connected to the grid system; in rural areas, electricity is accessible to less than 1% of the population. However, the Rwandan government has announced plans to install 300 off-grid solar power systems in remote schools around the country. There are many other areas on the continent in great need of such energy solutions. Nigeria, a country of regional dominance in West Africa with a population of more than 140 million, provides a good example: less than 20% of the population has access to a constant power supply, making energy generation and delivery a top priority for the government. While rich in natural gas, oil and coal, Nigeria is also well situated for wind energy and can certainly also use solar power since it is not far from the equator.

As shown by the solar resource map, Africa at large has great solar energy potential, averaging 8 KWh/M². Thinking of energy systems as predominantly based on a central electricity power grid does not follow the lay of the land in most African societies, where serious asymmetries can be found in settlements. Many towns and cities are poorly connected to each other. However, renewable energy technologies like stand-alone solar photovoltaic panels can provide distributed energy generation for large and scattered populations, whether in Rwanda or Nigeria.

The World Solar Resource map illustrates average daily solar insolation in Watts/square meter. In nearly all assessments, Africa has proved to have the greatest Solar Energy Potential. (Photo source: fsec.ucf.edu)
The Importance of Innovation:

The major stumbling block to the adaptation and utilization of renewable energy resources is the absence of innovation and collaboration. Africans have an innate entrepreneurial spirit to get out of their energy trap. However, to succeed in applying solutions, such as utilizing the continent’s wealth of renewable energy resources to provide power to the African people, there must be innovation and collaboration.

There are a few isolated efforts to address the energy problem in Africa. To mitigate environmental pollution, South Africa, for example, has a carbon capture and storage (CCS) group that is exploring the implementation of solar technology. The idea is to use concentrated solar energy to power CCS which increases power output while polluting less than conventional power plants, which are mostly powered by coal.

To deal with electricity distribution, Nigeria’s privately-owned Genesis Electricity Limited full-service energy company is building and syncing power-lines throughout West Africa. As the name implies, Genesis is the first privately owned company of its kind in any part of Africa to operate a multinational grid. The obstacles to engineering innovations in Africa are institutional, not intellectual. This means that Africa must produce institutions that can help innovation and collaboration.

The Institutions Needed to Foster Innovation:

Whenever I consider how much is possible technology-wise in our world today as a result of the supporting infrastructure, I see a glimmer of hope for Africa. Solar energy can do anything that coal or petroleum can do, in a more effective and efficient manner. Institutions in Africa conducive to innovation could mirror the supporting infrastructure made available to me for my research endeavors at Stanford University. This might entail granting students access to publications on and off the web as well as providing them with professors and professionals to mentor them in the field. Most importantly, it would require financial support towards research to finance the bare necessities of the project at hand. The investment in such institutions produced empires such as Facebook, Yahoo, and Google, to name a few. In my case, it has enabled me to work on innovative, portable solar thermal products that could one day be a part of the solution to many of Africa’s pestilences.

Institutions conducive to innovations in Africa are no mere dream nor are they without precedence. In places like Rwanda and Nigeria, where entrepreneurial space fosters innovation and industrial progress, Africa thrives like the rest of the world.

Robert Kabera is a native of Rwanda and a graduating senior in Energy Resources Engineering at Stanford University. His current research focuses on powering a Carbon Capture & Storage unit in a South African based coal plant using direct solar heating. Some of Robert’s hobbies are traveling and learning new languages as well as long distance running.
Are You Hausa?

BY MARYAM GARBA

Last week someone asked me the question, “Are you Hausa?” Six years ago, I would have readily answered this question with a confident “yes.” This time, I hesitated. Instead I asked, “What makes a person Hausa?” My reluctance to respond and my ensuing question gave me great insight into my own understanding of my identity as an international student in America.

The Hausas are one of the approximately 250 ethnic groups living in Nigeria today. The Hausas live mostly in northern Nigeria and the vast majority of the group practice Islam.

My parents come from northern Nigeria (Kaduna State), but I was born and raised in the southern part of the country. When I was growing up, my family always cooked and enjoyed traditional Hausa dishes including tuwo and miya, and we spoke both Hausa and English at home.

However, when I left Nigeria six years ago to attend school in the United Kingdom and in the United States, I stopped practicing my Hausa. My only opportunities to practice the language were over the phone with my relatives or when I went home during the holidays, which was never for more than three weeks per year. I also went for long periods of time without eating a single Hausa meal. There were very few Hausa students in the schools I attended, and the other Hausa speakers I met felt more comfortable speaking English than they did speaking Hausa. Almost all of my communication was done in English. In a fairly short period of time, English became my primary language of thought and speech.

My primary identity also changed from being “Hausa” to being Nigerian. When I lived in Nigeria, everyone understood what I meant when I identified myself as a Hausa girl. To them, it meant that my parents came from northern Nigeria and that perhaps I had spent some time living in the north. However, when I arrived in Stanford, even some of my African friends did not know which country the Hausa ethnic group came from. I could no longer identify myself as Hausa, because no one understood what I meant. I had to embrace a broader identity, which was “Nigerian.” My response to the question, “Where are you from?” was no longer “Kaduna” but rather “Nigeria.”

My closest friends come from all over the world including Botswana, South Africa and Saudi Arabia. Through these friendships, I learned to dance like a traditional Zulu woman, discuss political issues in Botswana and cook Arabian food. I could not remember the last time I listened to a Hausa song, followed the news in Kaduna State, or cooked a Hausa dish. I was so distant from Hausa culture that it had failed to inform my choices for almost six years.

It is now clear to me that over the years my identity has shifted. After seven years of living outside Nigeria, my primary identity had changed from being a Hausa girl to being “Nigerian,” or sometimes just “African.” I have also taken up other identities through sharing in other cultural experiences and forming new relationships with people from other parts of the world. Through these experiences, I realized that identity is not stagnant but it changes as we move through life. Human identity is a complex, diverse, fluid and constantly changing phenomenon.

To deal with the complex nature of identity, perhaps we need to stop asking “Are you?” questions and instead ask “Do you?” questions. “Are you?” questions cause us to feel that we belong to one category and not to another. Thus if I identify as Hausa, then it means I cannot be Zulu or German or anything else. On the contrary, “Do you?” questions allow a person to relate to any group to which they see themselves belonging.

As the world continues to globalize, questions about identity and diversity should allow individuals to identify the different aspects of him or herself that allow him or her to relate to a certain category. Therefore I can say, “I speak Hausa” and “My family eats tuwo” without having to say “I am Hausa.” Another example would be to ask, “Do you have a Nigerian passport?” or “Do you live in Nigeria?” instead of simply asking, “Are you Nigerian?” “Do you?” questions allow individuals to fully associate with all aspects of their different identities without feeling like these identities are mutually exclusive.

If any one asks me again, “Are you Hausa?”, my response will be, “I speak Hausa, and I eat Hausa food. Does that make me Hausa?”

Maryam Garba (Human Biology ‘10) is a passionate advocate of identity-related issues on local and global levels. She is currently at Harvard University pursuing a Masters in Education and her goal is to encourage high school students to use their classrooms as a safe space for identity-development. In her free time, she enjoys designing clothes and visiting modern art museums. For more from Maryam, see page 52.
In this mini-series, a trio of responses to recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, and Sudan reflect on the game-changing revolutions that have been and are transforming countries and societies in the Arab world. These pieces take into account that, while many of these recent revolutions may have been sparked by the act of self-immolation in Tunisia, they had all, in fact, been waiting to happen. They occurred because of years of procrastination on economic and political reform which left cities and whole countries with millions of unemployed youth, communities despondent and desperate for answers, and leaders exposed for their greed and lies by an increasingly shared reality, many times online. This aggregated hunger for change crossed boundaries not because the nations concerned were Arab, but because the social conditions it responded to were as human and recognizable in one country as they were in the next.
Reflections on Revolutions

Tunisia's Responsible Revolution

BY BASSEM BOUGUERRA

In January, Tunisia offered the world a new model of revolution that brought down a dictatorial regime in a peaceful, socially responsible manner without any political agenda. At first glance, this statement might seem unfounded and illogical. How can a major political transformation occur uninspired by politics? If not political, what were the forces and inspirations behind the liberation of the Tunisian people?

To help answer these questions, it is important to start by examining the Tunisian socio-political scene prior to the dawn of the revolution. Everywhere one looked, one could see posters of a smiling president in a photo from over a decade ago. For most Tunisians, these posters served as a reminder of twenty-three years spent under a president with a corrupt agenda. Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali was a leader eager to be perceived as omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent by his people. Under his rule, Tunisia was a police-controlled country taken hostage by an extended family of criminals. Censorship of everything from books and newspapers to public debates about pertinent issues was severe and popular websites such as Flickr and YouTube did not make it through the tight internet filters. Positions ranging from ministers of parliament all the way down to school directors were appointed or approved by the president and his extended family.

Until recently, division was ubiquitous among Tunisians and the distribution of commonwealth was maliciously used to intensify the social gap. Northern and coastal cities received the greater part of domestic and foreign investments and investors stayed away from the inner part of the country. The few companies that opened inland, such as the Gafsa Phosphate Company, exploited local communities by paying local workers unfair wages as low as two dollars a day and acting indifferent to the immense air pollution their factories emitted. This situation eventually led to an uprising in Gafsa, one of the poorest and least developed cities in the country. In 2008, for the first time in two decades, Tunisians in Gafsa voiced their disagreement with the system in the streets. The police force responded by executing young protesters, and over 3,000 policemen took on the task of bringing order back to the area by isolating the town for months. Nothing about this event was ever televised or reported in any of the newspapers, and regionalism became even more prominent in a society already engulfed by a haze of bitterness and division.

In the midst of all this, the Tunisian youth escaped the trenchant reality by actively engaging in online communities such as blogospheres and social networks. They used proxy servers to overcome the belligerent internet censorship. Tunisian-created multimedia began flooding the internet. One of the early products of this newly-created community was the emergence of independent young artists such as Emel Mathlouthi, who played a major role in the latest uprisings by inspiring a whole generation of political activists with her songs. By 2007, this young educated group of internet users formed an influential decentralized political network that appeared apolitical on its surface, mainly to avoid confrontation with the police.

The events in Gafsa, along with other reports that could not make it through the state-owned media, were only reported in personal blogs, making the blogosphere a new trusted source of information and the go-to place for real news. This trust fueled bloggers’ devotion and perseverance as they endeavored to unveil the truth to the people. Popular virtual mass movements started to take place; some of them, such as the well known “Ammar Day” denouncing internet censorship, transcended to real life via protests that took place in Tunisia, Paris, Montreal, and New York City on May 22nd, 2010; other movements were conceived and realized only on the internet.

An unprecedented unity amalgamated the bloggers coming from different religious and political backgrounds; if you were a Tunisian blogger, you knew that someone out there would have your back if you were ever arrested because of your writing. This unity

Locals gathered together to watch over their neighborhoods during the revolution in Tunisia. Here, Emel Mathlouthi, a Tunisian singer whose songs helped inspire a generation of political activists, entertains one such group of neighborhood watchers. (Photo credit: Issam Bouguerra)
was seen in the “I am Fatma” solidarity movement that helped liberate the infamous Tunisian blogger Fatma Arabicca from her unlawful detention. Bloggers worked with Arabic mainstream media such as Al Jazeera and Arabia Media and had them, along with international non-governmental organizations, condemn the arrest and demand the immediate release of Fatma.

The previously mentioned initiatives and many others emboldened bloggers and online activists and gave them a feeling of empowerment. In addition, they inspired a huge mass of Tunisians to the point where over 20% of the Tunisian population created Facebook accounts and started joining virtual political groups and assemblies, breaking a wall of fear that had formerly separated them from any political activity. Through these new platforms, information about the government’s abuse of power began circulating on a much broader scale and a sense of political awakening spread through the previously-silent majority.

The immense greed of the ousted president’s family alienated the vast majority of Tunisians who started to live under high financial constraint. Soon, the people of Tunisia found themselves unified against one common enemy: Ben Ali’s family who robbed the country of all its resources. Mohammed Bouazizi’s self-immolation ultimately ignited the long-anticipated revolution against corruption, social injustice, and dictatorship. When the protests began in December 2010, Ben Ali gave an infamous televised speech asking for an opportunity to fix everything. The so-called “opposition” alienated themselves by taking a unified stand on the situation in support of Ben Ali’s tyrannical regime; they attempted to convince Tunisians to “give the president another chance” - a deal breaker for the revolutionaries, who believed that he had had all the chance he needed in the prior twenty-three years.

The revolting masses—rose up spontaneously without leaders guiding and inspiring them, inducing the upheaval to take a decentralized, uncontrollable form. This was different from the Gafsa events that occurred in 2008 where the government had the final say over the situation after throwing the leaders of the uprising behind bars. This lack of leadership also helped produce new, unanticipated leaders, many of whom emerged from the online world and used the internet to call for initiatives such as money and food donations, street cleaning, neighborhood watching, and policing to protect communities from looters and trouble makers. Most of these new leaders did not and still do not have political agendas; their only ambition was to get the country into a prosperous state with the least possible damage.

Leadership qualities were seen even amongst common grocery store owners who started initiatives like advocating for a three-bread-loaves-per-household policy to make sure everyone could buy bread. No matter how much someone offered, three loaves was the maximum they could have. Street vendors gave away groceries to those who couldn’t afford it. Many Tunisians living abroad rushed back home to take part in the revolution and help reconstruct the country.

