

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Jacksonville, Florida, featuring a large, modern stadium in the center. The stadium is surrounded by a ribbon graphic that frames the word 'IROHIN' at the top and '2011' at the bottom. The cityscape includes a harbor with ships, various buildings, and a golf course in the foreground.

**IROHIN**

**2011**

**Taking Africa to the Classroom**

A PUBLICATION OF THE  
**University of Florida Center for African Studies**

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A PUBLICATION OF THE

**University of Florida's Center for African Studies**

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Taking Africa to the Classroom



*the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida*

# OUTREACH PROGRAM

The Center is partially funded under Title VI of the federal Higher Education Act as a National Resource Center on Africa. One of only 12 in the U.S., Florida's is the only Center located in the southeastern United States. The Center directs, develops, and coordinates interdisciplinary instruction, research, and outreach on Africa. The Outreach Program includes a variety of activities whose objective is to improve the teaching of Africa in primary and secondary schools, colleges, universities and local communities. Following are some of the regular activities which fall under the Outreach Program.



Teachers' summer institutes include hands-on activities such as preparing African food.

## Teachers' Workshops

The Center offers in-service workshops for K-12 teachers about instruction on Africa throughout the school year.

## Summer Institutes

Each summer, the Center holds teaching institutes for K-12 teachers.

## Jambo!

Each summer the Center holds a high school language program to introduce the students to an African language.

## Library

Teachers may borrow videotapes and books from the Outreach office.

## Publications

The Center publishes and distributes teaching resources including *Irohin*. In addition, the Center has published a monograph entitled *Lesson Plans on African History and Geography: A Teaching Resource*.

## Community & School Presentations

Faculty and graduate students make presentations on Africa to local communities and schools.



Students at Eastside High School participating in an African cultural presentation.

*a Note from the*

# EDITOR

Each summer, the Center for African Studies at the University of Florida hosts a K-12 Teachers Institute. The objective of the institute is to help teachers increase their knowledge about Africa and develop lesson plans to use in their classrooms. The creative lesson plans and articles in this issue of *Irohin* were written by participants in the 2010 institute. Please feel free to use these materials in your teaching and share them with other teachers. Write or call the Center for African Studies for additional copies or download this issue as well as previous ones in PDF format at <http://www.africa.ufl.edu/outreach>.



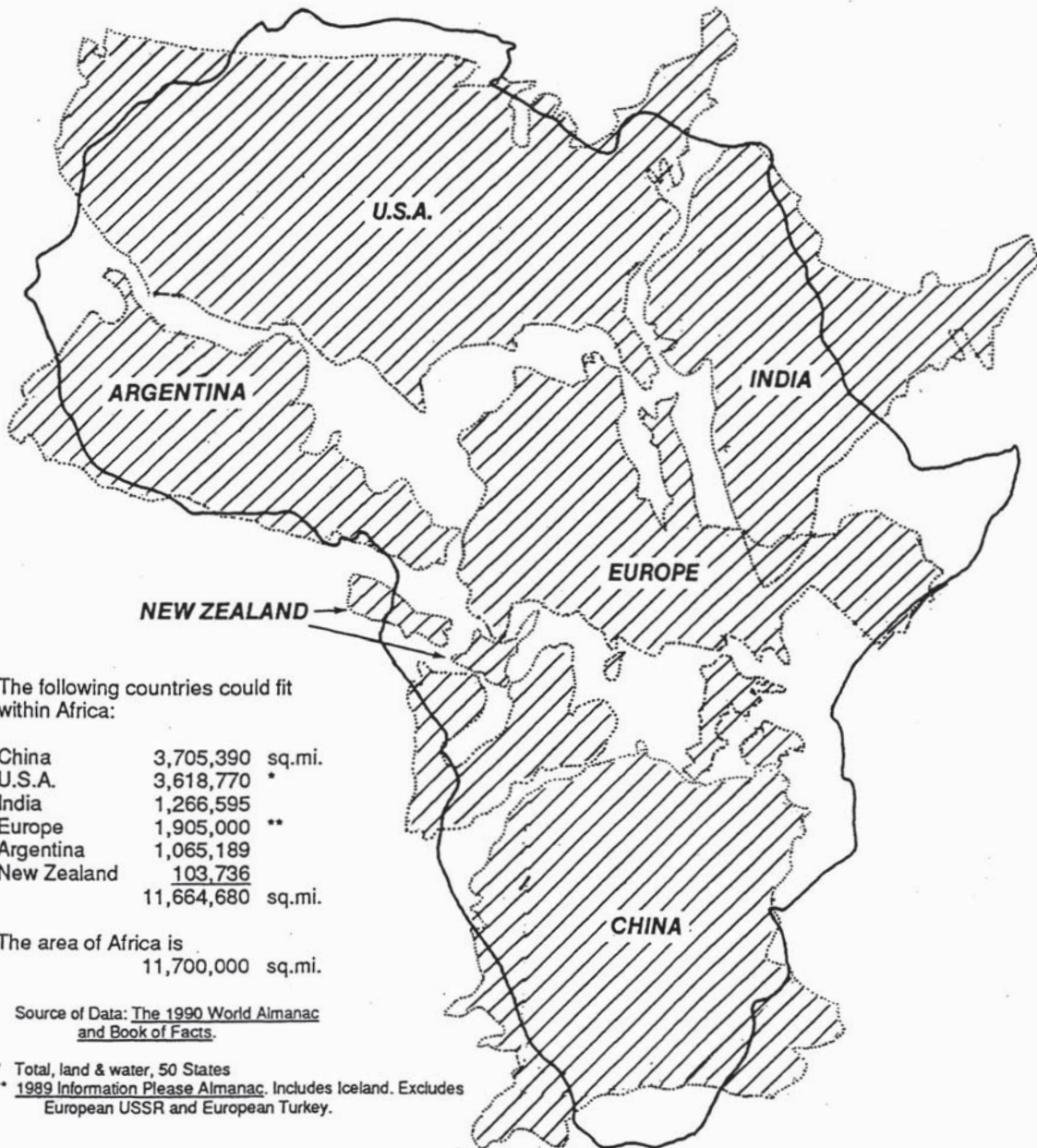
**Participants in the 2010 Summer Institute**

Dr. Agnes Leslie, Marlena Herndon, Florence Bason, John Bell, Darlene Greenaway, April Brown, Elaine Ward,  
Sharon L. Humbarger, Tracy Beckett, Tara Gabriel, Dr. Rose Lugano, and Ryan Ruppert



*Understanding the Size of*

# AFRICA



The following countries could fit within Africa:

China	3,705,390	sq.mi.
U.S.A.	3,618,770	*
India	1,266,595	
Europe	1,905,000	**
Argentina	1,065,189	
New Zealand	103,736	
	11,664,680	sq.mi.

The area of Africa is  
11,700,000 sq.mi.

Source of Data: The 1990 World Almanac and Book of Facts.

\* Total, land & water, 50 States

\*\* 1989 Information Please Almanac. Includes Iceland. Excludes European USSR and European Turkey.

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Florence Bason

# DISPELLING STEREOTYPES

## *and False Presumptions about Africa*

If someone is from Colombia, South America, do we say they are South American? No – we say they are Colombian. When we meet someone from Italy do we introduce him or her as being European? No – we introduce them as Italian. The same goes for people from all countries in the world, with the exception of the fifty-four countries located on the continent of Africa. Anytime we meet people from those countries, we have the tendency to refer to them as “African.” Most people do this out of habit or perhaps because they can barely name ten countries in Africa, let alone all fifty-four. However, in doing so we unintentionally promote the stereotype that Africa is a country.

In addition to the incorrect assumption that Africa is a country, there are a variety of other stereotypes associated with Africa. These stereotypes are prevalent among almost all individuals, even teachers who have not only obtained higher education degrees, but have also attended workshops designed to promote awareness about the continent of Africa. Such stereotypes include beliefs that Africa contains only wild animals, diseases, huts, malnutrition, jungles, elephants, deserts, poor people, natives, and a land full of superstitions (Osunde, Tlou, & Brown, 1996). Fortunately educators have limitless opportunities to teach students about Africa and correct any false generalities when it comes to the continent. However, in order to do so, educators must be aware of the stereotypes and why they are incorrect. This article will look at a few stereotypes, possible reasons they are prevalent, and attempt to dispel any inaccurate representations of Africa.

Another common misconception related to Africa is that it is a continent with no history. However, this stereotype is invalid; one only needs to look to Egypt to recognize the vast history that can be found in one country within the huge continent. There is also the walls and structures of Great Zimbabwe, the

Nubian Temple of Apedemak, Naqa, and the ruins of Carthage. In the early third century the Carthaginian Empire was second only to Rome; Julius Caesar conquered this country and helped increase its greatness. In addition to all these examples, there is another overwhelming fact you have to overlook if you wish to say Africa has no history - the fact that the oldest humanoid remains have been found there, thus leading some to label it to the origin of humankind.

One negative perception many have toward Africa relates to the idea that Africa is rather primitive. Although there are some romantic ideas associated with this idea, there is condescension associated with it as well (Palmborg, 2001). One medium that promotes this stereotype is found in classrooms around the world – textbooks. Recently a study was completed that looked at common geography textbooks used throughout classrooms and the images of Africa depicted in these books. Seven of the textbook studied discuss how “tribalism” is the cause of conflict in Africa, with one textbook going so far as to say Africa is a “wild zone where tribal groups war with one another due to a breakdown of law and order” (Myers, 2001, p.526). Another book discusses Africa as “the last major stronghold of animists and tribal peoples” (p.526). A third book teaches “the traditional unit of African society was the tribe” (p.526). This belief that Africa is made up of tribes is one reason many individuals view the continent as primitive. The truth of the matter is Africa is far from primitive, as evidenced by the fact the World Cup was recently being held in South Africa.

The belief that African is full of primitive, tribal individuals helps fuel another stereotype, that Africans are uneducated. Although not everyone in Africa is educated, there is not a single continent in the world that only consists of educated citizens. An interesting place to look to in order to dispel the uneducated stereotype is Botswana. After

Botswana gained independence from the UK in 1996, huge diamond reserves were found in the country, thus resulting in them becoming very wealthy. How did they spend their newfound wealth? It was used primarily on education. In addition to spending a great deal to improve their local education, they also have a system in which every five years they sit down with the elected officials, and the officials have to answer inquiries centered around what the elected officials did for the country. This system shows remarkable intelligence, in addition to their emphasis on education. After all, how could one answer such questions if one was uneducated?

The Myers study (2001) also found that many textbooks help promote the belief that Africa is an area plagued by AIDS and other diseases. The textbooks do this by using the AIDS epidemic and other diseases in Africa as a way to teach about contagious diffusion. The study discusses the rate of AIDS, yet there is little to no discussion of the fact the rates are disputed nor do they discuss the reasons for the high numbers. The fact is that, yes, there are diseases in Africa. However, AIDS is found throughout the world and is not merely confined to the continent of Africa.

Most of us have been told at one point in our life we ought to finish the food on our plate because “there are starving children in Africa.” As such, it is not surprising that many people believe that Africa is a land full of starving people. In Myers’ study (2001), the imagery used in the majority of the texts had alarming photographs of starving mothers, children, refugees, or of charred human remains. One textbook went so far as to show a starving child with a vulture hovering behind her (p.527). In theory the images teach about famine; however, the books do not teach about what causes famine, and ultimately the images help promote the belief that Africa is full of starvation. It is easy to believe that Africa is a land full of starving children after you’ve seen such images and visited Think-





*Cape Town, South Africa is a great example of a large and flourishing African city.*

Quest only to be met with the statistic that “one-third of children in sub-Saharan Africa are (suffering from) malnutrition.” However, they do not explain what they mean by malnutrition, nor does that quote represent Africa as a continent, only sub-Saharan Africa.

The Myers study (2001) found that five of the best-selling textbooks use Africa to teach population dynamics and “overpopulation” (p.525). However, the textbooks fail to educate students about the general dynamics of population growth and often the textbooks only look at one area and apply the information gained in that area to the whole continent. Overpopulation is a concern throughout the world, including America, and in no way represents Africa as a whole.

Another stereotype relating to Africa is that it is a land with no diversity. This is invalid for many reasons, including climate, which ranges from subarctic at the highest points to tropical. Everyone is aware that there is a desert area, but in addition to the desert there

are also jungle regions. There are also beautiful coastlines surrounding the continent.

