



Cultural attaché engages alumni *Literally*

Following closely on the heels of a busy schedule with VIPs during Secretary of State Clinton's visit to Kenya Cultural Attaché Ellen Bienstock, hit the road to the coast of Kenya where she spent three days engaging with alumni. Ellen met with them



Ellen (3rd right back row) poses with members of the Mwangaza Support group led by Nurbibi Hassanali (3rd right front row)

one on one, getting acquainted with what they are doing on the ground. On her first day, she met with a group of women and a couple of men living with HIV brought together by an IVLP alumna – Nurbibi Hassanali. Since coming back from her IVLP program, Nurbibi has shared with this group her



Ellen and alumni listen during the grant writing workshop.

experience in the U.S. and how HIV+ people deal with stigma there. Ellen was moved by their stories and how they are overcoming stigma in the society and proud of the work Nurbibi was doing with what she learned in the U.S.

Ellen then headed to Fort Jesus museum to meet the most recent returnee and curator of the museum – Jimbi Katana. Mr. Katana briefed Ellen on his trip to the U.S. then led her to

visit the pre-historic “Shimoni” Caves, which are under his jurisdiction. But this was not before she met the deputy director of the museum Mr. Athman Hussein, another IVLP alumna. Mr. Athman was very proud of his IVLP experience and congratulated the Embassy for supporting the Fort Jesus Museum on many fronts.

On August 11, 2009, Ellen met 22 alumni--young and old--from a variety of U.S. government sponsored programs. It was a sight to behold as alumni as old as 70 years of age interacted with 15-year-old alumni of the Youth Exchange and



Ellen presents state alumni USB flash drive to one of the winners.

Study (YES) program. The alumni were gathered for a grant writing workshop led by USAID employee Beatrice Odede, representing a new partnership between alumni and USAID. She was assisted by Ellen who gave her experience of reading several

grant proposals. By end of the day, alumni were able to write proposals and the leader of the top three groups that had the best proposal after the training received the brand new state alumni USB flash drives. The workshop culminated in the launch of the Mombasa alumni chapter later that evening, during which the group appointed Dr. Khadija Shikelyas Chairperson of a three member interim board.

The following day, she met the YES alumni together with their parents. The youth shared how their lives changed; the impact they had on others;



Ellen Bienstock (standing center) poses with members of the newly formed Mombasa alumni

their classroom and host family experiences; and their best moment and most difficult challenges. The parents, too, had a chance to share their experiences and

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discuss how they thought their children had been transformed. The very open discussion demonstrated an American virtue the alumni said they observed during their time in the U.S.



Ellen crowned her tour of the coast with a visit to the finalists' concert of the Kenya Music Festival (KMF) where she saw future alumni showing their talents in music, dance and elocution. Huh!!

Ellen (standing center) poses with the YES alumni and their parents.

What a week! Coming after an exciting weekend when Ellen had just literally got engaged to Felix Masi – an IVLP alumnus]. We wish them a very happy future.

American Fulbrighter helps paint Kenyan stories



It is not uncommon to find westerners coming to Africa and falling love with it. However, for fulbrighter Gloria Simoneaux, she fell in love with it in a different way. You only need to see Gloria

dance to salsa and other music and you will know that she is surely (in a word) crazy for the African spirit.

After several false starts, Gloria settled at Kenya Association of Professional Counselors (KAPC) and has never looked back again, working with this "person-centered" organization to change lives in Kenya. False starts because in April 2008 she received news that her proposal to lecture and do research at the University of



Zimbabwe as a Fulbright Scholar was approved.

Because of the instability in Zimbabwe, she was later asked to make a second choice to which she did not hesitate to ask to be sent to Kenya. On arrival in Kenya, she was again to change institutions due to her specialized area of interest –



expressive art, before moving to KAPC. She has now trained counselors in Kisumu, Eldoret, Mombasa and Nairobi equipping them to train others in expressive arts with children struggling with trauma.