Tourism is the heart and soul of the Tunisian economy and Tunisians quickly realized that a safe and clean country is essential for the vitality of that sector; in response, everyone endeavored to clean the streets after bloody and violent clashes between the police and protesters. Pictures of people cleaning public areas along with videos reassuring prospective visitors that Tunisia is safe for tourists flooded the internet. A sense of country ownership permeated the population and even inspired each government employee to donate one payday to the administration to help ease the rebuilding process. It is also worth noting that no weapons were used by protesters—people defended themselves from snipers and the police with bare hands so violence wouldn’t be used to legitimize a new tyranny.

The world watched the Tunisian revolution inspire and trigger a series of uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East with admiration. They admired how it differentiated itself from those led by armed guerrillas or foreign armies. It was inspired and driven by an educated, peaceful group of citizens who used the internet to mobilize, educate, and guide those who wanted an end to social injustice and corrupt regimes. This group of responsible citizens was armed not with a political agenda, but with a clear vision of a free and prosperous Tunisia.

Bassem Bouguerra is a Tunisian-American online activist living in San Francisco, California. He is a Software Architect at Yahoo! and pursuing a Graduate Certificate in Machine Learning from Stanford. He is a community leader, organizing discussion panels and protests denouncing the human rights violations in Tunisia and the Arab world.
As an Egyptian-American-Muslim (talk about hyphenated identities!) and a Political Science major, I came into contact with Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations* early on in my academic career, along with a slew of arguments claiming that Islam and democracy are incompatible. I quickly realized that very few people at Stanford were actually doing research on the Middle East and I found my niche: studying why the Middle East and many Arab countries had been delayed in succumbing to the democratization waves crossing the globe. I became both academically and personally excited as I delved into this research.

Focusing most specifically on the case of Egypt, I chose to write my honors thesis on the relationship between American democracy promotion efforts in Egypt and the political openings in the country, observed most clearly between 2003 and 2005 during the Bush administration. I found that when American officials partook in public rhetoric, attempted to condition aid in exchange for liberalization reforms, and practiced smart funding programs towards institution building in the country, the Egyptian regime responded—not by countering American attempts, but rather by allowing the rise of an independent media, loosening the grip on many prominent opposition groups, and freeing high-profile political prisoners. Although many of the Egyptian government’s actions were token and questionable in intent, there is no doubt that they were symbolic in highlighting the potential power and influence of American pressure.

Essentially, I found that, as a global superpower with moral responsibilities, the United States certainly had a lot of leverage it could use to pressure the Egyptian regime into creating a political space; American rhetoric had paved the way for an “Arab Spring” and conditionality attempts on supplemental aid had freed two prominent political prisoners. This space would be absolutely necessary in paving the way for the internationally-supported, but internally-led domestic democracy movements in Egypt, and across the Middle East.

Then Tunisia happened. Sparked by the decision of one hopeless man to set himself on fire in response to poor employment opportunities in the country, the Tunisian streets were overtaken by riots, which finally culminated in the removal of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from power. Inspired by the relative success of the Tunisian revolution, Egyptian people took to the streets on January 25, unified by calls for an end to corruption, social and economic problems, and a demand for President Mubarak to be removed from power after a 30-year rule. After 18 days of consistent and peaceful protests, with over four million citizens participating, Mubarak finally resigned. The success of the democracy movement in Egypt began a domino effect of riots and revolts in a number of Arab countries, among them Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain.

While the timing and trajectory of the movement in Egypt was certainly unexpected and took many, including the United States, by surprise, hindsight is, of course, 20/20. With a growing disparity between rich and poor, rocketing food prices, failing government services, widespread corruption across private businesses and government bureaucracy, and the exponentially-increasing presence of Egyptian slums, known as *ashwaiyyat*, it is...
a wonder that the Egyptian people had not revolted in massive numbers at an earlier time.

In reflecting on the multi-faceted success of the Egyptian ousting of Mubarak, three points should be highlighted:

1. The Power of Technology. There is no doubt that Facebook, Twitter, Blackberry Messenger, and other technological developments of the time certainly accelerated the success of the Egyptian revolution. Bringing people from across the country together, unifying various opposition groups, and helping to organize logistics, these sources were important in guaranteeing the attendance of protestors in the first days of the events. Furthermore, these sites and communication tools created a media buzz and attracted American and international attention, thus creating increased levels of pressure on the Egyptian regime. Despite all of this, however, it is important to highlight that the Egyptian people's resilience, patience, and bravery created the revolution. Even after all mainstream sources of communication were cut by the government, the people continued to go to Tahrir Square and use non-technological means to ensure the success of the movement. Essentially, technology was a facilitator, but not the cause of the revolution.

2. Islamist Influence. A number of analysts warily watched the Egyptian revolution with fear of Islamist influence in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood. Throughout the Mubarak regime, the Egyptian president used to intimidate powers like the United States by saying that the only alternative to his regime would be the Brotherhood, pointing to the rise of Hezbollah and Hamas in Lebanon and Palestine as examples. Succumbing to the arguments of Mubarak would be a huge mistake. While the Brotherhood is not perfect (no political party is) and certainly has Islamist tendencies which are unfamiliar to American politicians, it is also true that they have renounced violence multiple times, have worked productively with a number of secular and non-religious opposition movements in the country, and have shown willingness to liberalize, especially among younger members of the organization. Furthermore, the Brotherhood is not the only alternative in Egypt. Some of the most prominent opposition figures in the country include non-Brotherhood figures and groups like Mohamed El Baradei, Kefaya, and the April 6 Movement. The current trajectory of the transition period also indicates the rise of a number of parties that will comprehensively reflect the diversity of the Egyptian constituency.

3. The Role of the United States. While American officials hesitantly partook in a number of quiet public statements throughout the progression of the revolution finally culminating in a congratulatory speech by President Obama, they had no publicly-visible role in the success of the revolution. Although American caution was politically under-standable—especially considering the unfamiliarity of the situation and the regional interests at stake, there is no doubt that we could have done more. I stand by the findings of my thesis and know that as the symbol of freedom in the world, we can take more conscious efforts to uphold liberty, challenge and leverage our authoritarian allies proactively with little risk, and ultimately contribute to the international support of democracy movements taking hold across the globe.

As an American citizen, I hope that the upcoming days will remind us of our moral commitment to more actively and proudly support these internal democracy movements and uphold the rights of Arab men, women, and children to the freedoms and liberties we enjoy and often take for granted in the West. As an American citizen, I know that it is in our long-term interest to support these movements, a stance that will return prestige to the United States after weakened relations in the region and bring economic, social, and diplomatic benefits. As an American citizen, I ask that the tax dollars I pay be allocated to the building of democratic institutions, not to the support of authoritarian dictators who subjugate their people to decades of misery and hopelessness.

As an Egyptian citizen, I am proud. Sure, I am shrewdly hesitant and waiting to see genuine signals of change, honest modifications to the Constitution, and the political empowerment of the Egyptian people; but I am proud. As an Egyptian citizen, I am proud to have seen the day when my people have challenged the predictions of Huntington and established that Islam and democracy are, in fact, compatible; proud to have seen my people oust one of the most prominent symbols and bulwarks of authoritarianism in the Middle East, and demand the liberty, freedom, and democracy that they truly deserve.

There is hope. People around the world are taking back their countries and demanding change. What an exciting time to be an Egyptian-American-Muslim Political Science major!

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Reflections on Revolutions

Democracy’s Domino Effect: Protests in Sudan

BY SHADI BUSHRA

January 31, 2011

If somebody had told me a month ago that there would be a nascent democracy in North Africa, I would have thought they were being rather naïve. If somebody had told me a week ago that Egypt would be the closest it’s ever been to democracy, I would have thought they were completely mad. Now, with Tunisia looking to hold real elections after years of strongman rule under Ben Ali and Egypt’s Mubarak looking for some way to end the embarrassingly debilitating protests while saving face, I’m more optimistic about the Arab and African worlds’ prospects for political change. Most exciting to me of course, as a Sudanese, are the small protests in Sudan which students and other young people kicked off on Sunday, January 31st after watching their peers in Egypt and Tunisia succeed.

Yesterday, a Sudanese friend mentioned the prospect of Sudan catching the revolution fever (revo-fev for some). I was pessimistic. After the South voted to secede, common sense indicates that the ruling National Congress Party (NCP) will do whatever it takes to keep hold of the limited territory it now controls. This includes intensifying the conflict in Darfur as well as squashing domestic agitators such as those who would protest for democracy. I didn’t see much hope of a Tunisia-style month-long marathon of protests. Khartoum has anticipated this while preparing for the secession referendum lest some get the idea that if our neighbors to the south can decide their own fate, shouldn’t the citizens in the north get the same luxury? Despite these reservations, I am actually very excited for what is happening in Sudan. Will it fizzle and die after a day, or will it snowball into something real? Nobody would have predicted that Egypt’s or Tunisia’s protests would have such dramatic effects. Following the conversation with my friend, more developments out of Egypt (such as the military’s seeming ambivalence, greater cooperation along the secular-religious divide, and a relatively more coherent opposition platform), and conversations with my brother and parents, I’m much more hopeful; it appears the government even felt threatened enough to arrest my cousin, Nazik, for trying to photograph the protests. So, at the risk of being wrong, I’ve decided to do what can be done from an ocean away to keep Sudan’s protests in people’s news feeds. Honestly, I have nothing to lose but a few hours of my life, while those at home stand to actually lose their lives.

What’s Happening (So Far)?

I’ve attempted to sketch a rough outline of the day’s events. It is a composite based on first-hand accounts from friends and family, the one or two news reports on the protests, and a large number of reports from protesters and supporters on social media websites. Information is slow to come in, and even more difficult to confirm. I’ve tried to include only those that have been verified through other sources, or that are very plausible in the repressive atmosphere that is Sudan today.

Here’s what I know so far: There have been several protests in Sudan, one in central Khartoum, three at university campuses in the tri-city area, another at Kordofan University in the west, and smaller ones throughout the

Protests in Sudan mirror those in surrounding Arab countries. (Source: Wikipedia Commons)
country. The police responded with the heavy-handed measures most have come to associate with them. Armed riot police violently broke up the protests in Khartoum’s center. At Khartoum University and Al Ahlyia University, police officers tear-gassed and beat students. The sizes of the groups are unconfirmed, but estimates are several hundred at each metro location (Central Khartoum, Khartoum University, Al Ahlyia University) and 500 at Kordofan University in El Obeid.

In addition to the police’s violent attack on peaceful protesters, what happened to those arrested is still largely unknown. Those taken to police stations were held for varying lengths of time but were mostly treated (relatively) civilly. Some were freed, others had to wait for someone to bail them out (as was the case with my cousin), and others are still detained.

However, a large number were arrested by plainclothes security officials, taken away in unmarked vehicles, and are now at undisclosed locations. It is quite possible that they are being held at the “ghost houses” that marked the first chapter of Bashir’s rule in the early 1990’s. Torture, rape, murder, and other atrocities are the norm at these locales. Naturally, both information about who was taken away by national security/intelligence officials and how they were treated is of yet unconfirmed. With that being said, there are reports from fellow protesters that over twenty people were taken to an unmarked building (as is usually the case with the “ghost houses”) near Nile Street and were held there and tortured.

Since these protests were organized in large part through online social media...they started small. However, they gathered momentum as passers-by joined in on the marching and chanting.

A large number were arrested by plainclothes security officials, taken away in unmarked vehicles, and are now at undisclosed locations.

Since these protests were organized in large part through online social media, which most Sudanese do not have access to, they started small. However, they gathered momentum as passers-by joined in on the marching and chanting. and chanting of anti-Bashir, anti-government, and pro-democracy slogans. The demonstrations started on Palace Street, and participants marched towards the Presidential Palace. Police waiting at several locations broke up the protests using an inordinate amount of violence and arrested those who failed to flee in time. Some protesters fought back, with unfortunate results. Most ran and, refusing to give up, regrouped at new locations to continue the demonstrations. There is also an unverified report that police distributed food and water to protesters along Palace Street.

At the University of Khartoum, students began the protests in their dormitories and moved about campus. Police soon surrounded the campus and fired into the crowds with tear gas and tasers, causing some to try to escape. Those who fled were arrested, beaten, or both. Police then tried to break into the University’s School of Medicine, where the students were holed up. Apparently, the students initially repelled the police. Soon after, there were clashes between students and police, with reports of the medical school’s faculty participating in “heavy fighting.” Reports suggest that the students requested help from others, probably over the phone, leading protesters elsewhere in Khartoum to head towards the University and specifically the School of Medicine complex. At least 64 people are believed to have been arrested. President al-Bashir also fired the university’s director, Mustafa Idris al-Bashir, for not doing more to quell the demonstrations.

In Omdurman, the twin city across the river, protests began at Al Ahlyia University, which another of my cousins attends. Here, plainclothes police and security officials were more of a problem than the riot police were. They moved through the crowd unnoticed, until they began arresting students. Once their presence was revealed, the clashes began, fatally
wounding one demonstrator, Mohammad Abdelrahman of Al Ahlya University, who died later in the day at a hospital while being treated for serious injuries sustained at the hands of police.