This is the twenty-first century. We have unlimited access to all the information we could ever want. We are able to read for hours from the comfort from our homes, but we must be able to distinguish what is correct and what is false. Textbooks have no excuse for false information; ultimately they do not rely on the “wow” factors to sell and therefore have no business promoting stereotypes. Ultimately it is our job as educators to know what the truth is and also be aware of stereotypes our students have in order to correct them.

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Marlena Herndon

# ROWANDAN WOMEN IN POLITICS

*Past, Present & Future*

The country of Rwanda is changing everyday. Located in east-central Africa, Rwanda has dealt with its share of challenges and heartache. This article will address the circumstances leading up to the transformation of politics in Rwanda and specifically how women are a part of this transformation. It will also identify what policies are being made and describe the overall view for the future of this country.

The country's nightmarish genocide has had a direct affect on why women have increasingly found themselves in positions of power. Based on two trends, the use of quotas in Africa and the post-conflict situation, these women are now able to represent gender injustices and ensure a commitment to gender equality. The Rwandan women in parliament have had some achievements, but may face possible challenges ahead. Several support groups for these women want to continue development of equal rights and plan to stay committed. The policy changes in Rwanda highlight gender-sensitive topics and draw focus to innovative thinking that could be used as a model for other parts of the world.

## THE PAST

The survivors of the 1994 genocide between the Hutu and the Tutsis tell the story of the horrific ordeal many suffered. The hatred left behind nearly 800,000 killed and a country's infrastructure torn apart. The traumatized survivors of this genocide are living proof of the atrocities endured, but also reveal the will of the people to survive.

Rwanda became an independent country on July 1, 1962. Prior to that it was a Belgian colony. Belgium used the minority Tutsis to help rule and did not treat the Hutu fairly. Thus, the fighting between the two groups continued even after Belgium gave up control. When the slaughter ended in July 1994, the population of women and girls in Rwanda was 30% reduced. Women had been granted the right to vote in 1961 and even

held some positions in parliament starting in 1965. However, in their post-genocide, transitional government, Rwanda saw dramatic gains for women in positions of power. Innovative electoral structures, such as the quota system, allowed women to achieve 50% representation in the parliamentary elections of October 2003.

teen additional women were elected. Also the National Women's Council was established shortly after the genocide and they represent women's concerns.

The combination of genocide, ongoing group conflicts, and changes in a country's constitution that includes a quota system, all allowed



*Mary Balikungery of the Rwanda Women's Network*

Judith Kanakuze, a Rwandan, participated in drafting a new constitution. As a member of the Constitutional Commission, she served as a "gender expert" and ensured equal rights for men and women for the sake of her country's successful development. The 2003 Constitution increased the number of seats to be held by women in all structures of government. Senate members are appointed for eight-year terms and women were mandated to hold 30% of the seats. There are eighty members serving five-year terms in the Chamber of Deputies and twenty-four seats are reserved for women. However, in the general election in September 2003, in addition to the twenty-four reserved seats, fif-

for women to take positions of power. These survivors will be a major part of the nation's new infrastructure.

## THE PRESENT

Currently women hold a third of all cabinet positions, including foreign minister, education minister, Supreme Court chief justice, and police commissioner general. As of September 2008, Rwanda was the first in the world where women claim the majority of elected and appointed positions at 56%. In addition to the political power women hold, women head more than a third of households. They make up 55% of the workforce, which includes such positions as police of-

ficers and prison governors. They also own about 40% of businesses.

Judith Kanakuze is not only a Member of Parliament, but also a survivor of the genocide. Even though eleven thousand Tutsis were murdered in her home province, as an MP she is optimistic. Kanakuze says, "This is a different time. We are transforming our society, and women are a part of the solution."

Gender and social affairs are now being addressed. After the genocide there were property disputes. Widows were unable to inherit land. Due to a strong family bill, for the first time women in Rwanda were given rights to inherit. This also allows a girl child and a boy child equal inheritance.

Another issue that needed to be addressed by the government was rape. Sexual attacks were a prominent aspect of the genocide. For punishment, the initial draft of genocide law put rape in the lowest of four offences. It was placed alongside looting and only required a light prison sentence or community service. Tutsi women who were raped were very often infected with HIV and/or bore children of their attackers. It was important that these sexual abuse cases be taken seriously. A proposal and agreement were reached to deal with sexual violence as a category one offence. This places it alongside murder with a sentence of death or life in prison.

Other notable acts of support are the financial loans offered to help women achieve different goals. These loans can be used for domestic or business purposes and are given to poor women who cannot financially afford to set up projects.

Women in Parliament are fighting gender-based discrimination. They are committed to modify existing laws or toss them out completely. The nation is currently a member of the Commonwealth where all people involved wish to protect human rights, freedom of expression, and equal opportunity.

## THE FUTURE

As of today, "Rwanda has achieved international recognition and admiration for their tremendous social progress." Their constitution is a set of laws that enforce values of fairness and justice. There are seventeen private radio broadcasts and at least sixty independent newspapers. The media is committed to constructive debate to fight against corrup-

tion and maintain good governance. They want to ensure elections in which people are accountable and all major decisions are discussed with the people. All of these practices aim to continue a democratic public life.

President Paul Kagame said, "We shall continue to appeal to women to offer themselves as candidates and also to vote for gender-sensitive men who will defend and protect their interests. Increased participation of women in politics is, therefore, necessary for improved social, economic, and political conditions of their families and the entire country,"

Some of the challenges the new Members of Parliament face are stereotypes about their lack of competence as leaders. "They must overcome their supposed naïveté." To some there is a status difference between those seats reserved for women and those that are gained in direct competition with men. Most however, don't think of themselves in terms of parties but rather they think of the challenges that face them as women. It seems counter-productive to place a higher value on certain seats.

Gender is now a part of political thinking. President Kagame, in collaboration with institutions such as Parliament, the Rwanda Women in Parliamentary Forum, and the Minister of Gender, to name a few, is continually trying to achieve unity. The One Million Women's March held on May 16, 2010, is an example of how the country is making efforts toward a better future. "There is a continuous commitment to promoting, accelerating, and sustaining women's empowerment and gender equality."

Rwanda has seen many national changes in the last twenty years. This African country has had the challenge of rebuilding a nation by rewriting its Constitution. In a post-genocide world, the transformation is happening across all areas, including how women are involved. Women, who many argue are the true victims of this struggle, are proving the will to survive and even thrive in their "new" nation.

Gender equality is now being addressed as the opportunities arise and continued support for women is prevalent. Today Rwanda can be used as a model for innovative thinking to solve a nation's dilemmas. The achievements of a gender-sensitive nation will benefit all the Rwandan people.

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<http://www.iisd.ca/ymb/wuf3/20june.html>



Tracy Beckett

# THE AIRLIFT GENERATION

*the Hope of Africa*

YOU ARE THE  
BEST HOPE FOR  
EAST AFRICA;  
THE BEST HOPE  
FOR YOUR  
CONTINENT.

That is the recent message from U. S. Vice-President Joe Biden to a group of university students in Kenya. It is not the first time that the young people of this region have been told this, though. Between 1959 and 1963, nearly 800 East African men and women left their homelands in pursuit of knowledge. When they returned, they made outstanding contributions to society. These individuals – mainly from Kenya, Uganda, and what is now Tanzania - came to be known as “The Airlift Generation.”

Ambassadors, engineers, doctors, lawyers, educators, a Nobel Prize winner, and even an economist who later became the father of a U. S. President are the result of the extraordinary joint effort of a few committed East Africans and Americans. Other organizations have worked to provide international education opportunities for East Africans. None, however, can boast as many successful alumni as the African American Students Foundation (AASF), which was the main group behind the Airlift project.

## CLIMATE FOR CRUSADE

The African American Students Foundation (AASF) was an outgrowth of two earlier groups: CORE and ACOA. An American minister named George M. Houser founded the Committee of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1942 as a response to racial discrimination and segregation in the American South. African-American servicemen returning from the battlefields of World War II found

that they had value as protectors of freedom abroad, but were undeserving of freedom themselves at home. Jim Crow laws mandated separate transportation, facilities, and employment for these individuals. To show solidarity, CORE members rode buses with African-Americans on “freedom rides” as early as 1947.

Achieving a great deal of publicity for this action and inspired by the social unrest brewing in places like South Africa and Kenya, Houser approached a group of CORE members about forming the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) in 1953. The purpose of this splinter group was to financially support Africa-related projects with hopes of establishing interracial cooperation. Original members included well-known liberals who stressed the anti-Communist nature of the organization. It was the McCarthy era, after all.

Worse than the McCarthy hearings, though, were conditions on the African continent. When the Afrikaner Nationalists came to power in 1948 South Africa, apartheid (“apartness”) became the law of the land. Restrictions on citizenship, travel, residence location, employment type, ability to own land, and voting rights were brutally enforced. The African National Congress (ANC) – led by Walter Sisulu and future South African president, Nelson Mandela – held boycotts, protests, and strikes to resist the injustices in their country. This effort resulted in mass imprisonments and legalized public whippings for anyone who accepted funding for the resistance.

Kenya, too, was on fire. The Mau Mau, a secret society sworn to resist the colonial government through guerrilla-style tactics was comprised of displaced Kikuyu. This ethnic group was forced from their farms and into low-paying jobs. As rebels, they often hindered the efforts of those, like future Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta, who worked for change using more conventional methods.

Colonial Britain’s response in 1948 was to suspend most civil liberties through the use of harsh Emergency Regulations (known simply as “The Emergency”).

Horrified that direct funding might be making matters worse for the resistance movements, Houser began to consider other approaches for assisting Sub-Saharan Africa. One of those approaches was education.

The colonial government in place at that time promoted British universities as the epitome of higher learning over the only “local” school available, Makerere University in Uganda. Although some British scholarships were awarded to East African youths, the individuals were hand-picked by the colonial government based on academics. These selections did not necessarily reflect the most motivated students, nor did it speak to the number of students who felt an obligation to return to their home country and improve it.

The Soviet Union with its Eastern Bloc countries was simultaneously recruiting students for its schools, including the new “University of Friendship of Peoples” in Moscow. Not only were scholarships offered with all expenses paid, airfare home for each year of study was promised, too. Both Russia and China increased their scholarship offerings as more African countries gained independence. Admission processes were streamlined to encourage quick enrollment of students from Africa, as well as Asia and Latin America. In light of the Cold War, such enticements made American government officials uneasy.

## RISK-TAKERS

Enter William Scheinman. The pilot of a navy landing craft in WWII, Scheinman returned after the war to try his hand at gambling, college, and eventually, business. Early in his career, he was the publicist for Count Basie. He immersed himself in the Harlem jazz world and was a hit with the ladies. To supplement his publicity work, Scheinman

sold aircraft parts. He soon opened his own successful parts company, Arnav Aircraft Associates, in 1950. Six years later, the young navy vet joined ACOA as a millionaire looking to put his money where his ideals were. George Houser enlisted Scheinman to help cover transportation and lodging costs for a special book tour.

*The Kenya Question: An African Answer* was written by Kenyan Tom Mboya during his time at Oxford. Mboya was slightly younger than Scheinman, but no less charismatic. In his book, he outlined reasons for the Mau Mau Rebellion, the role of labor in Kenya, and how a truly representative government could be achieved in his homeland. Weekends in the British Isles found him honing his presentation skills before being “discovered” at a London press conference. This success caught the attention of Houser.

Mboya was articulate in English as well as five African languages. His intense, yet careful demeanor served him well when he worked to improve conditions for labor union members in Kenya. A willingness to look beyond the lines of ethnicity (himself a Luo) gained Mboya friends at home and abroad. A gifted diplomat, he dreamed of leading his country to independence.

At the invitation of Houser’s ACOA, Mboya toured the U. S. to promote awareness of Kenyan issues through his book. Privately, he also requested financial help from college presidents and union leaders for African students interested in furthering their studies in North America. Tom Mboya knew that when independence came for Kenya, the infrastructure would not be there unless his people were ready for leadership positions. He did not want his country to repeat the mistake of Ghana, which had to retain white bureaucrats from the previous colonial government in order to simply function during the first few years of independence.

Mboya’s desire to prepare his country took a step forward when he met William Scheinman. The two did not meet until Mboya’s last evening in the U. S. After Mboya’s presentation, Scheinman took him to a Harlem restaurant where they talked most of the night before Scheinman drove the Kenyan to the airport. Of this meeting, a lifelong correspondence began and the African American Students Foundation (AASF) was ultimately born.

