



U. S. Ambassador Hosts Alumni and Launches Kenyan Alumni Community Site



Ambassador Ranneberger addresses alumni

Ambassador Michael Ranneberger hosted more than 80 state alumni at his residence on October 28th, 2009 in an event that marked a new chapter in Kenyan alumni engagement. Alumni were drawn from most of the

State Department funded programs in Kenya among them; Fulbright Programs, Hubert H. Humphrey, Study of the United States Institutions (SUSI), Youth Leadership Program – “Bold Leaders,” and the International Visitors and Leadership Program (IVLP). As the enthusiastic alumni shared their American experiences with each other, they found themselves united--in spite of their diverse career backgrounds – as State Alumni. The evening started with the Cultural Attache welcoming the group and introducing the new PAO who impressed them with his Swahili. Then the Alumni Coordinator introduced the new “Kenyan Community” on the State Alumni site. He also announced the Kenya Alumni Leadership award that will be presented mid-2010 courtesy of a grant from the Education and Cultural Affairs Alumni Office in Washington.

Before the Ambassador’s speech, two alumni shared their experiences during and after their respective programs. A SUSI alumna – Glory Muriuki, recounted her time in the U.S. and how it has impacted her perspective on community service and has led to her establishing various community service projects. Then came Otiende Amollo, the October



Ambassador Ranneberger engages alumni

2009 State Alumni Member of the Month. An IVLP alumnus, he discussed the challenges facing the Committee of Experts (CoE) that is tasked with re-writing Kenya’s constitution. He spoke of his observations of the U.S. system and how that has influenced what he brings to the committee. Otiende used the occasion to urge fellow alumni who have had firsthand experience with the U.S. system to support the committee’s endeavors in whichever way they can to make sure Kenya gets a new constitution.

The Ambassador’s urged alumni, as he has Kenyans in general, to get involved in the implementation of the reform process. In his support for the CoE, he called for “real effort to build consensus” to help the committee succeed. He also said that Kenya had a historic opportunity to make a new constitution and that it must adopt an all inclusive approach to deliver the new document to its citizens. He promised America’s support for the Kenyan people as they push for a better constitution that will root out injustice and corruption in the society.



Alumni register on arrival for the event

New PAO welcomed to the Kenyan Alumni Community



The event at the ambassador’s residence also served as a welcome to the new Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi—Mr. John Haynes. John tickled alumni with his mastery of Kiswahili. Interspersing his speech with Swahili words, John congratulated the impressed alumni on having gone on such prestigious programs. He welcomed them to be active members of the State Alumni and to continue the good work they are doing for the Kenyan community.

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John addresses alumni at the event

John brings a wealth of experience to the Public Affairs Office, having worked for the U. S. Department of State in various capacities for over 18 years. His previous Foreign Service assignments

include: Director of the Narcotics Affairs Section in Quito, Ecuador; Public Affairs Officer in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania; Human Rights Officer in Rangoon, Burma; Honduras Desk Officer and Legislative Affairs Special Assistant in the Department of State; Administrative Office in Naples, Italy and Consular Officer in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Before joining the Foreign Service, John was Deputy Office Director in the Department of State's Office of Inspector General and an Internal Affairs auditor with the Government Accountability Office. He has a Bachelor's in International Relations from the University of Colorado and a Master's in International Administration from the American University in Washington, D.C.

John is married to Elizabeth Jordan, who is also a Foreign Service Officer serving in Nairobi, and they have two sons.

Kenya Alumni Peace and Leadership Award

Next year the alumni office will be awarding an alumnus/alumna for his/her outstanding leadership initiative and promotion of peace in society. All alumni are therefore invited to send their bios to the Alumni Coordinator for posting on the Kenyan community site and potential nomination.

Criteria

Alumni are invited to nominate an individual (a State Alumnus/Alumna) from either the public or private sector who they think is an exemplary leader. The top three people with the highest number of nominations will be invited to give a talk on the subject of leadership. He/she must also be a registered member of the state alumni website.