Protests at Omdurman Islamic University also turned violent, initially without any police provocation. The university apparently had students who were content with the current regime. Soon enough there were clashes between groups of protesters and the students loyal to the regime. Unconfirmed reports indicate that the loyalists attacked the demonstrators with Molotov cocktails and metal bars. These reports should be taken with a grain of salt however—both because there could have been undercover security officials instigating the intra-student conflict, and because protesters and their supporters are the main sources of these reports. At both Omdurman campuses, the chronology was roughly the same: protests began, police cordoned off the area, clashes escalated, arrests were made, and the universities were closed.

Journalists fared much worse than the average protester. Many were arrested, including a cameraman for the Associated Foreign Press. At least two are confirmed to have been tortured. Numerous foreign journalists were harassed, intimidated, and had their footage and photographs confiscated. Sudanese members of the press, on the other hand, were subject to the full spectrum of abuses.

Those believed to have organized the protests online were arrested early in the day, often before they could even begin demonstrating. The government has access to any online information it desires, including the IP addresses of those computers used to organize such events. One high-profile example is the daughter of Hussein Khogaly, the editor-in-chief of the al-Watan newspaper, who was arrested at 8 in the morning under accusations that she had organized the protests on Facebook.

Why now?

What I have not touched on yet are the reasons behind these protests. Sudan has one of the world’s longest continuous dictatorships, set to celebrate its twenty-second birthday this June. Like most countries, there is also tremendous economic hardship in Sudan as it deals with the effects of the global economic crisis. In Sudan, this has manifested itself in the form of particularly high inflation due to last year’s devaluation of the Sudanese pound. To cut down on spending, the government cut subsidies on petroleum products and sugar earlier this month, making public transportation and food more expensive. This triggered smaller, less political protests several weeks ago.

Key motivators of most young protesters today were the examples set by Tunisia, and more recently, Egypt. Both countries have long-term dictatorships (or in Tunisia’s case, had a long-term dictatorship). Hope for change was effectively stomped out by decades of repression, but like a phoenix, was reborn from the ashes of a burned Tunisian man. This has reignited hope throughout the region—if Tunisia could do it, why can’t we?

I’ve made it a point to refrain from too much analysis here. I don’t want to taint what are mostly facts with my own opinions. But I will mention a few reasons why I think the government is less likely to topple in Sudan than in its neighbors. First, Sudan is in many ways already an international pariah. The world has tried to pressure the government there with sanctions, legal proceedings, and general isolation. Despite this, Bashir’s National Congress Party persisted. There are few sticks for the international community to wield, and assuming that they would want to is a leap of its own. Second, Sudan’s internal security has always been an obsession of the government, initially because of the North-South civil war, then because of the Darfur conflict. Now, with the South preparing to secede, it is once again an issue. Khartoum is well-versed in the means of repression. Third, Egypt relies heavily on foreign investment, and on US aid. It has to keep the West’s point of view in mind. Sudan’s investment, on the other hand, comes largely from China and other less democracy-concerned countries.

With all that being said, I fully believe that a popular revolution is possible in Sudan. There is no such thing as an ideal atmosphere for a revolution. There is only the way things are, and the way we want them to be. The grievances are as available there as they were in Tunisia or Egypt. Although the environment may be nominally less friendly, the international community less receptive, and the people slightly more cowed, there is hope. A month ago, Sudan had Africa’s most recent popular revolution, the 1985 ouster of Jafar Nimeiri. Inspired by Tunisia and in the wake of Egypt, it is time to retake that legacy.

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An earlier version of this piece appeared in the Stanford Progressive on January 31, 2011.
In Kenya, only 27% of pupils in Standards One through Three can read Kiswahili syllables. In some schools, only 20% of Standard Eight pupils pass the Standard Three exam at the end of their primary education sequence (completion of Standard Eight). In one school, only 40% of the pupils enrolled in Standard One even sat for the culminating Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) exam, let alone passed.

These disappointing facts stand in spite of two momentous campaigns for free primary education (FPE) promised over the entirety of the country’s fifty-year history. These two campaigns have sought to achieve universal education for all Kenyans by, at minimum, abolishing school fees to increase access. However, on multiple fronts, from that of cost to access to quality, the government has failed to deliver. Why? I argue that the two campaigns have failed because they have been led by politicians instead of educators. Both campaigns were motivated by political gain and promised during election cycles to woo voters, but were either forgotten or poorly implemented afterwards. The unfeasible and ill-formulated execution of free primary education has negatively impacted hundreds of thousands of children, teachers, and communities across all of Kenya.

The first campaign for free primary education was an abysmal failure, ironically leaving the country with even higher school fees than before the FPE campaign. In Kenya’s first elections after its 1963 independence from Great Britain, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) promised education as the silver bullet to the three evils of poverty, disease, and ignorance. Education captivated a large electoral constituency, and the potential delivery of a new educational system symbolized Kenya’s independence and the Africanization and Kenyanization of its educational system. Furthermore, education was to be the vehicle for rapid socio-economic development to prepare the new Kenyan society for its place in the modern global community.

Yet KANU’s campaign promise was, at its heart, intended to garner mass political support. Despite government rhetoric on the provision of free primary education, it was only in 1974, amidst the euphoria celebrating a decade of independence, that President Jomo Kenyatta, through a presidential decree, abolished tuition fees for the first four grades of primary school. This was not only ten years late, it was a completely unexpected pronouncement. Schools were unprepared for the spike in enrollment: between 1973 and 1974, the total enrollment for grades one to six jumped from 1.8 million to 2.8 million. The Ministry of Education was forced to recruit teachers en masse, hiring 39% more teachers by recruiting large numbers of untrained teachers who had themselves failed out of school (See Figure 1).

Since the decree was unexpected and unaccounted for in the projected estimates of the Ministry of Education, the government had no existing countermeasures to replace the lost revenue previously collected through school fees. School management committees of primary schools resorted to raising school revenue under the guise of “building levies” usually used for putting up new facilities. Ironically, the building levy was generally higher than the school fees charged prior to the decree. The drop-out rate soared, mirroring the previous increase in enrollment rates.

The government responded to this calamity by instituting various incentives to re-attract the students. In 1980, the government abolished all tuition, building, and school fees. It introduced a school milk scheme that provided a packet of milk once a week to each schoolchild. To further encourage enrollment, in 1985, the government restructured the education system and prolonged primary education by one year.

Yet, how was it to finance all these additional expenses of delivering primary education? The government’s brilliant solution: don’t. In 1988, the government introduced “cost-sharing policies” that called upon parents and school communities to finance capital and expenditure of primary education. With this model, the government would only have to pay teachers and administrators.
The effect of cost sharing was a disaster. The transfer of extra costs to parents coincided with the increased costs of the new educational system. In addition, the guidelines were unclear as to the extent of cost-sharing, and thus schools would impose any amount they wished—quadrupling the cost of schooling in many areas. Primary school gross enrollment rate (GER) declined from 98% in 1989 to 89% in 2002. In addition to low enrollment and high dropout rates, grade repetition and primary to secondary transition rates increased. Far from eliminating all fees for primary education, KANU increased the cost of primary education and negatively impacted access, retention, equity, and quality. Needless to say, the first campaign for free primary education ultimately collapsed.

Similar to the first campaign, the second campaign for free primary education accompanied Kenya’s second major transition of political power. In 2002, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) ran for the presidential election, challenging forty years of single party rule by the Kenya African National Union. At the centerpiece of the NARC’s platform was the promise (yet again) of free primary education. This was a major attack on the previous administration’s performance while offering a refreshing overhaul of political power. Yet this campaign, too, has disappointed, plagued by poor policy formulation and execution. Again, the children of Kenya have suffered at the hands of politicians.

Following the NARC’s victory on 6 January 2003, the Ministry of Education instituted a capitation grant of Ksh 1,020 (1,020 Kenyan Shillings) for every primary child. It expanded the education budget by 17% and increased the gross total expenditure of the education ministry by 21%. With the announcement of FPE, 1.2 to 1.3 million additional students entered the school system and the net enrollment ratio grew by approximately 20% following the implementation of the FPE policy.

However, the government rushed into implementing this policy without consulting educators; the resulting lack of clarity caused disorganization and rampant confusion among community members, teaching staff, and donors alike (See Figure 2). Unclear guidelines on admission have resulted in the entry of over-age children. Only a quarter of the pupils were actually in a grade that was suitable for their age and 44% were over-age for their grade by two or more years. FPE disbursements have not always been timely and the procurement procedures have been cumbersome and time consuming. The absence of a sustained and comprehensive communication strategy for free primary education means that educators and the public were neither informed nor prepared for changes the government foisted upon them.

Increased enrollments exacerbated the already insufficient human and physical capital needed to deliver quality education. Dropout rates were as high as 26%. Schools in the slums and marginalized regions saw the highest rates of enrollment, but were exactly the places where the infrastructure was weakest. The country was already short of properly trained teachers, and therefore unprepared to significantly ramp up the teaching force to decrease pupil-teacher ratios in classrooms. In 2003, Kenya had 175,000 public primary school teachers, but an additional 60,000 teachers were needed. The unavailability of sufficient physical facilities, school furniture, and equipment as well as the serious shortfalls in instructional materials and teachers imply that the quality of education offered remains questionable.

Furthermore, funding is still insufficient. School officials report that the budget for primary schools is only
the budget is far beyond the normal budget allocation. It is dependent on the country’s continued economic growth and significant foreign aid: World Bank ($50mil), the UK Department for International Development ($21.1 mil), the World Food Programme ($13.9 mil), OPEC ($9.9 mil), and UNICEF ($2.5 mil). In the meantime, prioritizing primary education displaces money that would otherwise go towards other sectors of education as well as from the health sector.

Free primary education has failed in Kenya because it has not been designed by educators, but hastily invented by politicians to appeal to voters. Politicians have acted irresponsibly by promising to deliver unrealistic goals, and then failing to adequately plan, resource, or implement FPE policy. Instead, politicians should step aside and let educators control educational policy: educational policy in Kenya must be de-politicized.

Nevertheless, the progress made from this second campaign for free primary education has been incredibly inspiring. Schools have exhibited phenomenal creativity in increasing internal efficiency with seemingly unchanging inputs. Some teachers work two shifts, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, to accommodate the increase in students. Some schools have created revenue streams, such as a passion fruit garden that one school uses to sell or to feed the students, who help garden. Other schools hire minimal staff, asking students to help with cleaning and maintaining the school. Kenyan educators have proven to be flexible and innovative.

The campaign for free primary education also highlights the power of appealing to—and leveraging—a people’s culture: in particular, Kenya’s ethic of harambee. A Kiswahili term that means “let’s pull together,” harambee is the country’s motto and promotes the idea of “self-help.” Harambee schools benefited from significant cost-sharing contributions, which may have worked if not for the extreme magnitude of the cause. In certain ways, the spirit of harambee serves as a metaphor for Kenya’s progress towards free primary education. Both evoked during calls for Kenya’s independence, harambee and FPE became political messages intended to strategically rally the collective people. Harambee inspires optimism: it embodies the potential a community—from a village to a nation—can achieve should the efforts of the Kenyan people pull together.

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Funding the Ubuntu Spirit

BY BRIDGET CONNOLLY & LUCY LITVAK

Social Crime Prevention in Khayelitsha:

“Before, I was a wrong person, doing stuff outside, doing crime and things. Also at school I was very rude. But when I’m doing Stars of Tomorrow, they teach me how to behave as a young kid, how to talk to other persons, how to handle different situations. So it changed my life to be a better life you see? Today I am a person who can at least do something.”

–Sinethemba Bagela (age 22) Founder of Inkanyezini Zangomso (Stars of Tomorrow)

Every week in the Cape Town township of Khayelitsha, thirty young people gather together to sing, drum, dance, and act. They call themselves “Inkanyezini Zangomso,” isiXhosa for “Stars of Tomorrow,” and, like stars, they shine brightly in a community known for youth violence and crime.

They wear their mission proudly on their uniforms: “Inkanyezini Zangomso: representing humanity, fighting crime, abuse and poverty,” and they work to achieve this mission through the arts. Their performance pieces integrate drama, music, and dance, and are often inspired by social issues and challenges within their own community, a poor township comprised of predominantly black South Africans.
descending or migrating from Xhosa communities in the Eastern Cape.

Although apartheid ended 16 years ago, the legacy of 350 years of oppression and exploitation of non-white South Africans by the white minority continues to pose challenges to community development in Khayelitsha.

The first Cape Town townships were developed as early as the 1920s to house male laborers who migrated from the apartheid regime-imposed “homelands” of the Xhosa people in the Eastern Cape to Cape Town to work. When pass laws were lifted in the 1980s, allowing many black families to join their husbands and fathers in Cape Town, these townships quickly became overcrowded. Some families built informal shelters in backyards, while others squatted elsewhere. The government built Khayelitsha in an effort to help with the overcrowding, but the number of people living there soon exceeded the existing housing units. Today, overcrowding in Khayelitsha continues as black South Africans continue to move from the Eastern Cape to the city to find work. Like a typical township, Khayelitsha is comprised of both informal settlements—expanse of precarious shacks the residents build out of scrap metal, corrugated metal sheets, and pieces of plastic—and formal housing built by the government—simple concrete structures that are in short supply. The government also fails to sufficiently deliver other basic services, such as running water, electricity, and education. The community faces many challenges due to its state of poverty, including hunger, disease, and crime.

Cape Town has the highest murder rate in the country as well as high rates of robbery, rape, and home burglaries. In a survey conducted, “It must be a major challenge therefore to engage with these young people and to reconstruct a more positive and less violent community.”

Although apartheid ended 16 years ago, the legacy of 350 years of oppression and exploitation of non-white South Africans by the white minority continues to pose challenges to community development in Khayelitsha.