After a few months of exchanging letters, Mboya asked Scheinman for financial assistance of a Kenyan who had a scholarship waiting for him in the U. S., but who did not have money for transportation to his school. This was the start of several individual cases of Scheinman paying the airfare of Kenyans coming to the U. S. on scholarships they had arranged themselves. The businessman communicated with the students, too, and began to see that their motivation was something beyond themselves. They were the hope of their communities.

Scheinman and his accountant soon noted the logical need for an organization that could raise money for charter flights and living expenses for groups of African students. An adviser who was sensitive to individual student issues could double as an executive director and oversee a small office. Cora Weiss, an ACOA member and wife of a Holocaust survivor, accepted and excelled at that non-paid position. None of the key players in the AASF, in fact, accepted a salary; donations were meant for the students.



**Jackie Robinson, Harry Belafonte & Sidney Poitier each provided financial support for ASSE.**

Three American personalities stepped forward to help AASF with its financial goals. Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, and Jackie Robinson all signed a fundraising letter for AASF in 1959. To varying degrees, they continued their support throughout the Airlift. Belafonte was a popular singer with liberal leanings and a history of supporting good causes. Poitier, the well-known actor, was a political moderate. Jackie Robinson turned his successful baseball career into an equally

successful, yet conservative, “retirement” of business and journalism. Furthermore, Robinson was a Nixon supporter, who attended rallies early in the 1960 campaign with the then Vice-President.



**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

Nixon, as head of the U. S. delegation to Ghana, witnessed that country’s declaration of independence ceremonies in 1957. He had a chance meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr. while there. As a result, they planned to meet upon their return to the States and discuss civil rights. King reacted favorably by not denigrating the Vice-President to the media for the rest of their stay. Nixon adopted a stronger pro-Africa stance after that.

Nixon’s opponent for the 1960 election, Senator John F. Kennedy, had an interest in Africa as well. He sat on Senate subcommittees regarding the Continent. Kennedy soon realized, however, that he would need a deeper understanding of not only Africa, but also the African-American constituency before he could count on their support. The senator approached both Robinson and Belafonte about tutoring him because of their fame and connections. Robinson refused, but Belafonte wisely counseled that the person that he really needed was Martin Luther King, Jr.

Kennedy’s opportunity for a King connection came when the civil rights activist was jailed for what was essentially driving on a suspended license. Robinson contacted Nixon on King’s behalf, but was told that it was a Georgia matter. The Vice-President would

not intervene. Kennedy and his brother, Robert, carefully and swiftly proceeded. Kennedy called King's wife, who was six months pregnant, to offer his assistance. Robert F. Kennedy then convinced the Georgia governor and the sentencing judge to release King. The civil rights leader quickly became a supporter of the senator from Massachusetts.

## THE IDEA TAKES FLIGHT

With Scheinman as President and offices in both New York and Nairobi, the AASF prepared students for the first chartered flight. Tom Mboya was adamant that African students should not receive aid unless they had already arranged their North American scholarships. He wanted to know that they were persistent and willing to work to achieve their goals. Some African students were so poor that they accepted any college that would provide a full scholarship for them. Other students realized that they were more likely to be admitted to all-black colleges or schools backed by religious groups. A common practice, though, was for the students to start at a smaller school, but then transfer to a larger, more prestigious university after the first semester or two.

Interviews were conducted by a small, all-African selection panel (including Mboya) at the Nairobi location. A concerted effort was made not to favor any ethnic group over another. Bucking patriarchal tradition, female students were also encouraged to apply. Academic merit was considered, but potential airliftees had to be referred by people the committee knew and trusted. Most of these students were older than the typical American freshman and usually had enough secondary schooling to be considered mature. Some already had families which they either left behind or arranged to have join them in the States. Candidates who were accepted into the program pledged to return after graduation and contribute to the betterment of their country. This stipulation was another way of ensuring that the students were motivated.

The U. S. State Department had its own requirements: a passport, proof of college admission and scholarship, a guaranteed return ticket, and the sum of \$300 in cash. Since the annual income of Africans was barely a third of that amount, community-wide solicitation was necessary.

Many Airlift students were beneficiaries of

harambee ("to have everyone pull together") fundraising parties. These village events were held both during the day and at night with attendees bringing money (or goods that could be auctioned for money). Food was often involved, so the atmosphere could feel more like a pep rally than a dour charity event. The irony of these fundraisers was that donors seemed unconcerned that their future leaders might be educated "nobodies" of both sexes instead of the traditional, uneducated hereditary leader's son.

The first chartered flight of 81 students landed in New York in 1959. Jackie Robinson, playwright Lorraine Hansberry, and other notables gave presentations during the three days of orientation. Much emphasis was placed on race relations. Students also did a bit of New York sightseeing before leaving for their respective schools. Throughout the year, Cora Weiss was available to counsel student concerns such as small loans, where to stay over Christmas break, and summer jobs.

The Airlift of 1960 almost didn't happen. Although 250 scholarships had been arranged for the upcoming year and \$200,000 had been raised for living expenses, there was no money for the charter flights. The AASF wondered if military planes could be used to transport the students. Not only would the planes be a financial help, it was also thought that their use would show the urgency of the situation in Eastern Africa. Jackie Robinson was one of those who submitted the request. It was denied. The reason relayed by one of Vice-President Nixon's aides was that the U. S. needed to be mindful of using military equipment inside a country under colonial rule. If the country were independent, then arranging for the flights would be less of an issue.

In July, Senator John F. Kennedy heard about the funding issue from Tom Mboya and William Scheinman. Realizing that he wouldn't be able to budge the State Department, Kennedy considered paying the \$90,000 bill partially through his family's foundation (named after his deceased older brother) and partially through appeals to other organizations. The main focus of the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation was not education, though, so those involved planned to handle the grant as quietly as possible. Kennedy did not want the gift seen as an improper political gesture during the run-up to the election. Other foundations and well-to-do folks in Kennedy's circle were consulted; however,

none would contribute at that time. In addition to the amount needed for the flights, Kennedy pledged an additional \$100,000 to fight criticism that the African students did not have enough money for incidentals while studying in the U. S. He also promised \$10,000 for a fact-finding group to go to Kenya and participate in the AASF selection process.



*John F. Kennedy alongside Tom Mboya*

This windfall took an ugly turn, however, when Nixon supporters heard about it near the beginning of August. A flurry of behind-the-scenes conversations produced an offer by the State Department to fund the Airlift up to \$100,000. The AASF politely refused, realizing that the offer might be conditional later. Shortly thereafter, the U. S. commercial airline that had promised planes to the AASF decided that it had no planes available for the September departure date. Scheinman thought the State Department might be trying to force the AASF into accepting its offer of funds.

Nixon-friendly Senator Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania made matters worse by announcing the State Department's offer on the Senate floor in mid-August. Jackie Robinson likewise informed the public about the State Department funds in his newspaper column.



Senator Scott then attacked Kennedy in the Senate by suggesting that his family was trying to steal a worthwhile project from the government for personal advancement. The only reason the Kennedys would do that, Scott mused, was if they thought they should be controlling the government before one of them was actually elected.



Kennedy probably did not mean to conceal his generosity indefinitely, but most likely wished to control how the information was released to the public. A swift response by an AASF board member helped save the day. It outlined the history of the frustrating communications with the State Department, chastised Senator Scott for attempting to gain political advantage from the situation, and expressed a hope that the State Department would consider providing the promised \$100,000 on a continuing basis for other African students coming to the U. S. A copy of this telegram to Scott was read into Senate record by Kennedy, who gained overwhelming support from both sides of the aisle through his factual response to the accusation of impropriety.

Nixon, of course, did not benefit from all of the subsequent fact-checking. The ruckus over the Airlift funding was revisited by the

media during the remainder of the campaign. In the process, Nixon lost the enthusiastic support of Jackie Robinson, who distanced himself from the AASF as well. These events may have lingered somewhere in the minds of the voters as they went to the polls in November. The 1960 Airlift, therefore, likely affected the outcome of the presidential election.

The 1961 Airlift was no less eventful. With the publicity from the year before, agencies other than AASF wanted a piece of the action and tried to circumvent the inclusion of AASF in grants and planning with the State Department. Although the Foundation was never meant to perpetuate itself, the idea had been to devolve the operation so that another entity using the best practices of AASF could take over the project. Unfortunately, the government and big university plans for educating Africans seemed to focus more on money-handling than educating students. As the Airlift process shifted from the personal to the impersonal, AASF finally joined into a cooperative council agreement (called CECA) with other agencies professing the same goals. Members of the Council for Education Cooperation with Africa flew to the Nairobi office and enforced stricter evaluation procedures during the interview process.

Now that JFK was president, the State Department was supplying \$100,000 for the flights so that the Kennedy Foundation could end its support. Even Scheinman, somewhat exhausted, reduced his commitments to the AASF. Cora Weiss went into “care and feeding mode;” maintaining the students that the AASF had previously flown to the U. S.

Still, the number of students actually flown to the U. S. was nearly the same as in the previous year. Notably, a larger proportion went to high schools rather than colleges. This reflected the partnership that Weiss had forged with the Universalist Unitarian Association in Boston to pay the way of high school students who were not academically ready for college.

By 1962, airlifting African students was almost completely taken over by the State Department. Its grantee organizations succeeded in exploiting all of AASF’s funding sources. The Foundation alerted African students already studying in the United States that it was no longer able to assist them with finances. Contact information, however, for organizations that could help was provided,

and Cora Weiss “mothered” students as best she could – even though the New York office of AASF was closed.

The last year that AASF was involved, 1963, the program became even broader. The airliftees were younger than in previous years, most being born after WWII. They were also able to attend college closer to their high school graduation than previous airliftees had been able to do. By the end of the year, though, the education of foreign students had become a regulated government activity assigned to grantee organizations. The African American Students Foundation was no more.

In all, there were nearly 800 young Africans from primarily Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda who attended high schools and universities in North America as part of the Airlift – 800 lives forever changed by education.

## NATION BUILDERS

The AASF bravely faced the British colonial government, the U.S. State Department, combative grantee organizations, and racial segregation to assure that higher education was available to students from the African continent. When uhuru (“freedom”) came to Kenya in 1963, there were nation builders ready. The first decade of the newly emancipated country saw a 90% return rate of Airlift graduates. They held ministerial and ambassadorial positions, served as members of the Kenyan legislature, led the country’s new universities, founded schools and clinics, and worked civil service jobs. The distinguished alumni include Dr. Wangari Maathai, Kenya’s first Nobel Laureate, and Barack Obama Sr., father of President Obama.

After pursuing studies in both the U. S. and Germany, Wangari Maathai became the first woman to earn a doctorate degree in East Africa. Also honored as the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize, Dr. Maathai has encouraged African women to reduce poverty and conserve the environment through the planting of over 40 million trees. To what does she attribute her success? Education. “You cannot be a leader without understanding the world you want to lead,” she asserts.

Referencing the Airlift in a 2007 speech, presidential candidate Barack Obama stated: “[The voting rights march in Selma, Alabama] sent a shout across oceans so that my grandfather began to imagine something

different for his son. His son, who grew up herding goats in a small village in Africa could suddenly set his sights a little higher and believe that maybe a black man in this world had a chance.” Obama, Sr. accepted financial aid from the AASF during the 1960s. With this support, he was able to earn degrees in economics from the University of Hawaii as well as Harvard before gaining a government post in his native Kenya.

## TRAGEDIES

Sadly, three of the major proponents for change during the Airlift era were assassinated. JFK, MLK, and Mboya were all shot and killed. Jack Kennedy died on November 22, 1963 - the same year Kenya gained its independence. Martin Luther King, Jr. was “free at last” on April 4, 1968. Tom Mboya followed soon after, buried just six years after uhuru. Many speculate what the world might be like today if these men had lived.

## A NEW HOPE

It is not as though education outside the Continent has been abandoned since the Airlift. Tom Mboya’s work continues through his daughter, Dr. Susan Mboya. Since 2002, she has been providing educational opportunities in the United States through her Zawadi Africa Education Fund. Her organization provides scholarships for academically gifted girls from disadvantaged backgrounds across Africa. Young African women are the focus of this program because Dr. Mboya feels that they encounter more roadblocks (fighting long-held traditions, financial burden, and cultural expectations) to higher education than their male counterparts. Zawadi means “gift” in Swahili. This may refer more to the contribution that women can make to modern African society than the money collected to send them to college.