The Alumnus/a with the most nominations and convincing community involvement will receive an award worth \$1,250, out of which \$1,000 will go to a project they are involved in while \$250 will be used to buy a plaque that will go to them.

Kenyan feted Global Alumni Member of the Month for October 2009



Otiende addresses fellow alumni

For the first time since its inception, a Kenyan was feted the coveted global alumni member of the month recognition. The recognition is usually bestowed on an alumna/alumnus for his/her contributions in the community before and after his/her experience in America.

Otiende Amollo, a 2007 alumnus of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) was feted for having dedicated his life to promoting and educating the Kenyan public about human rights, civil liberties, and fair democratic rights. He was also cited as being equally adept at explaining Kenyan constitutional law to U.S. Senators as he is securing better legal protection for HIV/AIDS patients. He credits the IVLP experience with having had a profound impact on his professional career: "My exchange program gave me a very meaningful insight to the workings of American democracy."

In March 2009, Amollo was appointed by President (and fellow IVLP alumnus) Mwai Kibaki to rewrite the constitution of Kenya. When discussing this task, Amollo said that his IVLP experience "is helping me design what is helpful for Kenya. It also helped me understand coexistence in a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious community. It was a real lesson on how to diffuse the tribal divisions that exist in Kenya." As an active supporter of the alumni community in Kenya, Amollo engages in discussions organized by alumni and offers his opinions and expertise. He is therefore a role model for the younger alumni and often engages them during alumni gatherings. He is constantly in demand by the international community to give direction on legal matters. Amollo is a natural-born leader who works to defend fellow Kenyans in the court of law, by providing direction and assistance on legal matters.



Otiende receives his certificate from ambassador Ranneberger(l)

who handed him a certificate for his achievements.

As a legal advocate, Amollo dedicates a significant amount of his time to doing pro-bono work for underprivileged members of the Kenyan society. For example, he successfully represented a person afflicted with HIV/AIDS who had been dismissed from her place of work due to her health status. As a result, the court ordered the employer to compensate the victim. This was a landmark case in Kenya and a real win for the fight against the HIV/AIDS stigma in that it established the triple principles that one cannot test an employee without his or her expressed consent; one cannot disclose the test results to the employer without expressed consent; and one cannot terminate employment on account of only the employee's HIV status. These principles are now encapsulated in the HIV Act which Amollo spearheaded and drafted, and which has finally become law.

Amollo was recently honored at a reception by the U. S. Ambassador to Kenya

How do I get to my Kenyan Alumni Community Site?

With the launching of the Kenya Alumni Community site last month, we now have a forum where alumni can share information with each other. Kenyan alumni post research papers, announce conferences, news, job opportunities and blog with the Cultural Attaché among other features. Please note that the state alumni site is a secure site which can only be accessed by those who have gone on U.S. Department of State funded programs.

To access the Kenyan Alumni Site, one must be a registered member on <https://alumni.state.gov>.

1. Log into the state alumni site and on the right hand side there will be a small dialogue box with the title **"communities"**. The communities are in alphabetical order.
2. Scroll down to K and click the **"Kenyan Alumni Community"**.
3. To add new information, click the bold title for example if you want to add a news item, click on **"Alumni news"**. That opens all the news items in chronological order. On the right hand there will be another column with various blubs.
4. Go to **alumni news options**.
5. Click **post a news article** and you are set.

Please contact the alumni coordinator on tel. no. 020 363 6626 incase you encounter any difficulties.

Become a member of the U.S. Embassy's Library

All alumni of U.S government funded programs are welcome to join the "American Reference Center (ARC) at NO COST. The center stocks the latest journals in numerous fields.

It has approximately 4,500 books, 35 periodicals, newspaper subscriptions, video cassettes, CDS, DVDS, full Internet access, and a variety of online resources, including:

- Electronic journals
- Policy databases
- Government and Think Tank Reports
- CD-ROM Encyclopedias & Phone Directories
- JSTOR, Lexis-Nexis and ProQuest.

To join the center, call the Director Mr. Kamau on 363 6207 or email: KamauGK@state.gov