Sinethemba Bagela is one of the founders of linkanyezi Zangomso. Like other youth from Khayelitsha, Sinethemba grew up in an environment burdened by many social challenges, one of the most oppressive being rampant crime, in which he himself played a part. Sinethemba was once a skollie, the common term for a young person who wreaks havoc in the neighborhood through crime and drug use.

Sinethemba has always been passionate about the arts, but it wasn’t until he formed linkanyezi Zangomso in 2007 that he stopped committing crimes and doing drugs. Many other group members are also former skollies. Gangsters from different gangs now fill the audience at linkanyezi Zangomso’s performances; because of their respect for the group, and their understanding of the group’s values, they do not fight after the show but talk with each other instead. Noticing this phenomenon, linkanyezi Zangomso members intentionally approach gang members to sell them tickets to their shows. Their performances also teach the audience about social issues, presenting stories about topics such as xenophobia, abuse, and HIV.

Supporting linkanyezi Zangomso is Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU), a development project working to improve the safety of township residents through a holistic set of situational, institutional, and social crime prevention strategies.

Since 2003, the City of Cape Town has implemented VPUU in partnership with the community of Khayelitsha, and with funding from the German Development Bank and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

"Social crime prevention" initiatives aim to mitigate the social risk factors for crime, and are grounded in research showing that in a community, the lower the level of social capital the higher the rate of violent crime [2]. According to the World Bank, social capital "encompasses the institutions, relationships, and norms that shape the quality and quantity of a society’s social interactions" [3]. VPUU’s primary strategy of social crime prevention is a government agency, called the Social Development Fund, which works with existing community groups to define and contribute to meeting their material needs. The Social Development Fund had funded approximately 140 groups as of August 2010.

The vast majority of groups serve youth such as linkanyezi Zangomso, which, in 2007, the Social Development Fund identified as an existing community group that contributed to social crime prevention and awarded the group a new sound system and uniforms. Other groups the Social Development Fund frequently supports include soup kitchens, which the fund supplies with large pots and stove gas so they are better equipped to serve the hungry, and preschools, which the fund supplies with fences and mattresses to keep students physically safe and comfortable.

(Continued on next page)
Our Community-Based Research Project: Evaluating the Impact of the Social Development Fund:

“The Social Development Fund is making things, it’s not a theory. There’s a lot of change since they started. And, they activate the groups...and the Social Development Fund helps those groups. I think they activate the kids because of those things they buy for them.”

– Zoliswa Mzondi, Founder of Thandolwethu Youth Centre.

During the spring and summer of 2010, we participated in the Stanford Program in Cape Town. With support from Program Director Timothy Stanton and financial assistance from two Stanford grants, we designed and implemented an impact evaluation of the Social Development Fund. Our study sought to help the Social Development Fund understand how its funding impacts community life, and ultimately crime prevention, within its target neighborhoods.

Guided by the principles of community-based, participatory research, we worked interdependently with the Social Development Fund staff at each stage—from preliminary meetings downtown in the Cape Town Civic Centre to delivering the products of our study to far-flung municipal offices in Khayelitsha. For five months, we traveled from the Stanford student residence to Khayelitsha, a 20-kilometer trip on the freeway past a landscape of sprawling shacks, perched on the sandy Cape Flats. We spent most of our hours in Khayelitsha with our interpreters and community guides conducting in-depth interviews with leaders of 43 groups funded by the Social Development Fund, and also with participants from 17 of those groups.

Our study collected many stories similar to that of Sinethemba and linkanyezipini Zangomso. Our research overwhelmingly indicates that community groups can help prevent youth from perpetrating crime through positive social activities, giving them access to a safe physical space, and building their interpersonal and life skills.

As the captain of one of the soccer teams said, “A lot of the members are quite young...so this gives them an opportunity to relate to others. The biggest thing is that [in] the community, well there is quite a high level of criminal activity, so by making sure that some of the youngsters grow up in a team environment—where it’s not only about what they want to do, but its also what the greater good is—it gives [the youth] another influence, not only that which is a wrong element, which is crime.”

Material resources from the Social Development Fund help build the capacity of these groups in numerous ways. Our interviews revealed a series of trends in how groups are strengthened when their material needs are met, which included an increase in membership and frequency of activity, a boost in the self-esteem of group members, improved recognition by others in the community, and access to formal organizations. For overall membership alone, our study found that 84% of groups had an increase in levels of membership after receiving funding from the Social Development Fund.

Soccer teams most commonly received uniforms from the Social Development Fund, an improvement that was consistently linked to an increase in membership. One coach reported that when young boys saw older players with new jerseys, they wanted to join the team—that particular team gained about 26 more players. Another soccer coach described how the jerseys boosted the self-esteem of his players: “With the help of the Social Development Fund we managed to get a very quality kit [uniform], which made us feel like professionals. Because the kids now they have also got soccer boots, which they didn't afford, their families. So now we managed to get those things. So they feel very professional—that they can reach the stars.”

As previously described, linkanyezipini Zangomso received uniforms from the Social Development Fund with their mission printed on the back. The group wears them with pride in the streets to spread their message. The uniforms help convey their mission more clearly. With the new sound system from the Social Development Fund, linkanyezipini Zangomso played music loud enough to draw in others from the street. Youth passing by were often drawn inside their venue, and would stay to watch performances.

The new uniforms and sound system also helped linkanyezipini Zangomso gain access to a practice space in a local high school, as the founders reported that the local high school saw the materials as a sign that the group was becoming more formalized.

Overall, our research suggests that the community groups that serve youth are an effective form of social crime prevention. For example, one indicator our study used was how safe group leaders feel when participating in their project—91% reported that they feel safer when participating in their group compared to when they are in other places outside their home. And overall, the Social Development Fund builds
the capacity of the under-resourced groups to further prevent crime. For example, over 90% of these group leaders felt more confident in their role at their group after receiving funding, indicating an increase in their capacity to lead the group.

In considering these findings, it is important to consider a few serious limitations to the study: the sample was not randomly selected from all funded groups, the interviews captured groups’ perceptions of impact, the responses could be tainted due to our affiliation with the donor organization, and our observations and impressions were influenced by our subjective position as white American college-educated women.

It is important to note that our study also showed that providing material resources to build the capacity of youth groups within Khayelitsha can also have negative impacts. Some of the members of linkanyezi Zangomso think they are de facto better than other performing arts groups now that they have a sound system and uniforms. Sinethemba reported that some of what linkanyezi Zangomso received from the Social Development Fund has been stolen from their homes, so now they exercise constant vigilance. One soccer coach described how new jerseys from the Social Development Fund attracted so many new players to join his team that they then did not have enough jerseys for everyone. These stories exemplify classic conundrums with increasing material resources in poor communities—the creation of new inequalities that can perpetuate divisiveness and crime, and dependence on external funding to continue development.

 Nonetheless, the Social Development Fund’s work has had a positive impact not only on specific groups, but on neighborhoods in Khayelitsha more generally. Many young people in Khayelitsha are choosing to engage in positive group activities in place of crime. As other residents of Khayelitsha witness these activities, it transforms the way in which they perceive the youth—as assets rather than problems, as contributors to community cohesion rather than destroyers of it—and therefore the level of safety they feel.

The UN projects that by 2030 Africa’s collective population will become 50% urban, and that rapid and unplanned urbanization appears to bear a direct relation to increased crime [3]. In order to prevent an increase in crime, it is necessary for African cities to adopt tested urban policies. Our study was the first impact evaluation of the Social Development Fund, and while certainly continued evaluation is needed to prove its effectiveness, our research shows that this model of funding existing community groups is promising as a policy of social crime prevention in poor, urban Africa. As Sinethemba from linkanyezi Zangomso expressed, government support for community groups engaging in crime prevention can be profound: “[receiving materials] was a motivation to us because when we have those things, we get that spirit where at least there is someone who sees what we are doing, and they like what we are doing. That is a big motivation to us, we are keeping working.”

Many young people in Khayelitsha are choosing to engage in positive group activities in place of crime.

Lucy Litvak is a senior majoring in Human Biology with a concentration in Community Health. Her course of study has focused on the social determinants of health inequities. On campus, Lucy’s involvement has included Students Taking on Poverty (STOP), the Stanford Labor Action Coalition (SLAC), and Garden Manager at Synergy Cooperative House.

References:
Seeking Justice, Stability and Understanding in the Democratic Republic of Congo

BY CAITY MONROE

The problem:

More people have died in the past twelve years in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) than in the genocides in Cambodia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur combined. The conflict in Congo is difficult to grasp because of the complexity of its origins as well as the devastation it has caused. This conflict has resulted from a historically weak state, destructive foreign and elite actors, competition over natural resources, and ideological grievances. While it is difficult to give an atrocity of such magnitude adequate recognition, the world has yet to come even close with the Congo.

Though it may be a difficult atrocity to face, it is also one that the world cannot afford to ignore. Over a century has passed since Joseph Conrad’s fictional Mr. Kurtz in Heart of Darkness described the Congo’s brutalities, saying, “the horror, the horror,” but one could apply a similar description to the east of the country today. The current crisis began in 1996 following a spillover of the 1994 Rwandan genocide that caused over one million Rwandan refugees to flee into eastern Congo. Among those refugees were ex-génocidaires, who began to rearm in the refugee camps. This prompted a small force headed by Congolese soldier Laurent Kabila—father of the current President Joseph Kabila—to invade the Congo with the backing of Uganda and Rwanda, sparking the first Congo war. When that force overthrew the late President Mobutu Sese Seko a year later, the senior Kabila became the DRC’s new leader but fell out with his former backers.

However, Rwanda and Uganda were uneasy to relinquish their presence in the Congo, which had enabled them to conduct military operations against opposing rebel militias, protect valued ethnic groups, and secure considerable profits from Congo’s minerals. Thus, Rwanda and Uganda launched another attack on the Congo initiating the second Congo war. Though the second war technically ended in 2003, violence has continued in the east.

What should be done?

Some attempts have been made to stop this ongoing violence, and while some have had moderate success, the situation is far from resolved. It is important to understand these efforts, their shortcomings, and ways they can be improved, for stability and peace to be achieved. The following sections constitute brief efforts to evaluate the situation in the Congo and how it could be improved:

1. Improve security forces:

One important step is to reform or improve current security mechanisms in the country. While the United Nations Mission in the Congo (MONUSCO) has helped bring relative peace to much of the west since its establishment in 1999, it has not been as successful in protecting Congolese civilians in the east. In fact, its alliance with the corrupt and violent Forces Armiées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC)—Congo’s national army—in military operations against the Hutu-extremist FDLR resulted in many civilian casualties. MONUSCO has a history of failing to protect civilians even when stationed in extremely close proximity to the violence. This was the case with some recent instances of mass rape in the east.

Some scholars, such as Columbia University based author Séverine Autesserre, have noted that that MONUSCO and other peace-building efforts have mostly ignored the local dynamics of Congo’s violence, including local ethnic, land, or ideological issues. These are important reasons behind the fighting—particularly in the eastern regions—that need to be addressed before the region can achieve a sustainable peace.

The Congo also desperately needs a strong and stable government. This requires a strong, legitimate national army, but currently FARDC is as abusive as the rebel groups it fights. FARDC is plagued by disunity resulting from the unsuccessful integration of the Tutsi-dominated National Congress for the Defense of the People (CNDP) militia troops. Though the CNDP was technically integrated into Congo’s national army in 2009, much of its command structure and former loyalties have remained the same despite a change in uniform. The national army needs to professionalize its troops and end the culture of impunity that enables the east’s violence.

2. Regulate conflict minerals:

Congo’s current crisis was primarily caused by the repercussions of the Rwandan genocide and weakness of the Congolese state. But conflict over minerals has since helped sustain and motivate the violence (United Nations Panel of Experts). The exploitation of coltan, tungsten, tin, and gold motivates armed groups to gain control of mineral-rich regions by using violence and rape. Militias subsequently obtain funds from exporting these minerals to buy arms and ammunition.

Celebrities and senators alike have started to advocate for better legislation regarding “conflict minerals.” Section 1502 of the Wall Street Reform Bill, passed in July 2010, advocates stricter auditing and surveillance of mineral trade. These initiatives are promising but should be accompanied by efforts to ensure that unintended consequences—such as boycotts of all Congolese
minerals to avoid the burden of stringent reporting—don’t hurt an already crippled economy.

3. Address bad neighbors:

Rwanda has also played a destructive role in the Congo by targeting ethnic groups and funding violent militia. This hostile political environment makes it an unwelcoming place for many innocent Hutu refugees. A more open political environment might permit refugees to return home, thus alleviating some of the problems of overcrowding, disease, and starvation in refugee camps in the Kivus.

Yet Rwandan President Paul Kagame, whose Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) helped end the 1994 genocide, holds a peculiar place of reverence among Western political leaders. An expert at using genocide guilt as a political tool, Kagame has impressed foreign leaders with his transparent use of foreign aid and strong domestic policies, thus distracting them from RPF crimes in the Congo. For instance, an RPF (renamed RPA in 1994) killing campaign in Congo between 1993 and 2003 was recently confirmed by a 2010 UN mapping report. Also, for many years, Rwanda supported the CNDP, which wreaked havoc on Eastern Congo, exploited minerals, and recruited child soldiers in mass quantities.