Another gift to modern society is the ingenuity of William Kamkwamba of Malawi: “I saw a need to change something, but couldn’t wait on others to do it for me.” He engineered an electricity-producing windmill from scrap parts at age 14. It powered 3 light bulbs, 2 radios, and charged the occasional neighbor’s cell phone. His second windmill provided needed irrigation for his family’s property. Just like members of the Airlift Generation, Kamkwamba is gaining scholarships and travel opportunities through his own hard work. He is planning to attend a U. S. college in the Fall of 2010.

Kenya now has 7 public universities and over 20 private ones - practically the most of any country in Africa. That is a big change from 50 years ago when the only “local” option was a community college in neighboring Uganda. Is the need for student Airlifts over?



***William Kamkwamba in front of his windmill.***

When asked about the idea of a present-day Airlift, U. S. Vice-President Biden responded: “In the [U. S. education of Africans] process, you make us better. You improve us. So it’s a selfish motivation we have in wanting to extend and expand those educational opportunities.” Cultural and intellectual exchange is vital in maintaining the connection between the United States and the African continent. It continues the tradition firmly rooted in the Airlift Generation.

*Amani ya duniani kutipia elimu.*  
(World peace through education.)

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— Elaine Ward —

# DRUMMING

## *the Pulse in the Heart of Africa*

As the history of African music is traced, the element of rhythm, which is known as the pulse or beat, has always been considered the driving force within the music. The drum, which is said to be the oldest instrument known to humankind, has always been one of the major instruments that, when played, depicts passion and energy within people all around the world. The drums of Africa are played with much skill and embellished improvisations, and can communicate directly to the spirit and soul of the listeners. Although there are over two thousand languages spoken on the continent of Africa, the voice of the drum is the universal language to which all of Africa can relate and respect. The following will be discussed in this synopsis of the African Drum: The African drum in general; events wherein drums are used; a few examples of African drums; the care of the drum; examples of drumming in Ghana (which is on the west coast of Africa) and drumming in Burundi (which is in southeast Africa); and finally, a few simple drumming techniques that can be used to introduce even a non-musician to the drum, which is the pulse in the heart of Africa.

### THE DRUM

Drums have always been an important part of African music. Although it is not the most common instrument in Africa, many cultures around the world have identified the drum as the most representative of African instruments. Francis Bebey, author of the book, *African Music*, made this powerful statement: “The drum definitely expresses the inner feelings of Black Africa.” Often, the term “the African Drum” is generalized. For example, the analogy of “The Car” can be compared to that of the drum, for there are many types of cars, ranging from sports cars to limousines, and they all are designed with different purposes in mind. Similarly, there are also vast differences in the African drums.

The sizes of African drums range from very small, hand-held drums to large drums that have to sit on a stand. There are even large drums that require several men to carry them, especially in some of the processions. Another characteristic of drums is their variations in pitches. Some drums are pitched to high tones and some yield low tones, similar to those of the human voice. Drums have various shapes, which include cylinders, hourglasses, goblets, and rounded frames. The rhythm of the drum is so intertwined with the people of Africa that even when the drum is not present, its pulse can still be heard and felt through clapping, stomping, stepping, and dancing.

### EVENTS WHEREIN DRUMS ARE USED

Drumming is the pulse in the heart of African lifestyles in many ways. These would include recreation and festivals, birth, initiations, weddings, funerals, and ceremonies with the royals of the tribe. Usually the privilege of playing at royal events is reserved for the aristocrats of the land. Drums are used to salute the Divinities and prevail in the spiritual and mystical aspects of life. The voice of the drum can also be used to send messages or news from one village to another. This manner of drumming requires much patience and skill. Some drum messages are not meant for everyone. For example, a special rhythm is sounded when the chief summons all of his leaders to a meeting. In these special cases, only a few can understand and interpret the drum message. Another example is when drums are played just before a hunting expedition. Usually three-headed drums are used for such an event.

### A FEW EXAMPLES OF AFRICA DRUMS

The Kpanlogo is a drum that can be heard over long distances. Today it is played in many African bands and is considered a ceremonial drum. The three-headed drums are laid on the ground parallel to one another, and the musicians straddle them and beat the skins with their

hands. The Etwu is called the friction drum because it is played by rubbing a stick across its head. A powder is placed on the Etwu drum that creates friction when it is played. There are some drums that are considered processional drums that are so large that they must be carried on horseback. Some are even played by gliding and sliding the fingers across the skin of the drum.

### THE CONSTRUCTION AND CARE OF THE DRUM

Since drums play such an important role in the countries of Africa, it is important to make sure that the right tree be used. Once the tree is carved and the drum is made, the drum maker as well as the drummer must use much care in how they preserve the drum. For example, at least three coats of oil are used to preserve the wood and to keep it from cracking. Many drums have rope handles that are securely attached to make transport easier.

### A LOOK AT DRUMMING IN GHANA

Ghana is located on the west coast of Africa. In Ghana, sticks, hands, or a combination of both may play drums. The drums are a part of the membranophones and are the second most popular instruments of the country. The first is the idiophones (cymbals). In Northern Ghana, the double-headed closed drums are favored. Another drum is the frame drum, which has a membrane that has been stretched and placed over a potsherd. In parts of Southern Ghana, the single-headed open drum is preferred. The drum that has a language all its own, and is played throughout Ghana, is the Atumpan. It is also known as the Akan talking drum. This drum is considered the Talking Drum because of its characteristics of varying tones to, “talk.” It is also used for communicating across distances. The hand drum, the apentemma, is also widespread. There is one group, called the Anlo-Ewe, who plays a drum that is unique to their southeast coast. This drum is different from other drums made in Ghana in that it is constructed by joining strips of wood with iron hoops together, then painted

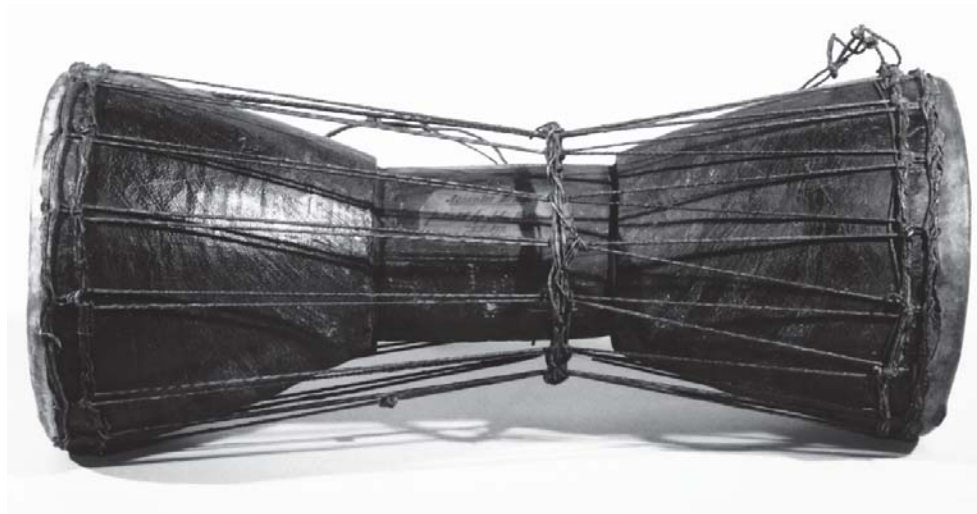


red and blue or green. To date, no other groups have adopted this technology.

As a result of historical interactions among the societies, some societies in the south have adopted drums of the north in order to use them for certain types of music. In the north, some drums of the south are used at the royal courts. Some of the drums that are still played are over five hundred years old. These drum bodies are usually covered with cloth for the purpose of beauty. In Ghana, one creative use of the drum is that some schools use the drum to begin the school day, to send students out to recess, and to dismiss them at the end of the day. Students learn what is being communicated by the tones and patterns being played on the drums.

its own voice and special function within the group. Four of these drums function individually with each one having a special name. The Karyenda and Rukinso drums are also associated with royalty.

Most drums in Burundi such as the Inkiranya, the Amashakwe and the Ibishizo, are beaten with a drumstick. These drums have single pegged heads and are very tall. The Inkiranya, which is the central drum, is surrounded by twenty to twenty-four Inkiranya and Amashakwe drums placed in a semi-circle. On one side, the Amashakwe drums play uniform, basic rhythms and on the other side, the Ibishizo play more varied rhythms. All players dance and sing praises to the person they are honoring.



*'Talking' drum from the Asante of Ghana*

## A LOOK AT DRUMMING IN BURUNDI

Burundi is in the southeastern part of Africa. Since there is not much industry there, most income comes from agriculture and cattle raising. This has resulted in families occupying places in the hills, instead of villages. For centuries the royal courts, especially the chiefs, embraced the cultural life of the people and their musical performances. Drumming is highly regarded in Burundi. The two main types of drums used in Burundi are the Ingaraba drum, which is single-headed and shaped like a cylinder, and the Ingoma, made by two skins laced together. The Ingoma, a royal saluting drum, refers to both the drum and the ensemble that plays the drum or drums. It is regarded by the people of Burundi as the most characteristic of the people. The Ngoma drums are also used as a form of communication and are known as the drums of authority. These drums are usually played in groups of seven, with each drum having

There is a world renowned group that has performed in Burundi for over forty years known as the Royal Drummers of Burundi. Their drums are made with such detail they are considered sacred. A special ceremony is held when cutting the trees to make these drums. This cutting of trees usually takes place at a certain time of day and the men are celebrated when they return from the cutting of the trees. The drums resulting from the tree cutting are the amashako, the ibishikiso, and the ikiramyia. They represent fertility, regeneration and kings respectfully. The drummers play at coronations of kings, weddings, and funerals. One of the most fascinating aspects of these drummers is that they balance very large drums on their heads as they move in the most rhythmic manner. The Royal Drummers of Burundi have maintained their unique style of playing and their techniques have been passed down from father to son for many years.

## TECHNIQUES FOR PLAYING THE DJEMBE AND SIMILAR DRUMS

The hand positions for playing some of the African drums, especially the Congas and Djembes, are similar throughout Africa. They will be given in three steps. These positions, when used correctly, produce a bass sound, a slap sound and a muff sound. In the first position, place both hands on the drum with your fingers together. Position them so that the palms of your hands are not touching the drum and your knuckles are even with the rim of the drum. This will produce the muff sound. In the second position, place one hand on the center of the drum so that a bass sound can be produced. The fingers should be together and the palm should be facing downward. In the third position, the hand should be placed along the rim of the drum. This produces the slap sound. The palms should face downward. Instead of flattening the fingers, the fingers should be in a cupped position so that only the outside tips of the fingers are touching the drum. These three steps will help with basic drumming techniques and hopefully get the beginning drummer started.

## CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, drumming alone in no way defines Africa in terms of the richness of music its various cultures possess. Understanding drums do, however, help us to appreciate the similarities within the different cultures. For example, singing, dancing and stepping are all intertwined with the rhythm of drum playing. The various festivals, ceremonies, and rituals all incorporate drumming by highly skilled musicians. The strong syncopated rhythms are loved and respected by people all over the world and more and more cultures are learning how to use some of the techniques found in African drumming. There are many varieties of drums throughout the continent of Africa, as could be seen when looking at a few drums from Ghana and Burundi. Drumming groups have played for many centuries and new groups are forever emerging. If the basic techniques of drumming are applied, you would be well on your way to becoming a beginning drummer, with the sky being the limit. Understanding the purpose and specific use of some of the drums makes it easier for you to select a drum for personal use. Lastly, the African drum will continue to speak volumes to its listeners and usher them right into the pulse in the heart of Africa.

# LESSON PLAN

## PROCEDURE

Teach students about some of the various types of drums used in Africa. Emphasize that certain drums are characteristic of certain countries and regions. For example, compare a few of the drums of one country to those of another, which will help in your presentation. Once students have an understanding of the importance of Drums in Africa, teach them some basic drumming techniques for playing drums (which can be found in the Basic technique section of this paper).

First, have all students clap a steady rhythm without altering the beat. Teach the three hand positions for playing the drums that are mentioned in the Technique section of this paper. Have students practice playing the drums using these techniques. Pick one student to play the steady beat on the cowbell. When students are ready, teach them the following chant: Stop, Look and Listen. Cross the street. First use your eyes and ears. Then use your feet. After memorizing this chant, have students clap the patterns. Once they can do this, divide the class into four groups, giving each group one fourth of the chant.

Select one student to play the words, "sha-ke- re shake", "sha-ke- re shake" "sha-ke- re shake", "sha-ke- re shake", in a triplet rhythm. Select another student to improvise playing a rhythm that is in sync with the steady beat pattern (in a meter of four which is a March rhythm). When students are comfortable with their patterns, have the person playing the cowbell begin to create the pulse. Bring one group of the chanters in at a time. Lastly, bring in the shakere and then the student who is improvising. If there is not a student who feels comfortable improvising, you, the teacher, may do this.