This was however not the first time for Gloria in Kenya as the Kenyan influence led her to start a not for profit organization – "Harambee Arts" in 2007. A "child centered" organization, the mission of Harambee Arts is to promote the psychological healing of traumatized children and women through the use of expressive arts therapy. Harambee uses arts-based strategies that she developed over a period of 20 years in the USA as founder of DrawBridge: An Arts Program for Homeless Children. Harambee Arts currently leads three community arts projects in Nairobi with the assistance of 8 community-based artists and dancers who have been trained in the Harambee Arts child-centered model.



Some of the projects currently undertaken by Harambee are: the Langata Women's Prison Support Group for HIV+ inmates, the City Primary School's "special unit" for 20 children with autism and Down syndrome living in poverty, and Kibera Kids4Peace art and leadership project, serving 50 ethnically diverse children living in Africa's largest slum. Additionally, Harambee Arts leads trainings for counselors, psychology students, orphanage staff and other community caregivers who work with highly vulnerable children.

They incorporate the use of art - painting, sculpting and dancing - as a tool to communicate, express and begin to heal from traumatic experiences. Trainings take place at The Kenya Association of Professional Counselors (KAPC), Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH) and RaMoMa Museum of Modern Art (Art for Healing Project). All services to children, women and trainees are provided free of charge.

Love struck by Africa, Gloria's goal is to remain in Africa and continue the work of Harambee Arts.

Alumni feature prominently on panel discussing president Obama's Ghana speech



Dr. Sihanya gives his views during the discussion

As the world watched President Obama's inaugural speech in sub-Saharan Africa, Kenyans were not left out. They followed the proceedings on their TV screens from their homes, bars, restaurants and hotels. The US embassy organized a live viewing and discussion for alumni, youth leaders, civil society, academics and politicians at the InterContinental Hotel in Nairobi.

Following the viewing, a panel of four— two American Foreign Service Officers and two Fulbright alumni— led the viewers in discussing the speech. Both alumni— Professor Macharia Munene and Dr. Bernard Sihanya— gave their candid interpretation of the impact of the speech on Africa and particularly Kenya, which the president chided for corruption, ethnic tensions and the slow pace of reforms. The panelists were unanimous that it was a timely, well written and well delivered speech— as expected from President Obama, they said. Dr. Sihanya is currently the Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Nairobi, and Professor. Munene is the former Dean of the Faculty of History and Social sciences at the United States International University (USIU) in Nairobi, where he currently teaches.

One of the panelists said there was a clear deviation from the previous way of doing things by the current U.S. administration, which was a good sign in his opinion. On the U. S. engagement with Kenya, both the panelists and the audience said the president's sentiments were similar to those of ordinary Kenyan citizens. A youth leader who had travelled 217 miles from the western city of Kisumu to attend the session said he was very inspired by the speech and hopes that Kenyan leaders emulate President Obama's leadership. Both Dr. Sihanya Prof. Munene were interviewed on several TV stations and quoted in several newspapers following the event.



Prof. Munene makes a point at the event

DID YOU KNOW

That the U. S. Embassy Nairobi's American Reference Center has both print and electronic materials that you can use for your research and general information?

All alumni of U.S Government funded programs are welcome to join the center at NO COST. The center stocks the latest journals in all fields.

It has 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

Coming up

Next year, our alumni office will be partnering with the drama festival to nurture Kenya's creative talents. The office will also be launching the Kenya Alumni Peace and Leadership Award (KAPLA) which will go to an alumna/alumnus with an outstanding track record of community service engagement.

Please look out for and read our weekly alumni profiles starting September to know your fellow alumni and to nominate the best for this award. The winner of the KAPLA will receive an award worth \$1,000

In October, the featured State Alumni Member of the Month will be from Africa! Each month, an alumnus(a) is featured on the homepage of the State Alumni website (<https://alumni.state.gov>) with his/her picture and an article about the great work he/she has accomplished. Please look at an earlier email with the details.