The CNDP disbanded in 2009 partially because Sweden and the Netherlands froze aid to Rwanda following documentation of its support to the CNDP. Many Western countries could apply such diplomatic pressures on Rwanda to influence Kagame’s actions in regional affairs. In October of 2010, the UN published a mapping report that detailed—among many other aspects of the Congo’s recent violence—Rwandan-inflicted atrocities in the DRC. This documentation is promising for it reflects increased awareness and waning impunity. But it also raises some complicated issues. Eastern Congo is desperately in need of peace, and that peace will be difficult to achieve if Rwanda and Congo are fighting over each other’s crimes. Justice and historical truth are essential to solving the problem in the Congo, yet we must hope that these aims are not achieved at the expense of significant progress toward ending the violence.

Hope for the future?

Unfortunately, addressing only one problem in the Congo will not automatically solve the others, and could lead instead to an incomplete peace. While rape clinics in the east are noble efforts, they will not solve the crisis of sexual violence. Mass rape is not simply a result of some inherent regional chaos—it is often used to intimidate a population, gain control of a territory, and assert authority and power. Clinics do little to address the motives for the use of rape as well as the impunity that enables it; consequently, many patients return shortly after their release having been raped yet again. Furthermore, marginalized civilians will likely continue to join the militias that perpetrate these crimes of sexual violence and mineral exploitation if economic opportunities are scarce and if impunity remains the norm. Regardless of the stringency of conflict mineral regulations, without a stronger state apparatus and a well-trained national army, exploitation and corruption will likely continue, and monitoring mines scattered throughout the country will be extremely difficult. Even if conflict mineral regulations, a strengthened state, and a reformed MONUSCO force are implemented, repressed ethnic tensions or hostile political environ-
ments in the region could threaten long-term stability. This conflict will persist if its root causes—not just its immediate symptoms—are not properly addressed. Virtually every effort undertaken in the Congo will require a stronger Congolese state, Congolese participation, and persistence.

For many years, the international community has either ignored or contributed to the conflict in the Congo. U.S. media coverage as well as public outcry over Congo’s atrocities have been scarce over the past decade and a half. Yet slowly, with some visits from political leaders, newspaper articles detailing widespread rape, and legislation regarding Congo’s minerals, more people in the U.S. are starting to notice this conflict. Hopefully, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon’s recent Congo visits, the emergence of conflict mineral initiatives, and the current investigations into the destructive role of neighboring Rwanda will generate more international efforts to tackle the conflict’s unpleasant but inescapable reality.

Last October, thousands of Congolese women, led by President Kabila’s wife, marched against the brutal sexual violence that has plagued “the rape capital of the world.” The Congolese people want and deserve a sustainable peace, and the rest of the world should help ensure that they obtain it. The magnitude of the death toll, brutality of the violence, the instability in the region, and the tragically unfulfilled potential of the Congo is evidence that further ignorance or inaction is no longer tenable.

Caiti Monroe is a junior at Stanford University originally from Eugene, Oregon. She is a History major with a concentration on Africa and a specific interest in conflict and human rights. She is hoping to travel to the African Great Lakes region this summer to conduct oral history interviews for her senior thesis.

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In October, 2010, Olive Lembe Kabila led thousands of Congolese women in a march against the sexual violence that has plagued the eastern region of the Congo. (Photo source: Aljazeera.com)
Achieving health in Africa is important as an issue of human equity and as a major contributor to poverty reduction and human development. The continent has almost 25% of the world’s burden of disease but only 3% of its health workforce [1]. This burden of disease has evolved in the 21st century into the dual burden of infectious diseases such as malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis and non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as strokes, cancer, and heart disease. Indeed, the latter NCDs now account for over 50% of deaths in Africa.

The US healthcare industry plays a major role in the brain-drain of the precious few physicians in English-speaking low resource countries: 25% of our hospitals are staffed by international medical graduates. A recent study of all sub-Saharan medical schools by Fitzhugh Mullan et al drew attention to the ubiquitous faculty shortages in basic and clinical sciences, weak internet connections and decaying physical infrastructure of schools [2]. Overall, sub-Saharan Africa has an average physician-to-population ratio of 18 per 100,000 compared to India (60:100,000), or the US (285:100,000). A good way to visualize this maldistribution is highlighted by a map of the world indicating these ratios across several countries in the different continents (Figure 1). As the new Dean of Global Health at Stanford, I have made a strong commitment to having our medical center and university play a role in mitigating this workforce crisis. For this reason, over the past eighteen months since my arrival, we have worked on developing partnerships, grant opportunities, and research initiatives in Africa.

When the US National Institutes of Health offered an opportunity for 12 universities in Africa to partner with American and other overseas institutions to compete for 5 year multimillion dollar grants with the goal of increasing the number of health care workers by 140,000, our group

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**Figure 1:** Population-to-physician ratio across the world coded from smallest to largest by gradient of text size. Cuba has the most favorable ratio at 170:1 while Malawi and Tanzania share the worst ratio at 50,000:1. (Figure source: http://bigthink.com/ideas/21237 (Published Sept, 2007).
submitted a proposal with the University of Zimbabwe to build research and clinical capacity as part of a retention strategy for faculty in Zimbabwe. Stanford and the University of Zimbabwe worked together with the University of Colorado to present a novel educational plan and were awarded an eight million dollar grant to work on rebuilding a medical school and health system devastated by recent politics. During the economic period of 1999-2009 many medical faculty left the country resulting in only 39% of faculty positions being filled and a 49% drop in medical school enrollment for lack of teachers. In 2009, only 19% of internal medicine training positions were filled. With this grant, we hope to strengthen teaching, plug the holes in the curriculum with internet resources and overseas faculty rotations, and debut a unique community-based mentoring/teaching triangle across oceans.

Having lived in Zimbabwe with my husband and two small children in the late 1980’s at the time of independence and the end of apartheid, I worked hard to build capacity and teach at what was then a state-of-the-art medical school. It was exciting and heady times before HIV, Mugabe, and violent economic instability excoriated the face and spirit of this once-rich country. The new Medical Education Partnership Initiative (MEPI) grant comes at a time of potentially new constitutional referendum and elections. It was brave of NIH to support us in this endeavor and I look forward to the role Stanford will play in helping to transform medical education across the continent.

Other new initiatives occurring within the umbrella of Stanford Global Health in Africa include a partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and the Kenyan Medical Research Institute (KEMRI) in the slums of Kibera, Nairobi, and rural Kisumu, Kenya. This partnership revolves around projects involving development of a tuberculosis vaccine, a malaria vaccine and a human immune monitoring project with roll-out of rotavirus and pneumococcal vaccines. A recent trip to Rwanda included meeting with the Minister of Health at his invitation to help develop curriculum and sub-specialty training at their new teaching hospital in Kigali. Our Johnson & Johnson scholar program has been actively partnering with Liberian President Ellen Sirleaf’s main teaching hospital in Monrovia as well as in South Africa at a small hospital in the epicenter of multidrug and extremely drug-resistant tuberculosis in KwaZulu-Natal. We also teach at Mulago Hospital in Uganda on a busy hospital ward that has a 30% death rate due to HIV and often-preventable infectious diseases. Our hope for the future is that these strategically targeted partnerships around clinical care and educational capacity building will help retain African health workers as we work with our new colleagues to build a healthier, more just world.

Lastly, Stanford anchors the unique Global Health Corps (www.ghcorps.org), a non-profit organization that manages a program similar to the Peace Corps, designed to send college graduates to underserved areas around the globe to work for global health equity. Logistically, the program pairs recent college graduates from Africa with American graduates and sends the bonded pair for a year to sites in Africa with Partners in Health and the Clinton Foundation. It offers a serious field experience and a unique personal opportunity to expand boundaries.

Working to build healthcare capacity in Africa is an exciting challenge as each country has its own specific nuanced obstacles which may need to be addressed. Government partnerships, particularly in post-conflict settings or in-conflict settings are also a challenge at times but grassroots capacity building means engaging with country leadership in order to build sustainable foundations. Stanford has the intellectual resources to make a difference and the new Center for Global Health hopes to galvanize this ambition with genuine efforts from individuals across the university landscape.

Michele Barry, MD, FACP holds appointments at Stanford in the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, the Graduate School of Business and the School of Medicine where she is the Senior Associate Dean for Global Health and Director of Global Health Programs in Medicine.

References:

Ways to Get Involved

Students, residents, fellows and faculty can get involved with the Office of Global Health by joining the monthly global health representative group meetings publicized through their website: http://globalhealth.stanford.edu/. Representatives from all levels participate in these meetings which report on updates from the office, plan for upcoming events, and discuss ways to improve communication centered on global health across campus. The website also features many funding and job opportunities for all levels of students. In particular, the Office of Global Health hires two undergraduate interns a year to work with the Dean’s management team and receive mentorship in their development as leaders in Global Health efforts. If you are interested in applying, please contact the Program Administrator, Joce Rodriguez (joce@stanford.edu).

If you are a medical student, resident, or fellow, there are many opportunities for you to work in the field for a minimum of four weeks. If interested, please contact the Program Administrator, Joce Rodriguez (or Dr. Brian Blackburn: Blackburn@stanford.edu if you are a medical student) to learn more about the Global Health application area.

Lastly, a great way to stay abreast of all the different global health events and projects across campus is to join the Global Health Interest Group where, every quarter, faculty with a range of interests, from public health to bioscience and innovation, discuss their global health interests and projects. You may also sign up for the Office of Global Health’s bi-weekly digest which is issued every other Monday. To do this, please visit us on the web by going to Stanford Global Health’s homepage listed above.
INSIGHTS

Notes From Nairobi: Mapping the Future Through ICT
BY LISA POGGIALI

I first came to Kenya in 2003, when the country was fresh off the heels of a monumental democratic political transition. Opposition leader Mwai Kibaki had won an historic election, ending twenty-four years of incumbent rule by the then unpopular president Daniel arap Moi. The optimism was palpable: on the streets, in taxi cabs, in the beauty salons...there was a certain collective glint in Kenyans' eyes. At the time, a survey administered by Gallup International proclaimed Kenyans the most optimistic people in the world. I believed it.

The Central Business District in Nairobi is the product of a British planning sensibility: a perfectly symmetrical grid. The clean lines and well articulated street signs press up against—but never quite contain—the frantic pace of everyday urban life: matatu touts aggressively fighting for just one more passenger, government officials and businessmen in pressed suits sliding effortlessly between speeding cars, hawkers presiding over piles of bootleg DVDs that spill onto the pavement. How to navigate this new space?

My sense of direction has always been a bit nonsensical. Even when I diligently pay attention to where I am going, I often wind up someplace new. Always by default, never by design. Directions, I have long thought, have much in common with math: you know there is a bigger picture, a theoretical backdrop to which routine operations must relate, yet this wide-angle view rarely explicitly informs the mundane activities of everyday addition and subtraction. Determining the location of the nearest hoteli (restaurant), by analogy, rarely requires a broader understanding of urban space. But I need this bigger picture in order to grasp the minutiae. Perhaps this is the downside to years of anthropological training: if I can't comprehend the how and why of spatial arrangement, finding my way becomes a source of uncertainty and anxiety. So, when I arrived in Nairobi, I sought out a map. A map, I was sure, would allow me to sublimate the disorder of street life into the order of urban planning. It would give me the bigger picture I was looking for.

Yet, I couldn't find one anywhere. Bookshop after bookshop turned me away. Employees explained that they thought they had seen a map of Nairobi once, but that it catered primarily to the safari circuit, and would probably be difficult to find. Kenyans, I quickly came to realize, did not use maps.

This is not to say they weren't able to easily traverse city space. For instance, I soon learned that the matatu that would take me home from the Central Business District (CBD) was not locatable based on street name (Latema Road), but rather by the word "Odeon"—a cinema housed in a crumbling building on the corner of the matatu stage. Further, my matatu drop-off point was not designated by the road on which I lived (Argwings Khodek), but rather was called "Yaya", the name of a large shopping center that indexed roughly a 10-block radius surrounding the complex.

Anthropologists have a name for this way of conceptualizing geography: "place names," i.e., locally meaningful understandings of place and space, which are linked to historically specific social and cultural cosmologies. It was clear that Kenyans understood their urban landscape through a set of place names, rather than through explicitly demarcated streets. As one informant recently explained to me, "We don't have physical addresses in Kenya, so you just say 'it's by the big rock on Thika Road' so we know where you mean." For me, this was a totally different mode of understanding city space: approximate, relational, and—particularly frustrating for me—map-less.

Four years later, I returned to Kenya in the wake of another election. Unlike the previous one, which was characterized by exuberant optimism, this one was marked by frustration, bloodshed and shame. More than 1300 people were killed in politico-ethnic violence as reports of vote rigging surfaced and the legitimacy of incumbent President Mwai Kibaki's victory...
over challenger Raila Odinga was questioned. Half a century's worth of historical injustices over issues of land, political patronage, and ethnicity bubbled to the surface. A Benjaminian flash in a moment of danger; the past threw the present into stark relief. Shortly thereafter, detailed maps of Kenya began cropping up everywhere.

What had happened? How and why had cartography crept into the Kenyan national consciousness?