## GOAL

To give students an overview of Drumming in the Continent of Africa.

## OBJECTIVE

Students will play simple rhythmic patterns on various types of membranophones (Drums that have skin across the head). A couple of students will play an idiophone such as the shakere or cowbell to keep the steady beat.

## MATERIALS

Drums of various types and shakere.

## ASSESSMENT

Have students critique each other. Determine if students were able to play varying rhythms, simultaneously and yet keep the feel of the rhythm.

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— Ryan Ruppert —

# THE DAKAR

## *A Race Cross Northern Africa*

Some call it the most dangerous race in the world. What started as the Paris-Dakar Rally in 1979 is now known simply as The Dakar. It has claimed the lives of over fifty people since its inception, and typically only forty percent of the people who start the race finish. It is a rally that tests the skill and endurance of the participant and the vehicle driven.

Thierry Sabine, a French motorcycle racer, who in 1977 got lost in the sand dunes of the Libyan Desert, created the Dakar Rally. He was participating in another rally called the Abidjan-Nice Rally, and from his misfortune founded a new race. He thought the location was so perfect he envisioned a more permanent rally that would take place every year in Northern Africa. The next year he would plan and finally organize the first Paris-Dakar Rally in 1978-1979. The race would start in Paris, and even the European stretch would be a strictly off-road section. There were times that riders would have to venture onto roadways, but as often as possible the drivers would stay on a course that was on some of the toughest terrain imaginable. Most drivers would say the real rally began when they crossed the Mediterranean and arrived in Africa.

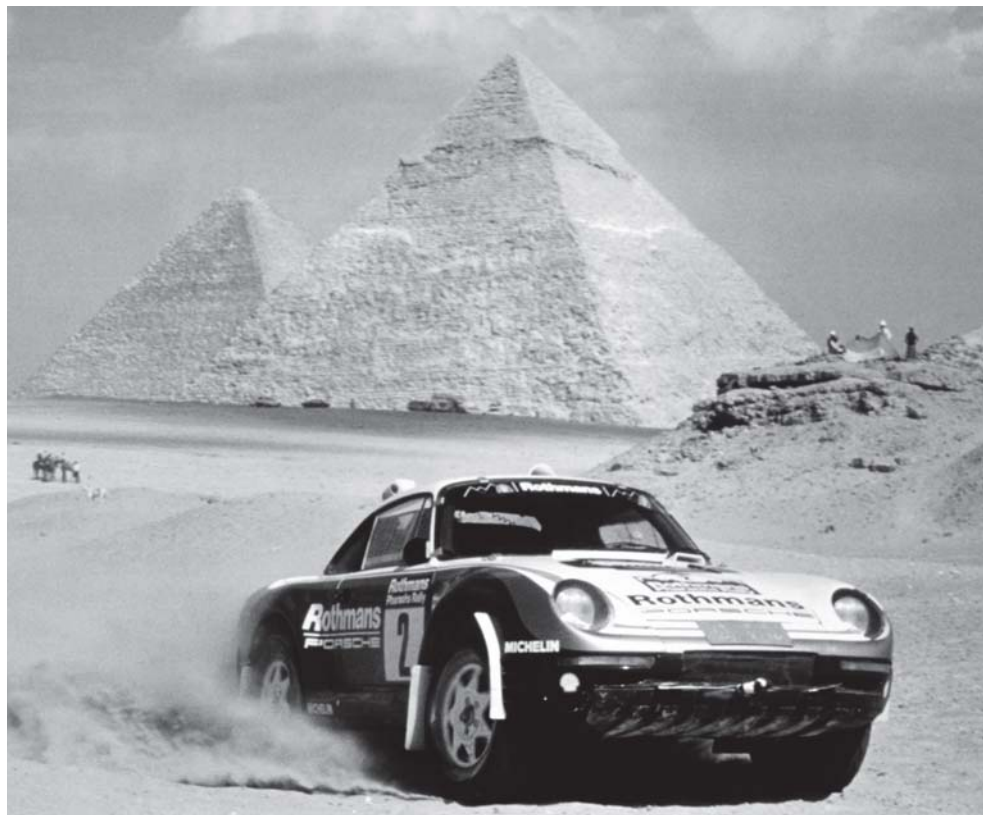
The Dakar Rally has involved up to twenty-five African countries since its inception. The 1992 rally made it all the way to Cape Town. Despite minor changes to the route over the years, for the most part the rally usually ends in Dakar, Senegal. The typical countries that it passes through are Algeria, Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Guinea, and Senegal. The terrains of these countries often have extreme conditions and many of the vehicles are tested to the limit. Most of these countries contain some part of the Sahara Desert. When most people picture the Sahara Desert they think of the sand dunes they have seen in pictures. These dunes only make up fifteen percent of the Sahara and are very soft sand and quite difficult to ride through.

Most of the terrain that the riders have to go through is desert plains with rough sand and gravel.

Mauritania has what some riders consider the most difficult section called the Adrar Region. It has sand dunes and canyons that some consider the most difficult in all of off-road racing. When riders finally reach Senegal they are treated to a grassier terrain of rolling hills. Most riders' vehicles are so battered and beaten at this point though that most just want to finish. The first Dakar Rally covered over ten thousand kilometers, and has averaged that many kilometers throughout the years. It has covered a range of distances from six to sixteen thousand kilometers with the exception of the year it went all the way to Cape Town. Those distances are even more impressive when the desert

and grassland terrain is factored in. The Rally usually lasts sixteen days and drivers only rest at night often with little sleep. The motorcycle drivers have to ride standing up over the sand dunes and plains in order not to fall over.

This race is open to amateur and professional drivers, and amateurs usually make up about 80 percent of the field. Most riders need to have company as it can cost in the range of fifty to one hundred thousand dollars. There are three types of vehicles that run in the Dakar Rally, and the type of vehicle can greatly determine the cost. These are motorbikes, cars, and trucks, all running in the rally at the same time. Vehicle manufacturers often use this event to test the durability of their vehicles, though many of the vehicles have to be specially modified to survive the rally.



*A Porsche 959 in the Paris Dakar Rally*



Following the vehicles is a moving city that supports the racers. Riders will often team up before the race and share mechanics, support vehicles, and equipment. The vehicles need constant maintenance throughout the race, but the mechanics can only work on the vehicles after they finish each stage. Each stage of the race can last up to sixteen hours and be as long as five to six hundred kilometers. Once the riders reach what's called a bivouac, or camp, they can receive help and assistance from their support team. If their vehicle breaks down while on the course, they are out of the race if they can not repair it themselves. Sweeper trucks drive through the course picking up broken down vehicles and riders near the end of the stage. Rescue can often be difficult at times, and if it is a true emergency a medical helicopter will be brought in.

Due to security concerns and terrorist threats in 2008, the Dakar Rally was cancelled. The following year it was moved to Chile and Argentina in South America, and has been there ever since. It is still called the Dakar, but now is completely removed from Africa where it all began. Feelings in Africa and the racing community have been mixed about the Dakar now being run in South America. Some riders wish for it to return to Northern Africa and continue where it began. There is even a Facebook page called "Bring Dakar Rally Back to Africa." The reality is that most of the African countries that hosted the rally do not miss it as much as the riders do.

The Dakar Rally can bring a serious environmental impact to the area it runs through. An article in the magazine *New African*, in 1985, talked about one of the trucks having to run over trees because the path had become too narrow. This of course is just one incident, but in a race we have to assume that nature takes a back seat to winning. The greenhouse gas emissions from the rally are an amount that is often debated. The Dakar Rally representatives contend that the emissions are no more than that of a Formula One race. Those figures don't take into account the support vehicles that make up the moving city following them. A new assessment of the carbon footprint the rally creates has been commissioned for the 2011 race. Many African nations have also complained about the lack of economic stimulus coming from the Dakar Rally. Many of the countries only see the riders pass through and spend

almost nothing. The moving city of support vehicles is almost completely self reliant and hardly contribute to the local economies, excluding Senegal where the race finishes.

There is also the cost of human lives that puts the Dakar Rally in question. As of 2009 the Dakar has claimed the lives of fifty one riders, support members, and spectators. At times the rally goes through rural villages where spectators line up to watch the passing vehicles. Unfortunately in some cases the people who are killed are only young children trying to cross the road. The riders go into the Dakar Rally knowing the danger, making the death of the spectators that much more heartbreaking. There is also the death of livestock and wild animals that the race does not take into account. The Dakar also claimed the life of the founder Thierry Sabine, who died in a helicopter accident during the 1986 rally.

A first hand look at the drama and difficulty of the Dakar Rally can be seen in the British TV series *Race to Dakar*. Charley Boorman, who is also well known for his motorcycle series with Ewan McGregor *The Long Way Round* and *The Long Way Down*, attempts to finish *The Dakar* with a team of two other riders. The documentary gives you a first hand look at the difficulty of the terrain and the immense amount of preparation that goes into the race. It also shows you the danger that exists in running this race. Charley ends up falling off his bike after a few days and breaks both his hands. Another member of his team gets stuck in the sand a few days later and is stranded in the desert for two days before being picked up. Only one rider, Simon Pavey, from his team is able to finish the race.

Despite the absence of *The Dakar* from Africa today, other races have stepped up to fill in the void. *The Rallye Du Maroc* started in 1934 and was held intermittently 23 times up till 1988 when it stopped. It was a marathon-style rally, similar to the Dakar Rally held in Morocco. *The Safari Rally*, which is held in East Africa, started in 1959 and is held to this day. It is only two to three days in length, making it much shorter than the Dakar Rally. *The Dakar Challenge*, also known as the *Banger Challenge*, has become an amateur sensation. The challenge is trying to drive a car that is valued at a certain amount, usually around one hundred pounds. You have to make it from London all the way to

Dakar. The vehicles are then donated for auction upon arrival to raise money for charity. Other such challenges spawned because of the popularity of this one take riders into Asia and the Middle East.

These races have definitely kept the continent that possesses such diverse terrain in the rally business. It's no question that the Dakar is in a class of its own and could not possibly be replaced by another race. Possibly some day the Dakar will return to Africa and may be met with both cheers and protests.

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April Brown

# AFRICAN LITERATURE

## *the Woman's Voice*

**A**frica is a continent with many different cultures and traditions. Creative works such as writing are no exception. Over time, the oral traditions and vast number of languages lend Africa an extremely wide range of themes and trends in literature. The artificial borders created by the Europeans during the Colonial Period directly impacted the continent, and these borders are what define our regions today. African literature is often divided by the different peoples, cultural practices, physical geographies, and varied languages of the following regions: West Africa, East Africa, North Africa, Central Africa, and Southern Africa. African literature is also categorized by genre and language, or a combination of these. The different approaches express to us a diversity of people, their way of life, and the many traditions that are treasured.

The African oral literature tradition is one that contains riddles, poetry, song, proverbs, and epics. The oral tradition is passed down from one generation to another and another. This is one way that the various cultures sustained tradition and heritage over time. The oral tradition is also a reflection of community values, rituals, beliefs, and continuity of culture. Performance of the material is a distinguishing feature of oral literature. The command of language, delivery, and creative spirit of the performer assists in communicating the moral or historical messages to the audience.

In addition to an oral tradition, written texts began with hieroglyphics, a complex system of picture writing used by the ancient Egyptians. Written text using alphabets and words came much later. The introduction of colonists, missionaries, and traders brought this form of writing to Africa.

The written word began to give Africans a greater voice. They could begin to bring the stories and traditions of each of their respective countries to life for the people and

the world. During the 1800s to 1900s male authors began to write these stories down. African literature was restricted to male writers only. Keep in mind that each author was writing in his country's written language. Written language and spoken language are very different in each country. Literature in English, known as Anglophone literature, came much later. Much of the English writing came from Christian missionaries and European colonists. Other materials are from indigenous writers. Many male authors wrote about themselves in an autobiographical form after they left Africa. The authors would be forced to flee when they became involved with the struggles of political systems or expressed their feelings about violence, human rights, or the position of women in their writing. The status of women is represented in many novels as a loss of dignity and self-respect.