In early January 2008 reports of violence in Rift Valley and Western provinces, as well as parts of Nairobi and Mombasa, began to surface, spread through technologies old (word of mouth, the printed page) and new (blogs, digital cameras, and Twitter accounts). The government instituted a media blackout under the pretext that more information would incite more violence, which prompted a response from prominent members in Kenya's then-infantile tech community. Kenyan bloggers and IT professionals wanted to find a way to spread crucial information about the ongoing crisis, so they pooled their technical skills and created a mobile phone platform rooted in the idea of “citizen journalism.” Kenyans were encouraged to send SMS (text messages) via their mobile phones detailing the horrific events they had witnessed in the aftermath of the election. This information was plotted on a Google map, textual information alongside cartographic representation. The platform, and the organization formed to manage it, was named Ushahidi, “testimony” in Kiswahili, Kenya’s national language.

45,000 Kenyans testified in this post-election period and a digital mapping culture in Kenya was born.

Today, digital maps are ubiquitous in the country; NGOs have done much to spread their popularity. Social justice organizations map peace initiatives; media organizations map journalists’ stories; health-related organizations map medical stockouts; and entire projects are dedicated to mapping the slums of Nairobi. For the most part, these maps are produced through the collective testimonial of Kenyans.

My recently-completed Ph.D. research in Kenya hinges on a broad set of questions concerning the cultural, social, and material production of digital technology, and its social and political effects. Yet, I keep coming back to maps. Perhaps this is partly because cartographic modes of knowing have so intimately informed my own understandings of urban space. This causes me to reflect on how digital mapping technologies are changing the ways in which Kenyans understand the spaces they create and move through. How do digital maps make—or unravel—statistical information? How do they inform perceptions of national and urban identity? How do they enter into, or perhaps even create? And why digital maps, specifically?

There are two questions I ask of all the developers I interview: 1) What drew you to technological development as opposed to another profession?; and 2) What do you think would impel someone to send in an SMS about an event they have witnessed?

More often than not, responses get me thinking about place and space. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is popular in Kenya for many reasons, not the least of which is economic. Recently, the government has been encouraging universities to set up ICT courses, and, given the soaring popularity of mobile phones, there is a general understanding that an ICT degree is eminently marketable. Yet, economics is not the whole picture. For many, writing code and designing websites is a way of inserting oneself in an unfolding narrative about success, prosperity, and futurity in Kenya, free from government interests and all of their corresponding signifiers (The rise of the middle classes in Kenya is intimately linked to the development of the post-independence state and its associated forms of political patronage and “corruption”). Developers, I am told, don’t need to wear a well-tailored suit and tie to make their money; they don’t need to trudge to a high-rise office every day; they don’t even need to work in or close to the Central Business District. They can locate themselves outside of a physical space that they find confining (the office, the CBD, the restrictive fabric of a suit and tie), and simultaneously—and relatively—place themselves outside of a social space in which economic success is contingent upon proximity to the state.

Participating in the creation of a digital map evokes similar sentiments about the power of place. Digital mapping is “about being part of history,” one of my informants insisted. “But why,” I inquired, “is it crucial that this information is communicated in the form of a map?”

“Because you can see Kenya,” he explained, “and you can find yourself there.”

Locating oneself. Having someone locate you. Perhaps every major incidence of violence disturbs one’s sense of place. 350,000 people were uprooted from their homes as a result of the 2007/2008 post-election violence. Many others watched as their surroundings—once familiar—became strange. 45,000 have since placed themselves on digital maps.

The Kenyans I have spoken to don’t want to be lost in the waves of bureaucratic wrangling and political propaganda that characterize the post-independence state. ICT in general—and mapping specifically—offers both a road out of that conversation, and a road into a new one, as developers insert themselves into a familiar narrative—the formation of the middle class, national reconciliation, the march of history—in a different way. One might say developers are attempting to recoup that former sense of optimism—and the material effects they thought it might deliver—by (re)locating themselves vis-à-vis the world of ICT. While the effects of this repositioning are currently open to question, it is clear that mapping one’s path—in both a physical and social sense—is at the heart of the matter.

Lisa Poggiali is a Ph.D candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Stanford University. Her research examines the cultural, social, and political dimensions of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in urban Kenya. She is currently conducting two years of ethnographic fieldwork in Nairobi, focusing specifically on the intersection of digital mapping and mobile phone technology, and the forms of world-making that this intersection calls into being.
Q: You are speaking today of the Ubuntu philosophy. What is it?
A: It means “humanness.” In many Bantu languages, the primary substance of being is actually “mtu.” For example, “mtu”—“person,” “kitu”—“thing,” a thing, place, time and they all have “mtu” in it. I think this concept is very good because it shows the oneness of humanity and the oneness of the universe, because what underlies the universe is that “mtu.”

Q: What is your speech [tonight] going to focus on?
A: The whole idea of network as opposed to hierarchy. A network really has no one center. Think of a fishing net. All of those nodes give and take simultaneously. Interconnected, yes, but, more so it is [about] both giving and taking. The strength of a net comes from that balance of energy in a net. So to me that concept of network, as opposed to hierarchy and division, is very important. Unfortunately, the world is organized on hierarchy and division. Take for instance [my pet subject of languages]. Languages are organized like some aristocracy. European languages, and the[n] languages of Africa and Asia and so on. And it is not true. All languages have the same potentiality. There is no language that has “blue blood”. All languages have the same potential for growth and for development, as do cultures; to give and something to learn from others. A hierarchy assumes that the aristocracy of cultures and languages, has nothing to learn from one another. Many are “lowly” languages and cultures and so on.

Q: Where does Ubuntu fit in this view of things? Humanism in the African sense?
A: Every Bantu language talks “Ado” or “Modo.” It means human being. If I meet, say a European, he or she is “Modo,” a human being from Europe. I really like to think of Ubuntu as this sort of “primary substance of being” more than just plain African, although it is, of course, embodied in [some] African languages and cultures. It is more universal and that is why I think it is very rich.
Q: What themes do you feel are not being addressed by African writers today?
A: If you take African literature as a whole, no matter what language it’s written in, they cover, really, many themes of relevance. The thing I critique is the tendency of African intellectual productions to be in European languages. I feel strongly about that. I teach a course on colonialism and the rise of modern African literature. Development of the modern world including the West cannot be comprehended fully without seeing colonialism. Even the intellectual history of ideas. Beginning with the post-Renaissance you cannot think of it without colonialism. So Africa was always in the mix although not under conditions that were always beneficial to it. [People should] think about African literature, from ancient to [the] post-colonial as a literature that really addresses the human in our world today more centrally than I can think of any other literature. Not because it is necessarily superior to other literatures, but because the conditions that produce it are so intertwined with the being of the world today.

Q: Were the 1960’s a boom time for African intellectuals and writers compared to today?
A: When we were beginning to write [in the 60’s] there was a lot of energy and optimism. It emanate[d] from the anti-colonial energy in society as a whole because [in the 60’s], not just Africa, but also the world [was changing]. Every nation was demanding independence, there were wars for independence going on in Kenya, in Algeria, India became independent in 1947, China became liberated in 1948, Ghana in 1957. This energy found its way into the lives of intellectuals. If you look at the writers who emerge in the 60’s (not the early ones in South Africa) but the ones who emerge in the 50’s and 60’s they were nearly all university students, or just graduated from university. Where did these young people get their energy? It’s not that they were any brighter than us, the ones who came after, but the energy that was there was reflected in their work—their energy. The same energy will come back because Africa still needs to fight for social revolutions, [for] social liberation, meaning literally the real economic and political empowerment of all. And that is not yet there.

Q: Does African literature today address the ideals, ethics or ethos of African societies as opposed to, say, Western ones?

Q: What influence do you feel that the world wide web, the internet, and new technologies, are going to have on the consumption of African literature going forward?
A: It opens possibilities. I don’t think technology is bad for Africa, or even African literature. Imagine, for instance, this iPAD [carried by SAUTI interviewers]. We can download many books with this. Imagine if every African child had one of these and access to internet.

Q: What is your assessment of some recent political developments like in Kenya—which recently set the tone with a “government of national unity” that has been replicated in Zimbabwe and attempted most recently without success in Ivory Coast?
A: What we need, whether [in] Kenya or Zimbabwe or Ivory Coast, are people-based governments. You don’t want a government of only the elite. The idea is to have the government meet the aspirations of the people. To what extent are these governments, whatever they are, rooted and geared toward meeting the aspirations of the people?

Q: Where do you see this social movement and social transformation coming from?
A: I don’t know, but obviously the problems are so huge and only social movements that are based on those needs can really address the problems of Africa and provide stability. But when you get a situation in which we don’t believe in initiatives from within Africa, we don’t believe in ourselves, in a sense. Look at the simple thing of African languages. Some of the most hostile positions come from African governments. And the hostility need not come in terms of the political suppression of those languages; rather it is that they somehow don’t have “space” in the education system of the country. All of the resources are geared toward English, French, and Portuguese. But who is actually benefitting from resources being confined to production of a global elite? These are the kinds of things we have to rethink, fundamentally. To rethink our way of creating policies and positions that make Africa believe in itself. And then engage the world.

Q: Do you think this is a challenge for future writers?
A: Well, for everybody in Africa. All intellectuals have to think of ways and means of empowerment of our base in Africa. Because it is only when we have an Africa that is trying this, that we can engage the world on the basis of networking, if you like, on the basis of strength, not on the basis of weakness.

Q: So, are you writing another book?
A: Yes, actually. My book, Dreams in a Time of War, is a childhood memoir. I am working on the second volume in this series, the second phase of my youth. It is tentatively called In the House of the Interpreter.

Fun Facts about wa Thiong’o:

- Wa Thiong’o travels with a Macbook Air. He is optimistic about young and new writers and recently attended Kwani, a cross-generation conversation between older and newer writers. Among them was his son, Mukoma wa Ngugi, author of Nairobi Heat.
- Wa Thiong’o’s travel reading included The Teaching of Literature: Theory and Method, in Swahili.

Angelo Izama is a Ugandan journalist, researcher and co-founder of a human security think tank in Kampala. He is currently a Knight Fellow at Stanford and previously was awarded the Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellowship by the National Endowment of Democracy.

Hiyabel Tewoldemedhin is an American-born Eritrean raised in Kenya. She is currently a senior majoring in Economics and International Relations and is interested in eastern African politics and development policy.
Sunlight flames,  
breaking through the dawn.  

Illuminating Kiptusuri.  
Where kerosene burns  
to light the home.  

But even that fizzes,  
Quickly.  

A small piece of metal can change everything,  
can bring a single light.  
Sunshine is stored, charging the battery.  

Grades improve  
Stores open at night  
Children are safe from burns  

All because of a single light.  

Phones are charged,  
New stoves are made,  
Business is created  

All because of a single light.  

A single light in Kiptusuri.

Ketaki Shriram, Class of 2013, is a potential Communication Major and Creative Writing minor. She has previously self-published a fantasy fiction novel for middle-schoolers, Sorceress of the Himalayas: www.sorceressofthehimalayas.com. In her free time, Ketaki enjoys tennis, fro-yo, and watching The Office. The title of her piece was inspired by a New York Times article about the residents of Kiptusuri in Kenya.
Sweet Superstition

BY TANAKA MAWINDI

I remember the times when…
Kneeling, she sweeps the mahogany floor
Summoning dust particles
To an already dusty broom
As I imitate.
Suddenly, a bristle touches
My leg—bare
The burden that is now mine…
“You must bite the broom or you won't have any children.
Kurumidza!—Hurry,” she says.
So I bite
The dusty, sweet superstition
Away
Everytime.

Breath-taking scene.
Red meat sliced and diced.
Gogo sweeps as
Faces smeared in crimson
Pass by her side.

Suddenly, the bristles touch,
A leg—bare,
Immediately,
At no summons,
A girl bites the dusty, sweet superstition
Away.

Tanaka Mawindi is currently a sophomore pursuing a B.A. in Comparative Literature with a minor in Portuguese. She was born and raised in Harare, Zimbabwe. Her aspirations are to live in a foreign country for a year after she graduates from Stanford, to become a heart surgeon, and to enjoy life's pleasures.
Most know the saying, “A picture is worth a thousand words,” —the implication that a picture contains some deeper, profound meaning. Well, I have spent almost two years looking back on photographs of my students in Qobboo, Ethiopia trying to think of any words to say or write about them, trying to find meaning. When friends ask about my time spent teaching in Ethiopia, I show them slideshows of my students hoping that the pictures will speak for me. It’s only this year that I understand the significance and personal value of these photographs.

In June of 2009, I arrived on the doorstep of a host family uninformed about my homestay. Hundreds of children battled for a seat in my classroom which was only sized for twenty. My money was stolen. I learned my host father was a drug lord.

Soon, however, my students walked me home from school every day and we practiced vocabulary along the way. We laughed and sang together on walks to the aqueduct, eager to drink the cool water and revitalize from the scathing sun overhead. Football games consumed our

Dear Africa, you helped me write this by showing me to give is priceless.

— K’Naan
afternoons and I exchanged stories with my advanced students in the evenings. It was then, I think, that I learned what it feels like to be infinite—to be in love with every mountain, every road, every day of class, every child.

Episodes that make one’s existence feel infinite are in the end, ephemeral. I was greeted in Qobboo by the Ethiopian army only a few weeks after my arrival. An afternoon of house arrest was followed by the menace of machine guns as I swiftly packed my belongings. I was never given a reason as to why I was being deported. Instead, I piled into a military caravan while my students cried as I reassured them that I would be back. I never came back.

As I was bombarded with questions back home I struggled to say anything meaningful. Most of all, I stumbled with applying my experiences in Ethiopia to my future life ambitions. I tried to string together the lessons that I learned; that passion and tenacious effort does not always bring about results, that young people like me romanticize about saving the world, but many times benefit more than the recipients of our efforts, and that student-run volunteer attempts are often unplanned and impulsive.