*Chinua Achebe*

Chinua Achebe, the foremost respected African male author of his time, was born in the town of Ibo, Nigeria, in 1930. He is considered one of the most important male figures indigenous to Africa since the 1950s. He promoted writing in English to give

Africans a voice in a very diverse Africa. His novel, *Things Fall Apart*, is read around the world and considered a classic. According to Achebe, the novel was a way for him to achieve two things: (1) to share the theme of cultural conflict between Africa and the West, and (2) to promote an understanding of Africans and their lives. The female characters in the novel seem to have inherited or gained nothing. Achebe shows their ascribed place and the ways in which they relate to the male culture. For most of this novel the women are “down on their knee before their men folk and are regularly making an exit in the proper order.” However, there is one exception, the Priestess of Agbala. She is honored for her prestige and station. As a general rule of thumb though, women were excluded from economic, political, and community life, it would appear that women were treated as property or part of an estate. Gender roles play an important part in African literature. It gives us the framework from which female authors had to rise up.

Now looking at the contemporary writing of today, we have an impressive contribution of African women's writing. Female authors have taken a stand to present a picture of a strong African woman. They want to maintain a balance between the traditional African woman and the competent determinist.

One popular female author is Yvonne Vera. She is known for having won several international awards, including the Tucholski prize awarded by Swedish PEN (2004) and the Macmillan writer's prize for Africa, for *The Stone Virgins* in 2002. She was also the 1997 winner of the Commonwealth writer's prize for best novel, Africa region, for *Under the Tongue*. Vera's first novel, *Nehanda*, published in 1993, was considered a foreshadowing of the style of writing she would continue to produce. She displayed “creativity, an aesthetic imagination, and a sensory experience” for the reader. The novels to follow, *Without a Name* and *Under the Tongue*,

dealt with the liberation and the trauma she remembers during that period in her country of Zimbabwe. The liberation period in many ways, was one of oppression by the remaining British landowners. Africans were unable to vote, white men controlled every aspect of law-making and government, and laws were passed stating that the presence of Africans in particular public places was prohibited. Women also played an active role in the liberation. They would often dress in military fatigues, disguised as men, and participate in protecting their country. Additionally, women contributed to the fight for freedom by providing food and clothes for the troops.

Yvonne Vera continued to write with this focus in mind and produced novels dealing with the liberation forces time and time again. When she was thirteen, her uncle left her hometown of Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, to join the liberation forces. This event caused her to reflect on how the political events were affecting her family, not just her country. Vera's recent work, *The Stone Virgins* (2002) is considered her most accomplished work to date. The novel continues to elaborate on the Zimbabwean independence struggle and unequal relationship between men and women before and after the liberation. This novel is said to be a breakthrough piece due to its post-independence setting. Vera once said, "I would love to be remembered as a writer who had no fear of words, but who had an intense love for her nation." This was just before she had to flee her homeland due to the political climate there. She joined her husband in Toronto, Canada, until dying in 2005.

Another prolific female author is Bessie Head. Head was born in South Africa in 1937. She was taken from her mother at birth and raised in a foster home until the age of thirteen. In 1964, she moved to Botswana to take a teaching position, which she quickly abandoned for writing, but remained in Botswana for fifteen years as a refugee before gaining citizenship. Head felt that the colonization of South Africa, the pressure of missionaries, and growing up as a racially mixed child were experiences that she could not ignore. She began writing several novels, including *When Rain Clouds Gather* and *A Question of Power*. Her works deal with issues of refugees, African history, poverty, and relationships. Having been taken from her mother at birth, Bessie Head dealt with this maternal loss through her writing. Post-colonial hardships endured by Africans and

termination of family relationships are represented in her various works. She also presents pieces of her autobiography that discuss poor and emotionally abused black women, writing, "Love is so powerful, it's like unseen flowers as you walk." Though Bessie Head's life was filled with hardship and struggle, her writing evokes love and beauty through it all. She was able to paint a picture with words that would have the reader aesthetically involved in the events and characters' lives, especially her own. Bessie Head died in Botswana in 1986 at the age of forty-nine.

And last, but certainly not least, is an example of an African female author who contributes to children's literature. Ifeoma Onyefulu (pronounced "Ee-for-ma Oh-ye-fulu" was born in Onitsha, Nigeria. Onyefulu has successfully introduced her homeland of Nigeria and village life to young children through her picture books. Her books have been praised for her depictions of the commonalities between cultures and are recommended for classroom libraries around the world. *A Is for Africa*, *Grandfather's Work: A Traditional Healer in Nigeria*, and *A Triangle for Adaora: An African Book of Shapes* demonstrate for children a different way of looking at village life. The books show the importance of relationships and illustrate customs that contemporary African families enjoy today. Author Chris Powling wrote in *Books for Keeps*, that the visual impact of *A Is for Africa* is like "stepping from a darkened room straight into noon sunshine." In *A Triangle for Adaora*, Onyefulu focuses on the journey of two cousins, Ugo and Adaora. During their quest they are invited to search for triangle shapes somewhere in their village, but in the meantime they encounter all of the other shapes as well. The School Library Journal dubbed this book "a unique approach to learning about shapes" and praised the "lush color photographs." This book also doubles as a concept book that parallels social life and relationships.

Onyefulu has also written many prize-winning novels for the junior reader and continues to maintain her balance of contemporary Africa and traditional culture. Her most recent accomplishment to date is her current novel, *Ikenna Goes to Nigeria*. With her professional photography and stunning words, Onyefulu has created yet another award-winning piece. The novel has been named the Best Book for Children since 2008. Onyefulu has also been awarded the African Studies Association Book Award for

this novel. In this piece the main character, Ikenna (the author's son), lives in London, but is now traveling to his ancestral home in Nigeria. He meets family he's never known and has an amazing cultural experience. Children around the world will be intrigued with Onyefulu's descriptive words and explanation of culture. Ifeoma Onyefulu currently resides in London, but frequently makes visits to her homeland of Nigeria.

The written word has given Africans a voice to share their cultures, traditions, and belief systems. African female authors are breakthrough writers who apply their life experiences, writing on ways of dealing with political climates in their countries, family relationships, and gender roles, as well as autobiography. The African oral tradition, the male authors' contributions, and African female authors have shouted to the world with their voices!

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Tara Gabriel

# THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

*and the Kebra Nagast - Ethiopia*

The story of the Ark of the Covenant begins and possibly ends on the Continent of Africa. The Ark was the vessel that Moses was commanded to build by Yahweh, the Hebrew and Christian God, to hold the Ten Commandments. It was originally housed in a movable tabernacle built by the Hebrews during their escape from Egypt to the Promised Land of Palestine. The Ark was kept in this movable tabernacle for well over 400 years. Then around 970 B.C., King Solomon, of the Kingdom of Israel, built his famous temple in Israel. The Ark of the Covenant was to reside in the inner most chamber, to serve as Yahweh's visible throne on earth. By 586 B.C. it had disappeared.

The Ark of the Covenant is so called because it held the sacred promise between Yahweh and the Hebrews. Yahweh commanded Moses to build the Ark (Exodus 25) while at Mount Sinai in Egypt during the Exodus. Moses was instructed to place the Ten Commandments he received from Yahweh inside the Ark. Later, Moses's brother, Aaron placed a budding rod and a golden pot of manna inside the Ark. The Hebrews carried the ark ahead of them for the forty-year journey of their exodus from Egypt to Palestine. During this journey and for the next 400 plus years, the Ark was kept (when not mobile) in the inner most chamber of the tabernacle built to house it.

In the fourth year of his reign, King Solomon began to build a permanent dwelling in Jerusalem to worship Yahweh and for the Ark to reside in. Solomon's Temple took seven years and the labor of nearly 200,000 men to complete this monumental task. The Ark was placed in the interior of the Temple in a room called the Holy of Holies behind a curtain. The Ark remained in the Holy of Holies for the next 380 or so years, but seems to have been missing when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. At first it was believed to have been

taken during this time, but the Babylonians kept a very detailed listing of the treasures looted from Israel, and the Ark of the Covenant - the throne of the Hebrew God - was not anywhere on their inventory lists. So where is the Ark today?

The Kebra Nagast, or the Book of the Glory of Kings, has been in existence around a thousand years. It is the Ethiopian history of the Ark of the Covenant once it left the Temple in Israel, and The Kebra Nagast also tells the story of the establishment of the Hebrew religion and the continuation of King Solomon's dynasty in Africa. The Kebra Nagast, an Ethiopian view of the Old and New Testament and (according to the editor of its newest translation, Miguel F. Brooks) proves the following:

1. "The lawful kings of Ethiopia were descended from Solomon, King of Israel.
2. That the Tabernacle of the Law of God, the Ark of the Covenant, was brought from Jerusalem to Aksum by Menelik, Solomon's firstborn son.
3. That the God of Israel transferred His place of abode on earth from Jerusalem to Aksum, the ecclesiastical capital of Ethiopia."

According to the Old Testament (1 Kings 10:1 - 13), when the Queen of Sheba (Kebra Nagast names her Queen Makeda) heard of King Solomon's great wisdom, she journeyed to Jerusalem to test the king with hard questions. When the king answered all her questions without difficulty, the Queen, truly impressed with his wisdom and with his wealth, gave King Solomon 120 talents of gold, spices, precious stones, and almug wood in great abundance [today's equivalent of about 3.5 million dollars]. It also states "King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity" (1 Kings 10:13). Then the Queen returned to her own country. She is never mentioned again in the Old Testament.

The Kebra Nagast picks up the story where the Old Testament leaves off. According to the Kebra Nagast, King Solomon was truly enamored of the Ethiopian queen and wished to "plant his seed in her." The problem was that according to Ethiopian tradition, the Queen must remain chaste. After wining and dining Queen Makeda on very spicy and hot food, the wise King made a vow that as long as the Queen did not take anything in the palace that he would not seek to take advantage of her. The queen awoke that night very thirsty and found a pitcher of water and drank from it. When the king saw this he stated that she broke her vow by taking the water, for "nothing is more valuable than water." The queen apologized, but now the king was released from his vow and took Queen Makeda as his lover. The Queen later returned to her homeland and gave birth to a son, Menelik.

Upon reaching manhood, Menelik was prepared by his mother, the Queen, to visit Israel to meet his father. She sent a message to King Solomon requesting him to anoint their son as the King of Ethiopia, and to decree that only male descendants of their son should rule this kingdom. The King and all of Israel rejoiced over the arrival of Solomon's son.

Solomon begged Menelik to remain in Israel, but because he was homesick, Menelik refused. When the king prepared to send his son back to Ethiopia, he instructed all of his advisors to send their first-born sons to accompany and advise Menelik. As it turns out this entourage was made up of Levites (the priestly class), who were the only men, by blood, who could properly care for the Ark. Menelik asked his father for a relic, or copy, of the Ark of the Covenant to take back with him. Solomon intended to give this relic to his son, but it is believed that the advisors who were being made to move to Ethiopia were not happy and instead switched the copy and stole the Ark of the Covenant to

take with them to Ethiopia. Menelik did not discover this deception until he returned home. Instead of returning the Ark, Menelik reasoned that it was the will of Yahweh that he possess the Ark.

According to monks at the monastery at Debre Damo, Ethiopia, oral tradition states that the Ark was first brought by the Levites to Tana Kirkos Island, where it remained for centuries after arriving in Ethiopia. Tana Kirkos is a natural fortress surrounded by Lake Tana. The Ark was said to have been kept in a tent or tabernacle while on the island. There is even archeological evidence to support this claim. The site that is said to have housed the ark for so long is on a summit, high on the island marked by rock pillars. Among the pillars are four timeworn, manually dug out socket holes. The distance between the socket holes and their orientation calculates to be the exact measurement of the holy of holies in the original tabernacle.

The Abbas of Tana Kirkos also claims that a Levitical Priest from Jerusalem, the priest who helped to bring the Ark to Ethiopia, is buried on the island. To help support this claim, inside the temple treasury are artifacts that the Abbas says are from Solomon's Temple. One such item is the breast plate of not just a Levitical Priest, but of a Levitical High Priest, who would be the sole guardian of the Ark.

The treasury at Tana Kirkos boasts such artifacts as a bronze tray and stand, which Hebrews used to collect the blood from slaughtered animal- a custom that the Israelites stopped practicing almost 2000 years ago. The treasury also contains many other items used in Jewish ceremonies. As a matter of fact, Tana Kirkos was primarily Jewish beginning about 500 B.C. The Jews in this area call themselves Beta Israel, which translates to House of Israel, and practice an ancient form of Judaism still today.

The Beta Israel, or Falashes as they are also known, have been connected with one of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Prior to the Babylonian invasion of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C., there was an invasion in the northern kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians. The ten tribes of Israel that resided in the northern kingdom were scattered throughout the known world, and became known as the

Lost Tribes of Israel. Beta Israel has been tied recently to the Tribe of Dan.

The Beta Israel practices significantly differ from those most Jews practice today. The Beta Israel do not practice any post-biblical law (law established after about 300 A.D.), nor do they celebrate the festivals of Purim and Chanukah. Only a few of the Beta Israel still reside in Ethiopia. Most have migrated to Israel to live.

When King Ezana of Aksum converted to Christianity, it is believed that he took the Ark of the Covenant and had it moved from Tana Kirkos to his capital, Aksum, the birthplace of the Queen of Sheba, where some believe it remains today. Ethiopia was the first Christian nation. There are 30,000 Ethiopian Orthodox churches, and every one of them has a replica of the Ark. Many of the traditions in the church are thought to have Jewish roots, such as the reverence of the ark.

The members of the Orthodox Church in Ethiopia will claim that the ark is in Ethiopia, specifically at Saint Mary of Zion chapel. The ark is presently guarded by the "keeper or guardian of the ark." The guardian claims to be a Levite priest and is like the High Priest in Judaism. The High Priest would have been the only one allowed in the presence of the Ark. Once the guardian is named, he lives his life inside the gates of the complex of the Ark. The present guardian will name his successor only on his deathbed. Historically, there have only been thirty Guardians, all of whom have never left the enclosure of the Ark's complex.

Ethiopia is the only country to make the claim that they, indeed, possess the Ark of the Covenant. The only problem is that there is no way to prove this claim. The Orthodox Ethiopians do not see the Ark as a relic you would peer at in a museum or have put through scientific analysis. To the Orthodox, the Ark is, indeed, Holy.

In June 2009, it was reported that the Patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church would reveal the Ark of the Covenant to the public. This report came after the Patriarch was received by Pope Benedict XVI. Several days later the Patriarch, Abuna Paulos, was quoted as saying,

"I am not here to give proofs that the Ark is in Ethiopia, but I am here to say what I saw, what I know and I can attest to. I didn't say that the Ark would be revealed to the world. It is a mystery, an object of veneration."

Apparently the misunderstanding came from an incorrect translation of the Patriarch's words.

Whether or not the Ark of the Covenant, built by Moses at the base of Mount Sinai, is truly in Ethiopia we may never know. For skeptics, until it is analyzed, they will not believe the Ark absolutely is in Aksum. As for those who believe, their conviction that the Ark is unquestionably in Ethiopia is not a matter of science, it is a matter of faith.

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- Darlene Greenaway -

# A VIEW

## *Restorative Justice*

The ability of victim and perpetrator to meet face to face to begin to heal from all types of unspeakable causes has been in place since 2001. In different parts of Africa it has different names, but the concept is the same. The Sycamore Tree Project has been given the distinctive privilege of beginning the restorative justice formats that are in operation today. The Sycamore Tree is an international Prison Fellowship program that uses the biblical story of Zacchaeus and the Sycamore Tree as its foundation. The Sycamore Tree project is a five-to-eight-session program that is based on biblical principles of restoring individuals and communities and of viewing crime not only as breaking a law, but as damaging relationships. This particular project brings together unrelated victims and offenders (meaning they are not each others' victims and offenders). The participants are led by the facilitator to consider these concepts in the context of crimes and justice.

- 1 Responsibility
- 2 Confession
- 3 Repentance
- 4 Forgiveness
- 5 Making amends
- 6 Reconciliation

The most dramatic use of restorative justice in recent times must be in Rwanda and is called The Umuvumu, rather than the Sycamore, Tree Project. The program (through Prison Fellowship Rwanda) has been extremely successful in this post-genocide nation where hold thousands of perpetrators. It is a ministry of reconciliation for the genocide perpetrators where the prisoners can have the opportunity to meet victims, admit/confess their crimes, ask for forgiveness, and take steps toward personal redemption.

As a result of the 1994 genocide, the prisons in Rwanda were vastly overcrowded. The Rwandan government allowed community courts, called gacaca courts, to be set up to

process the enormous backlog of war crime cases resulting from the genocide. These traditional community courts helped out the overburdened judicial system. They are called gacacas because they take place outdoors. The word gacaca means "grass" in the Kinyarwanda language, which is the primary language of Rwanda. The local judges are called "people of integrity" and are elected by their neighbors and are highly respected in the community. The gacacas involve local residents, the people who were there when the crimes took place, and who more often than not know what happened and can be relatives and friends of the victims or perpetrator. They cannot speak unless given permission, but can raise their hand if they object to the proceedings. This type of court has existed for centuries in Rwanda, so the people are very familiar with the system. The ringleaders of the genocide are not eligible for the gacaca, but a large majority of prisoners can be tried in these informal processes. Because many prisoners have been in prison for over eight years without trial and are angry and many communities are still bitter over the violence and death, the Christian fellowship came to the rescue with spiritual assistance. Prisoners come to realize the agony they have caused and are repenting and asking to meet with their victims. Prisoners such as these are candidates for the gacaca court.

Restorative justice is rooted in older traditions of community justice. The purpose of the restorative processes is to empower victims by providing them a strong voice to demonstrate to offenders the harm they cause by their actions and to provide a safe forum where the consequences and victims of their crimes and their remorse for criminal acts can encounter each other. Restorative justice encourages dialogue and negotiations between the victim and the offender. It encourages them to deal with one another directly. It promotes a problem-solving approach. It requires truth telling, repentance,

reconciliation, forgiveness, and healing for all parties in a given situation. Restorative justice puts emphasis on respecting the dignity of everyone and repairing harm caused by conflict, crime, and violence. As reported through the religious group Prison Fellowship International, as victims heard the enormities described and confessed to by their former oppressors, women fainted and men openly wept. Participants interviewed after these sessions invariably said they were very painful, but ultimately liberating.

In Sierra Leone, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) is widely regarded as one of the pillars of the Lomé Peace Agreement of 1999, which paved the way for the end of the war. It is a court-like restorative justice body assembled in South Africa after the abolition of apartheid. The main purpose of the TRC is two-fold. Firstly, it is to investigate the "causes, nature and extent" of gross human rights violations and abuses, and to determine whether such violations "were the result of deliberate planning, policy or authorization by any government, group or individual, and the role of both internal and external factors in the conflict." Second, it is to restore the human dignity of victims by providing both victims and perpetrators with the opportunity to give an account of human rights violations committed during the armed conflict. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission is to provide healing to both victims and perpetrators, as well as average Sierra Leoners who were directly involved in the conflict. The first step in the healing process is for victims to hear and see the world acknowledge that what was done to them was wrong. In the process of sharing the story, the victim can begin to heal from the trauma.

Literature reveals that a number of significant issues concerning transitional justice and its structure continues to torment practitioners attempting to implement it and scholars hoping to interpret it.





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**Gacaca Court - Photo courtesy of the National Service of Gacaca Jurisdictions of Rwanda**

Restorative justice is commonly known as a theory of criminal justice that focuses on crime as an act against another individual or community rather than the state. The victim plays a major role in the process and may receive some type of restitution from the offender. Restorative justice is a way of thinking about crime and justice that focuses on repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior. It seeks to place the needs of victims at the center of a response and looks at whose obligation it is to address these needs.

It has been stated that shame is a powerful emotion. Some have suggested that restorative justice allows offenders to experience and then remove a sense of shame for their behavior. By using both an adversarial judicial tribunal, and a Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a novel approach to transitional justice. If implemented effectively, it may be the most appropriate method of seeking justice.

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Sharon L. Humbarger

# EDUCATION IN AFRICA

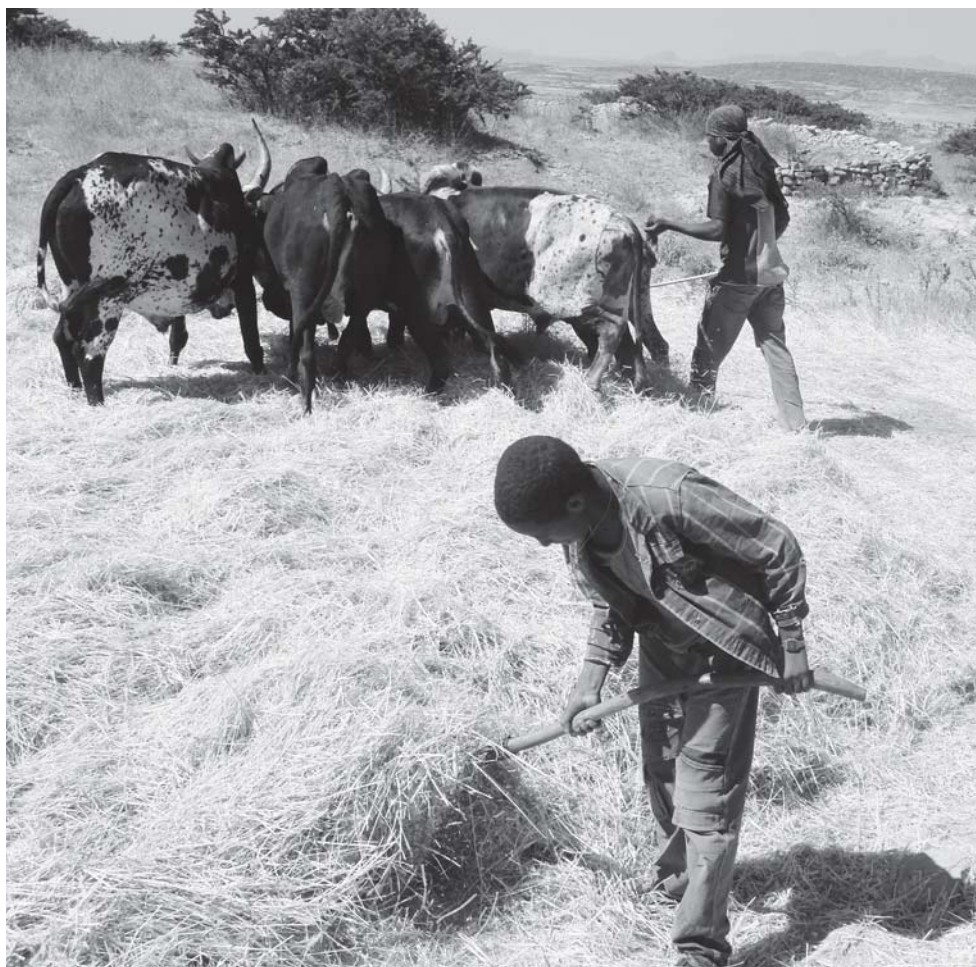
*Many People, Many Places, Many Ways*

**M**any people may believe that the term “education” refers to the learning that takes place inside the classroom. This is not the case in Africa, especially among the Amara people of northwest Ethiopia. They firmly believe that learning and education take place everywhere you go. Whether they are at home, in the fields, at the market, involved in festivities, or anywhere else, they are engaged in learning or teaching. Learning first begins in the home. The child has many teachers in his or her own home. Most African families are large, consisting of not only of siblings and parents, but grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. All of these members are responsible in playing some part of the educational role in the child’s life. If one family member instills a belief or a way of living, the other family members expand on that and reinforce it in the child’s life. The saying, “It takes a village to raise a child,” would hold true among many Africans, especially the Amara. Not only are there many people who teach in many different places, they teach in many different ways. Children are taught not only through the spoken word and observation, but through song, dance, poetry, movements, and more. All of these aspects are highly important to the Amara people, and other Africans as well.

While traditional African education begins at home, it continues into the fields and into everyday work. African children start at a young age helping around the house. A young boy will follow his mother around first, carrying things and doing small chores for her. He will then move on to helping his older brothers and watching them work in the fields. As he gets older, he will begin to shadow his father and uncles to observe the work they do, learning the family trade, whether it is farming, woodworking, weaving, tanning, or blacksmithing. A young girl also starts early by watching her mother and assisting with small household chores, such as making coffee and helping out in the

kitchen. She then follows her sisters around to gather firewood and water. As she gets older, she is taught how to use a grinder, how to cut gourds to use as utensils and containers, and how to spin threads to use in making cloth for the family. She will also be taught her mother’s special trade, which could be anything from basketwork to midwifery. Being taught these skills from such a young age unites the family and allows the children to be a valuable asset in helping the family to succeed. It teaches the children to have a strong work ethic as well as patience, obedience, and respect. Once they have learned the skill or trade, they will be able to provide for their present and future families as well.