It’s taken me almost two years to condense the meaning behind the photographs I took that summer. While all the disheartening aspects of failed volunteer efforts remain true, what prevails is human kindness. After struggling to choose an altruistic career path for many years, reflecting on the photographs I took in Ethiopia has guided me in finding a worthy ambition: to bring clean water to children in developing countries. I can honestly say that my time with my students in Ethiopia—short as it was —and their laugh and smiles while we walked to the village aqueduct paved the way for this decision.

Teresa Miroslaw is a junior studying Environmental Engineering. In the future, she hopes to work on issues related to water, sanitation and health in developing countries as well as in California. She would love to travel throughout the world with her three favorite possessions: her road bike, her film camera, and her djembe.
The heat of the day suddenly dissipates as the sun succumbs to the calling of the horizon and disappears quietly behind it. Freed from its kingdom of heat-induced lethargy, the streets begin to pulse more with each passing minute. First the young and eager with their boundless energy gather in groups under the lavender-colored sky; then come families laboring to keep their inquisitive children within an arm’s reach. Finally appear the crevassed and tanned faces of the older generation, whose posture at once reveals the pride of a city-dweller superimposed on the simplicity of a rural sheikh. In this high tide of the evening crowd, Samia and I lingered over the books at the souk in Al-Marsa, just steps away from the murmuring Mediterranean sea.

Les curiosités tunisiennes, an eccentric bibliophile’s dream, lured us in. Flaubert’s travel writings assembled in a used thrift edition almost disappeared between a thick manual in Arabic about the practice of Zen and another about communicating with a rebellious teenager. Those willing to perform a careful triage often leave congratulating themselves on their finds, dropping a few dinars in the palm of the vendor in exchange for a Gibran or a Balzac. Those few who asked the vendor where certain titles would be located, the interrogatory avez-vous in French was usually met with a dismissive smile, containing equal parts amusement and annoyance.

Hel andak…, on the other hand, the unsecret Tunisian password, was enough to secure a guided tour of the tables, an assisted excavation. Digging through the colorful placemats teaching children French and Arabic words for farm animals or fruits and vegetables uncovered neglected copies of Bourguiba-era romance novels and illustrated biographies of Um Kulthum. At the souk, I was often content to merely feign eyeing the books while my gaze discreetly followed the labyrinthine movements of the passers-by, who seemed to expand and contract according to the size of the available space such that an inch of sidewalk never went unoccupied.

On this particular night, however, Samia and I were on a specific mission: to acquire a cookbook. They were arranged and spread out over the table like a map of the region: cuisine tunisienne bordered by cuisine algérienne pushing up against cuisine marocaine with a sprinkling of cuisine juive maghrébine and an occasional cuisine italienne. The flimsy books, about the size of the large hand of the gruff tounes bahriyya train conductor I’d grown accustomed to seeing every day, defied my judgmental eyes. They were not at all like their glossy, hardcover American counterparts, replete with perfectly portioned products proudly displayed in strategic lighting. I flipped through cuisine tunisienne to merely feign eyeing the books while my gaze discreetly followed the labyrinthine movements of the passers-by, who seemed to expand and contract according to the size of the available space such that an inch of sidewalk never went unoccupied.

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ways to make a generous jarful of harissa or a potful of mhalbia. The ingredient lists and instructions were as simple as the binding that held them together: a few peppers, a spoonful of cumin, a glass of water, some oil; chop, combine, simmer, serve. I thought about these collections in comparison to the heavy tomes that lined the shelves of my kitchen at home. Here, *fi Toune*, there is no such thing as cooking for two or even “serves four to six.” No quarter teaspoons obsessively leveled off or footnoted ingredients only found in specialty stores. Looking back, I realize it is easy to take these cookbooks as representative of an entire culinary culture.

The Tunisian table is a place where the tedious calculations of Western-style dining melt away. Whereas in the United States we carefully count out portions for the exact amount needed to feed the number of anticipated guests, the Tunisian table operates on an exponential system. That is to say, the amount of food prepared grows exponentially as the number of (confirmed or potential) guests increases. If more than a few people are coming to dinner, the numerical side of planning almost disappears completely. Instead, the head of the house and any family members she (yes, she) may draft into her mealtime battalion simply begin prepping every bit of produce available. This comes as no surprise to the insider, as each individual Tunisian is also part of not only the nuclear family but also the (very) extended family, the circle of close friends, and so forth. A beautiful and innate multiplication of the self thus occurs through the act of sharing a meal. The social definition of a guest is never limited to just one person, but rather includes space for the inclusion of contiguous relationships as well. Since these relationships more noticeably play a role in the conception of personhood, any obliging host makes provisions for them. The table is always big enough for all parts of oneself, even when those parts manifest themselves in other people.

At my first Tunisian dinner party, my imagination could not grasp this concept. The table, set up on the terrace under the stars in the abated vesperal heat, stood firm under the weight of all of the standard appetizers (*sahan toumi, méchouia, olives, salata toumiya, warm tabouna*) in addition to a beet, carrot, and cucumber salad, roasted potatoes, and plates of thick chunks of tuna soaking in olive oil and surrounded by homemade *harissa*. A veritable feast of all the senses, so grand I thought it was the entire meal. Mounir, Samia, Henri, and myself helped ourselves at will, and even after several servings it seemed as if all the bowls and plates were still completely full. Then, to my surprise, it was time for couscous, grilled fish, and squid salad on a bed of chopped fresh parsley, and as it arrived, so did a few unexpected guests who had dropped by the house to say hello. *Tafidil, koul! Please, come eat!* Aware of the abundance, there was no need to utter awkward excuses about imposing; our ranks around the table effortlessly doubled. *Kaak warka*, fresh fruit, and yogurt for dessert, followed of course by coffee or tea, which was enjoyed in the company of one more newcomer: the brother-in-law of another brother-in-law who had arrived in time for couscous. Another easy expansion, partaking in as little or as much as desired. Several hours after saying *bismillah* and taking up our forks, enough was cleared from the table to feed everyone who had showed up three times over.

The spectacle of the dinner seemed so extraordinary to me that I attributed the abundance of food and hospitality to a welcoming display in front of my foreign presence. But in the days and weeks that followed, and even more so with the advent of Ramadan and the celebrated *iftar* meal at dusk, the standard held. There was always more available than could ever be eaten, whether in the most humble of foyers or in the most privileged. Relatives and friends joined in the meal at any time. Visitors were always invited to stay to eat. Hosts often replenished plates before a guest had even formulated the desire for seconds. The bottomless bowls meant that one never had to feel bad about asking for the last portion, and it was never necessary to negotiate who deserved the final slice of bread.

Frustrated with certain inefficiencies and injustices after two months of daily life in Tunisia, I decided to take a temporary leave and go to Paris. I volunteered to host a dinner party on the last night of my stay in the city. The dusty pile of cookbooks in the kitchen was not of much help: romantic dinners for two, cocktail hour, decadent desserts. Instead, I abandoned the by-the-cookbook approach, made a Tunisian-style list, and headed to the market. Upon returning, my acquisitions were met by puzzled faces and incredulous inquisitions. Why so much? How many people did I think would show? What did I mean, I didn’t know exactly? Was I cooking for the whole building? Was I trying to fatten everyone up? Half of my provisions, deemed superfluous, were requisitioned. Realizing that my protests were futile, I went about the business of cooking and served what I had been allowed to prepare. Later that evening, a bite of salmon and a sliver of *tarte à la tomate* stared up at the eight guests awkwardly nursing their glasses of wine. The negotiations began: you take it; oh no, you go ahead; really, I insist; how about we split it? The disputing parties shoveled their respective thumb-sized portions onto their plates. Radwan, a Tunisian friend sitting across from me, shot me a knowing look. *This is not a Tunisian table, I read in his eyes.*

Vive karim al-diyyafa. 

Alison Stiner is a PhD student at Stanford University in the Division of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. Her work on francophone literature most recently earned her the Native Student Mentor Award for the promotion of minority cultures. She also volunteers for The Beat Within, a creative writing workshop for incarcerated youth, and is the co-director of Stanford Aerobics and Yoga.
June 11, 2010. Johannesburg, South Africa. I wake up to the alternatively sonorous, symphonic drone of a thousand vuvuzelas, heralding the day for which a billion-strong, football-mad Africa has been waiting for six long years.

Ke naaaaaaaaako! (It is time!)

The excitement escalates with every passing hour; it simmers to fever pitch as a rhythmically choreographed opening ceremony that seamlessly marries voice, drum, dance and mime into a uniquely African celebration of humanity. Then, explosion! Tshabalala lifts the lid with a cracker worthy of any clasico, bringing the Soccer City calabash—and the world—to its feet. FIFA World Cup 2010 begins! And what a tournament it proves to be!

The detractors go into overdrive to dampen the ardor; not deterred by South Africa’s success in getting things ready in time, they turn on everything from the vuvuzela to the Jabulani ball (and his lesser-known cousin Jo-). Nonsense!, I say. True, that vuvuzela might be a tad annoying, but it is emblematic of this Africa United World Cup, so live with it! The balls? Just ask Diego from Uruguay (so many scintillating belters from that lad, I say!), or Gio from Holland (with his woodwork-rattling, Muslera-stunning pile-driver), to recollect a few. Problem with the ball? No way, guv’nor! We, the hordes of Africa United fandom and our foreign friends, ignore the jibes; draped in our colors and donning our makarapas, we diski-dance to Waka Waka, wave our flags, sashay from Cape Town to Polokwane to Durban and soak up the surprise-strewn feast of football served to us by thirty-two great football-playing nations.

And what surprises—and upsets—there are! New Zealand picks up their first-ever World Cup points and bravely holds defending champions Italy to an exciting stalemate. Slovakia goes farther and puts the azzurri to the sword, dumping them out of contention. Who can forget Robert Green’s comical blooper that kills England’s chances before they get going? Messi (and Argentina), Kaka and Robinho (and Brazil) and Ronaldo (and Portugal) join Rooney

Creative Expressions

Jabulani!
Celebrating the African World Cup!
BY EUGENE ADOGILA
and his fellow Knights of St. George in flattering to deceive, as Germany’s youth-fueled, double-conquering act, El Guaje Villa and The Dutch Wesley, put paid to any hopes of glory these so-called “best” footballers in the world harbor. New stars emerge in their place: Oezil; Mueller; Gyan; Ayew; Iniesta; Villa; Forlan. Fodder for the media to wax hyperbolic. The minnows strike back: Switzerland bests Spain; South Korea and Japan advance further than they ever have at a World Cup; South Africa capitalizes on the luck of the Irish to take out France as the football fates punish les [sacres] bleus. The comical misadventures of the French party exceed the dream script of a Mexican telenovela; Mexico dutifully abets their ignominious departure by delivering the coup de grace to French hopes. After sixty-three games across the breadth of South Africa’s enchanting landscape, it all returns to the calabash in Jozi. And another surprising first! Europe finally wins the World Cup on foreign soil, with Spain, having bounced back from its opening-game defeat to tiki-taka its way into the final, defeating Holland with would-be “best” footballer in the world Andres Iniesta delivering the knockout punch.

Then, the bizarre! No world cup would be complete without it! Luis Fabiano teaches us what not to do with our hands as he cheats his way onto the goal-of-the-tournament list; the referee just smiles and allows him to crush the orange Ivorian dream. His namesake from Uruguay “suarez-es” Africa’s hopes of historically securing a World Cup semifinal berth. While South Africa confounds all the naysayers by avoiding the self-destruct button to lay on a superb footballing festival, Sani from Nigeria endows the Queen’s English with “kaita.” Definition? Manically irrational self-destruction. I, as any member of the Africa United hordes, am livid as his foible rebirths the nightmarish African tendency to self-destruct on the global footballing dais. Eto’o, Drogba, Yakubu and our other leading lights fail to dazzle. Then Asamoah Gyan, who until now has bucked the trend in leading Ghana past the likes of Serbia and the United States, unnecessarily crashes a penalty onto a Uruguayan crossbar, crushing one billion Africa United for BaGhana BaGhana hearts. Unspeakable disappointment! Dreams shattered, for another four years at the very least.

July 11, 2010. The Spanish are World Champions. Mandela presides as they are crowned, evincing that incandescent smile that incessantly radiates an amalgam of optimism and celebration. In its glow, Africa United perks up, and blessings are counted: we treated the world to a wonderful month of footballing magic; Africa closed ranks around South Africa and helped Mzansi to host a magnificent tournament. The dream of an African World Cup win on home soil has proved elusive, but we live on to fight another day. In 2014, we can (hopefully!) build on lessons learned from this mundial to push for the ultimate (Asamoah, can we not make three World Cups with you missing penalties?). Who knows, we just might scale our Kilimanjaro in Rio, winning Africa United’s first World Cup as we gyrate to the samba tunes of our cousins in the Diaspora.

Eugene Adogla is a football enthusiast (some say fanatic), a Stanford alum (Class of 2008), and the former Editor-in-Chief of SAUTI.
Where's Haute on the Fashion Scene?

BY MARYAM GARBA

As a young and upcoming fashion designer, I keep a keen eye on where the “haute-est” African designers are coming from and how these emerging designers break into the ever-so-competitive fashion industry. Many of these designers are entering the fashion scene with bold colors and graphic prints and a few others are turning to up and coming locations in the fashion world to gain recognition.