As mentioned before, traditional African education is taught in many ways. Children are taught through language, music, dance, and through oral tradition (proverbs, myths, and stories). From birth, the tone of voice used with the family’s language teaches the child what is important. Language is used to convey information, assign tasks, teach basic arithmetic, and sharpen communication skills. Music and dance are essential in African life; they provide enjoyment and allow the people to be artistic. They give the learner the ability to grasp knowledge in many areas, such as language acquisition, literacy, numeracy, and more. They are taught the traditions and values of the community



*Ethiopian farmers harvesting grain; the younger pitching straw back into the pile to be crushed.*



through the music and dance. Children are exposed to music from birth when their mothers and families sing them lullabies. They continue to be exposed to music and dance with childhood songs and games. The children perform these songs and dances with delight, keeping themselves and others entertained. While it is enjoyable for them, they are also learning while participating. The songs teach a variety of things – days of the week, counting, language development, and more. As they get older, music and dance are used for initiations, celebrations, weddings, and funerals among many other festivities.

Yet another educational approach among African people is through oral tradition. Africans learn so much through oral tradition, such as the meaning of life, morals, norms, history, culture, and religion, just to name a few. Oral tradition contains many aspects, including proverbs, myths, fables, legends, and folktales/storytelling. Fables were a form of oral tradition that taught the listener a moral without directly telling them what to do or not do, especially in the case of the trickster stories. Anansi the spider is a famous character in the trickster fables from the Akan people of Ghana. Many of these fables teach the listener the importance of wisdom, selflessness, ambition, unity, cooperation, and many other values. These fables are educational, but also very entertaining. Much thought goes into the storytelling and elaboration to keep the attention of the audience. These stories were often told at night to keep the lessons in the minds of the children as they slept.

Mythology is closely connected to fables and storytelling, but delves deeper into the beliefs of creation, origin, and family descent. Often myths coincide with history, creating an artistic collection of stories. They are held in high esteem in the Akan communities of Ghana and are considered very sacred. While they may not be entirely accurate, they provide the community with a sense of understanding and justification for why things are the way they are. Proverbs are ubiquitous across the continent of Africa and are used to validate many beliefs and behaviors. They are credited to the ancestors and forefathers and are often used daily and displayed within the home. They are even painted on cloth, such as the Kangado, a tradition that originated in East Africa. These proverbs are written on the Kanga and then given as gifts

to parents, children, friends, and spouses. They send a message to the receiver of the gift that passes on the oral tradition and education among Africans.

All of these methods of education used among many Africans have led them to become excellent scholars. They have been taught from birth all of the things necessary to make them engaged, capable learners—obedience, respect, listening skills (listening for a purpose), articulation, use of precise language, deep understanding and interpretation, verbal and nonverbal communication, and creativity. These methods should be present in some form or another in all classrooms and educational settings. Using a variety of methods to educate our youth allows for a well-rounded individual with high morals and an appreciation of life. Not only are they entertained by most of the methods and actively engaged, they retain the knowledge for a lifetime. Having multiple people provide the education of the children in a variety of environments is vital to creating successful individuals. They are constantly learning and reciprocating that learning by teaching their peers and siblings. Song, dance, music, myths, fables, and more all lead to a holistic approach to education that we could all benefit from.

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# IDEAS

## for the classroom

- 1 Make sure students are well aware of where the continent of Africa is and that it has many countries. As each story or activity is done, make sure to point out on the map where it is from.
- 2 Read stories about Anansi the spider and the many adventures he has. Be sure to discuss the moral behind each one, asking children first what they think.
- 3 Have students create their own stories in a variety of ways, orally, written, performed with dance and music.
- 4 Watch videos on youtube.com or teachertube.com about the different African dances and music, as well as childhood games and activities.
- 5 Teach some of the proverbs or sayings of Africa and allow the students to interpret what they mean and discuss things they may have heard their parents say over and over again. Then as a class you can create your own list of proverbs that have meaning to the students. Allow each child to make a drawing and include a proverb on it, similar to how a Kanga looks.



John Bell

# THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

*in Botswana*

Since gaining their independence from the British in 1966, Botswana's education department has grown and become a key division and concern for the Botswana government. Funds for their Ministry of Education became available once diamonds were discovered soon after the British left the southern African country. This discovery helped move the country from one of the poorest in Africa up to the ranks of a "mid-level" player in the world. All mining companies in Botswana are fifty percent owned by the government. Also, the country has had a secure, political stability from its onset. According to Transparency International, Botswana has one of the least corrupt governments in the continent of Africa. It is the only mainland nation in Africa to have maintained free and fair elections since its independence. Once Botswana became a free country, its Constitution instituted a democratic form of free elections and government. It has had minimal needs for an armed force; after attacks from South African and Rhodesian armies in 1977, Botswana built up a military force of about 12,000. Their military branch is called the Botswana Defense Force (BDF).

Botswana's geography puts the country at a disadvantage; more than seventy percent is covered by the Kalahari Desert. The country is mostly flat and is about the size of Texas. There are two major environmental problems faced by Botswana, the first being desertification and the second, drought. The two problems go nearly hand-in-hand. Desertification problems stem from the periods of drought in the country. Because of the droughts, 75% of the country's population is dependent on groundwater, which leads to erosion of the land. Raising livestock and cattle has proven to be profitable for the country, but puts a further burden on water resources.

## EDUCATION SYSTEM

The importance of the education system in Botswana is summarized by the Ministry of

Education's four main objectives:

- 1 Highlight science and technology in the educational system.
- 2 Raise the standards of education at all levels.
- 3 Offer lifelong education to every section of society.
- 4 Attain to competence in the progress of education.

There are 740 primary schools and about 270 secondary schools. The primary schools serve 320,000 children and have 12,000 teachers. Secondary schools have about 145,000 students and 8,300 teachers. There are strong efforts to make a good quality education accessible to all children. Student-teacher ratios have declined since 1997, when the ratio was as high as 41:1. It dropped to 28:1 by 2002. Girls have high enrollment at all levels of the education system.



*Legae Academy students at a morning assembly.*

Primary school is comprised of four years in lower primary and three years in upper primary. At the end of each year is a Standard. Botswana puts emphasis on primary schooling. The government strives to make this level of education available to all. Secondary school is made of two years of lower secondary (junior secondary) schooling and three years of upper secondary (senior secondary) school.

In most urban areas, such as the capital city Gaborone, enrollment rates are 100% among primary school-age children, commonly a repeated amount due to continuous enrollment each year by children. Less than 10% of school-aged children drop out. Most children that do drop out do so to help support their families financially. Few children in the poorest regions in the isolated northwest areas of the country have never been to school.

Schools are owned by the government, government-funded, or private. Primary school is free, but there is a charge for secondary school. Rates for schooling vary if the child is a citizen of Botswana or not at a secondary level. The Ministry of Education receives about 10% of Botswana's GDP, but reports have mentioned that as much as 30% of public spending goes toward the Ministry of Education

## NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

While it was important to make education accessible to all children, the focus turned to improving the quality of that education in 1994 with the National Policy of Education. One goal was to raise the standard of education at all levels and improve partnerships between schools and communities. This would help provide lifelong education to all demographics of the population. Emphasis was also put on science and technology.

Another goal was to deal with the rapid expansion of the system. Some policies were to promote decentralization and recue limited capacity.

## PRIMARY SCHOOL

As of 2002, there are 740 primary schools that serve around 320,000 children and have 12,000 teachers. The student-teacher ratio at primary school is about 28:1. Children begin attending primary school once they are six years old.

One of the goals for the Ministry of Education is to make primary school accessible to al children. Thus far, primary school is not compulsory; children are not required or forced to attend school, but it is strongly encouraged. Primary school typically lasts for seven years. Schooling at the primary level is free. Teachers are continually assessing their students and provide remediation when necessary.

Primary school, similar to secondary school, is split into two levels. Lower primary is years 1-4 and upper primary is years 5-7. Emphasis in lower primary is on teaching creative & performing arts, cultural studies, English, environmental science, mathematics, and Setswana. Upper primary focuses on agriculture, creative & performing arts, English, mathematics, Setswana, religious and moral education, and science. English, math, and Setswana are taught at all levels, primary through secondary. One paramount objective of primary education is for children to become literate in Setswana and then in English. From 1991-1997m the number of students finishing primary level and moving up into junior secondary (lower secondary) increased from 65 percent to 98.5 percent. Children must pass the Standard VII to enter secondary school.

## SECONDARY SCHOOL

While about 145,000 students and 8,300 teachers, the student-teacher ratio is much lower at 17:1 compared to primary school. Part of this has to do with children dropping out of school to work. Secondary school lasts for five years: two years of lower secondary and three years of upper secondary schooling. There is a mandatory test for secondary students call the Botswana Genera Certificate of Secondary Education (BGCSE). This assessment allows the Botswana Education officials a chance to compare scores of the school and students. From the Ministry of

Education's website, there are two main objectives for secondary school:

- 1 Develop intellectual power by shaping the mind - e.g., learning arithmetic, reading, and writing (the three Rs).
- 2 Develop practical life skills - e.g., application of knowledge and skills in practical settings.

Contrary to the American school system where all citizens equally contribute for education costs by paying taxes, in Botswana, secondary school is paid for directly when a child is enrolled. The costs vary. Batswana citizens pay considerably less than expatriates who may pay as much as ten times more. Costs are also divided per term, which is typically one-third of the annual cost.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

A college was established in Gaborone in collaboration with the Regional University of Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland. In 1975, Lesotho dropped out and Botswana and Swaziland formed a partnership until 1982 when collective planning ceased and the two institutions separated and the college in Gaborone became the University of Botswana. The university has a wide variety of undergraduate programs students can chose from ranging from nursing and law, to engineering. Some graduate degrees at the master's level are education, public administration (government administration), and business administration. The school annually enrolls approximately 3,000 new students. Botswana also has technical and vocational programs for students to complete if they choose not to go to the university. There are programs in development, specifically, manufacturing, industry, and services. There are also technical educational programs. Vocational training centers are located in development areas that have diversified industrial areas. Some course options are automotive, textile, construction, electrical and hotel/catering.

## TEACHER CERTIFICATION

There are four primary level and two secondary level colleges of education. Two years after independence, 1,114 of 1,791 primary teachers were not certified; that means only 38% of teachers had proper credentials. But by 1985 the number had risen to 74.3 percent (6,980) and in 1993 to 83 percent (11,190). The trend is similar with secondary level teachers; in 1985 only 72.3 percent (1,368)

and in 1993 to 81.9 percent (4,391).

Like American schools, most of the teachers in primary level schools in Botswana are females: 77 percent in 1985, 76 percent in 1993. In secondary level schools the numbers are more proportionate: 43 percent female in 1985 and 42 percent in 1993. In the primary level colleges women are seen at the head of departments. However, in technical departments such as engineering or technology, men are still in the majority.

## SET-BACKS AND PROBLEMS

One major set-back in Botswana's education system is the AIDS/HIV epidemic. The problem is not so much the number of children's deaths, but its impact on society. Nine out of ten youth aged 15-19 are uninfected and that most men are only infected in their twenties (Kinghorn, 3). Forty percent of adults aged 20-24 have possibly contracted AIDS. Because so many adults have been diagnosed, this leads to high percentages of orphans. Almost one in three children aged 5-9 and one in two aged 10-14 are expected to be orphans by 2010 (Kinghorn, 4). In 2006, the percentage of adults infected with HIV/AIDS was about 24%. Not only does HIV/AIDS lead to an increase in the number of orphans, but the school system also suffers. Some adults that die from the disease are teachers, which mean that student-teacher ratios increase.

Another problem in the educational system is that minimal provisions are made for children with disabilities. There is a limited special education curriculum and few disabled children are integrated in regular classrooms. Parents who want their disabled children educated must send them to private schools where they have to pay school fees.

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The Center for African Studies at the University of Florida is offering a two-week Summer Institute for ten K-12 teachers. The objective of the institute is for participants to increase their knowledge about Africa, including its geography, history, and culture. Participants will develop lesson plans for use in their classrooms. Participation in the summer institute is free. **In addition participants will receive a stipend of \$500. Alachua county teachers will receive continuing education credit. Participants are responsible for their accommodation.**

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- A complete curriculum vitae
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**E** aleslie@africa.ufl.edu  
www.africa.ufl.edu/outreach

### TEACHER'S SUMMER INSTITUTE APPLICATION

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**Name**

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**DOB**

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**Telephone:** Office / Personal

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**E-mail**

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**School Affiliation & Address**

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All students will receive a t-shirt, language & study materials as well as a certificate of completion. The program is partially sponsored by the Center for African Studies with funds provided by a U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant.

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