One sure way of breaking into the fashion industry is to show a collection at a prestigious fashion event such as Fashion Week in Milan, Paris, or New York. But these shows are not easy to enter, as they have long histories and are typically very publicized and reviewed. These are also the shows where the most influential buyers go to make their season’s purchases. As a result, it is extremely difficult for new designers to break into one of these shows, especially when one considers the decades that mature designers such as Nigerian designer Tiffany Amber, have already been cultivating their relationships in the fashion world.

In order to garner recognition in a cut-throat industry, many African designers have turned to up-and-coming locations to showcase their season’s collection. D.C. has not always been considered a fashion hot spot, but the recent D.C. fashion week in February hosted a myriad of African designers. Amongst them were Berry Couture, House of Jola, Reeda and Sally Bawa—all from Nigeria. There were also exciting collections from Knaf Couture, D. Maksi (Ghana), Yndigo designs (Ethiopia) and House of Leevaan (Liberia). The sheer number of African designers represented at D.C. hinted that very soon D.C. may be a go-to location for emerging African designers who are seeking international recognition. There is also a significant number of African immigrants living in D.C. and the surrounding metropolis who could help make the city a viable location for African designers.

In addition to D.C., Johannesburg is now the go-to location for designers who prefer to show their collections on the African continent. The winter 2011 Johannesburg Fashion Week was the biggest and best event yet in the history of the show. It included over thirty designers, many of whom were young graduates from the University of Johannesburg, Sew Africa, Lisof, The Spero Villioti Elite Design Academy, and Tshwane University. The creativity and unique output from many of the new designers was remarkable and spanned a range of time periods. For example, Molokomme’s use of volume in her skirts reminded one of elegant English women at the turn of the 20th century.

In the midst of the myriad of international designers present at these shows, African designers stood out because of their fusion of global influences. For example, Laura Kass paired Ankara skirts with a chiffon blouse, the result of which was a very chic look that could be found anywhere from Lagos to London. For many African designers, international recognition is an integral goal and fusing global influences is definitely the way to achieve it.

Who knows, but Paris and Milan may well become fashion clichés as other new cities appear on the scene and more African designers take to these locations.

I have no doubt that Africa’s newest designers are well positioned to receive the spotlight as the fashion scene turns to previously demure locations to set the trends.

Maryam Garba is a Stanford and Harvard-educated designer who enjoys combining bold patterns with simple silhouettes. Her spring collection can be seen on her website at www.maryamgarba.com. For more from Maryam, see page 20.

Sources:
Music and Film in Africa

BY ATO ULZEN-APPIAH

Music:

In April 2010, Nigeria’s P-Square cemented its place as Africa’s biggest act when the group won African Artiste of The Year at the KORA All Africa Music Awards, (popularly called “Africa’s Grammys”), edging out the Senegalese group, Black Diamond, Angola’s Paul G, and Burkina Faso’s Ameya Meria. P-Square has become so popular that many Africans know the group’s music more than they know artists from their own countries. The group has also garnered international acclaim; it was nominated for the Best International Act at the BET Awards in 2010, and CNN has featured it as a successful African music group.

K’Naan, of Somali origin, was also successful last year. His second album, Troubadour, received international acclaim, and his song “Waving Flag” was chosen as the official Coca-Cola World Cup anthem. K’Naan also won best African Act at the Music of Black Origin Awards in the UK in October 2010.

In the east, Ugandan musician Maurice Kirya was named 2010 winner of the Radio France International Discoveries Music Award. Soweto Gospel Choir, Ali Farke Touré, Toumani Diabaté, Oumou Sangare & Konono No 1 (featured on Herbie Hancock’s Imagine Project) won at the fifty-third Grammys, America’s biggest music award ceremony, on February 13th, 2011.

The Soundcity Music Video Awards honoured Mozambique’s Tania Tome for best new (fresh) video for Nhi Ngugi Haladza. Nigerian rapper, Da-Grin, who passed away in 2010, was also honoured as his Pon Pon song won hit producer of the year (with Sossick). Additionally, at the MTV Africa Music Awards (MAMA), a MAMA Legend was given to the late Miriam Makeba from South Africa, who is affectionately remembered as “Mama Afrika.” Other big winners at the ceremony were Nigeria’s Tuface Idibia and Congo DR’s Fally Ipupa, who won Artist of the Year and Best Video respectively.

Film:

Many great African movies were released in 2010. Ghana’s Sinking Sands, directed by Leila Djansi, is turning out to be the most successful amongst them. The film, about a marriage gone sour which touches on domestic abuse, garnered nine nominations at the Africa Movie Academy Awards, and was screened at the Pan-African Film Festival (PAFF) in Los Angeles 2011. The movie marked the local African debut of Haiti movie star, Jimmy Jean-Louis, and was shot in Accra, Ghana. Also showcased at PAFF 2011 was the movie Elmina, directed by the award-winning Ghanaian director, Emmanuel Apea. The movie tells a story of colonialism, greed, hatred, love and betrayal and is set around the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Ghana, which is pertinent given the fact that Ghana has just started producing oil commercially.

South African film, Hopeville, is another good movie to watch. It was adapted from a very popular South African TV series of the same name. The TV series won awards for best drama and mini-series at the Rose d’Or Festival in Switzerland, beating 85 other television dramas. The series was also nominated for an EMMY for Best TV Movie/Mini-Series (International). The movie is directed by John Tengrove and the cast includes Desmond Dube, Thesegofatsa Khunou, Thema Ndaba, and Terry Pheto, who played a part in the Oscar-winning South African film, Tsotsi. In the film, Amos restores the swimming pool in the dusty town of Hopeville, inspiring others to take action and do what they know is right. Other good South African movies are Themba, about a young soccer star with the tag line—“A boy called Hope”, A Small Town called Descent, directed by Jahmil Pheto, Themba and the power of the human spirit. Ije has already garnered international awards. Other promising Nigerian films are Aramoti, directed by Nini Akanni, A Private Storm, by Lancelot Oduwa Imasueni and Ikechukwu Onyeka, Anchor Baby, directed by Lonzo Nzekwe, and Mirror Boy, directed by Obi Emelonye.

Finally, other great African movies include, Aderu, an Ethiopian movie directed by Nega Tariku, Seasons of a Life, a Malawi film directed by Shemu Joyah, Suwi, a Zambian movie directed by Musola Catherine Kaseketa, and Fishing the Little Stone, a Ugandan movie directed by Kaz Kasozi.

Ato Ulzen-Appiah is a Ghanaian graduate student in Civil Engineering at Stanford. He has interests in many fields pertaining to Africa, especially entrepreneurship, engineering and entertainment. He is part of the team that runs Museke.com, an African music site, and keeps a blog at MightyAfrican.blogspot.com

References:
Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries Are Leading the Way

BY KEN OPAPO

In Emerging Africa: How 17 Countries are Leading the Way, Steven Radelet documents an era of sustained economic and political reforms over the last 15 years among a cluster of sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. He then argues that these reforms represent a fundamental shift in real growth and are cause for cautious optimism about the future for much of the continent.

Radelet will find a tough audience in skeptics who don’t think that economic reforms and attempts at democratization have done enough to re-mould the institutions and politics of the 17 countries in his “emerging” category.

Most importantly, the book debunks the widespread myth of one perpetually failing continent of Africa. It will earn a place on bookshelves next to a small but growing group of works dedicated to a balanced analysis of Africa, highlighting both the good and the bad news. These works signal a cautious shift in the attitudes of academics, policymakers and governments of Africa; from viewing the continent as a humanitarian disaster to one with prospects for positive progress.

In his book, Radelet shows that since the mid-1990s 17 countries (comprising more than 300 million people) have each averaged annual economic growth rates of at least 2%. He posits that these growth rates were not merely a result of commodity booms but reflect a fundamental shift.

At one point, he argues that, “The interplay of economic reform and political change,” has catalyzed steady economic growth.

The book avoids blanket statements about SSA and instead investigates newly emerging patterns by dividing the region’s 48 countries into three groups based on political and economic trends over the last 15 years. Of these, 23 are placed in the emerging or threshold box, 9 are oil exporters and 16 are categorized as having shown little economic or political change.

According to Radelet, before the mid-1990s most SSA countries were indistinguishable from each other. With a few exceptions, economic mismanagement and poor governance had whittled away the commodity-led economic gains made in the 1960s leading to widespread economic collapse by the late 1980s.

He argues that since the mid-1990s the pattern changed sharply. In 17 of the sample countries growth jumped above 3% on average and was sustained for 15 years. The crux of his argument, then, is couched in this idea that these trends reflect “fundamental shifts” and not mere boom-bust cycles of previous...
decades. As a result, the future of emerging countries in sub-Saharan Africa is brighter than the majority of the current scholarship claims.

Radelet contrasts the new shifts against four “anti-growth syndromes,” whose onset stunted economic growth in Africa for most of the 70s and 80s. They include aggressive control and regulation of the economy, political ethnicity, heavy indebtedness, and the looting of public assets, and state breakdown. Most of SSA experienced at least one of these syndromes. Quite a few had more than one of the syndromes for prolonged periods before the mid-1990s.

The era of recklessly kleptocratic “Big Men”— which included the spectacularly disastrous reigns of “Emperor” Bokassa of the Central African Republic, Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, Idi Amin of Uganda, Sani Abacha of Nigeria, among others, made nearly the entire region “inhospitable to growth.” By the 1980’s, heavy borrowing and the resultant dependence on loans, following the oil shocks of the previous decade, caused economic crises in most SSA countries as credit dried up. The onset of the wave of democratization in late 80s and early 90s compounded the problem by adding political instability to the already dire situation of economic collapse. In most places, “Investors remained cautious, capital flight remained high and output remained flat.”

In the late 80s and early nineties, pressure from the IMF and the World Bank forced SSA states to take the bitter pill of market reforms. This eliminated most black markets (including the infamous African street corner currency markets), tamed inflation and reduced shortages of essential commodities. The parallel shift towards democracy, greater transparency, and increased accountability cemented these economic achievements.

The policy prescriptions at the time followed the dictum that most good things go together. Economic and political reforms went hand in hand. It is no wonder, therefore, that 13 of Radelet’s 17 emerging countries are electoral democracies.

The book highlights five factors that were critical to change: the emergence of democratic and accountable governments, economic policy reforms, the end of the SSA debt crisis, spread of new technologies—especially in the telecommunication sector—and the emergence of a new generation of policymakers, activists and business leaders.

Radelet holds up these factors as the telltale signs of a better future for the region.

The evidence appears to be in favor of his argument. It is hard to miss the correlation in the data between better governance—as manifested in political openness, less corruption, greater accountability, etc.—and economic growth.

A few outstanding issues however, remain unaddressed by Radelet. The political situation in most of the emerging countries remains shaky. As President Obama noted in his 2009 Cairo speech, “elections alone do not make true democracy.” Recent events, including Tanzania’s clampdown on the main opposition party Chadema, South Africa’s flirtation with an illiberal media law, and Ghana’s ethnically charged presidential vote, among others, pour cold water on Radelet’s optimism.

Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda, although among the 17 top economic performers in the region, remain unabashedly autocratic. In elections last year, Meles Zenawi’s party won all but 2 of 546 seats in Ethiopia’s parliament. Similarly, Paul Kagame of Rwanda won more than 90% of the vote in the last election. Yoweri Museveni, after 25 years in power, easily won re-election for another 5 years in Ugandan office.

Even among the 17 emerging nations, signs abound that sub-Saharan Africa has not totally overcome its political, economic, and social deficits to the degree that Radelet suggests.

The book sometimes crosses the fine line between balanced analysis and fishing for African successes. The 2% growth threshold—the average long run growth rate of the world’s richest countries—is too low. With 2% economic growth incomes double every 36 years. The average life expectancy in SSA is 46 years and fertility rates remain high. Clearly, SSA needs to grow a lot faster for any meaningful changes in living conditions to occur. In any case, historical evidence shows that poorer countries do grow faster than their richer counterparts, but this is because they have much more growth to achieve.

To put things in perspective, South Korea, a country that is often cited as having had a similar per capita level with a number of African countries in the early 1960s, performed its growth miracle by registering growth rates of more than 8% between 1962 and 1989.

The key contribution of Emerging Africa is that there exists a multi-speed SSA and that the situation is not as bad as it appears to be. The causal claims linking reforms in the mid-1990s to sustained economic growth won’t satisfy those who remain skeptical of the depth and breadth of political and economic reforms in the region. One need not be an expert on Africa to enjoy the book as it is intended for the general reader. The author does not indulge in great amounts of esoteric jargon and, despite a few lingering questions, clear tables and graphs support most of his claims.

In sum, I highly recommend it.

Ken Opalo is a graduate student of Comparative Politics in the Department of Political Science. His academic interests include the comparative politics of development, political ethnicity and citizenship leadership accountability mechanisms. Ken maintains a blog at http://kenopalo.wordpress.com/. For more from Ken, see page 12.
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Submissions for 2011-2012 will be accepted on a rolling basis until our fall deadline (date still TBD).
History
(Aka Know Better, Do Better in the Now)

History is the present
Which side will you be on?
20 years from now,
will your children have to explain your wrongs?
Rationalize your pitfalls,
make ignorance your plea
you just didn’t mean it,
you just couldn’t see.
Time will Judge.
The time to act is now
To greed, privilege, and comfort
don’t you bow.
History is the present,
you have the pen
Write the wrongs,
May freedom win!

— Michael Tubbs