

Nouakchott Notes

After coup, PC business as usual

By Luke Filose

PCV Laura Monahan was having tea in Lexeiba's rice fields on the morning of August 3 when the news reached her that President Maaouiya Ould Sid'Ahmed Taya had been deposed. Her reaction typified that of many in the Mauritanian and Peace Corps communities: "We said, Ok, there was a coup. Now let's plant our rice."

Although the coup was peaceful, the Peace Corps staff was swamped for the next several days corresponding with PC/Washington, making sure every volunteer was accounted for, and dispelling any rumors that the situation was out of control in Nouakchott.

To give an idea of the extent of the Peace Corps' emergency procedures, Country Director Obie Shaw sent two written reports a day listing the location of every Mauritania volunteer to a team assembled in Washington including the acting Chief of Staff, deputy head of the Africa Region, PC Head of Security, and desk officers.

The growth of communications infrastructure in Mauritania has made knowing where volunteers are even more important than before. "When a coup happens, parents, friends, and family call Washington and ask where a volunteer is. "A response of 'I don't know' is simply unacceptable," Obie explained.

All Nouakchott volunteers were placed on standfast, but



Demonstrators take to the streets of the capital after hearing news of the successful coup.

PCVs outside of the capital were not. "This was in part due to the fact that volunteers in the interior are sort of on a permanent standfast, in that all travel to Nouakchott and out of region must be pre-approved," Obie said. "This practice is in place for safety and security reasons - you can wake up one morning, and BAM! There's been a coup!"

According to Obie PCVs did a "fantastic job" of staying in touch, remaining optimistic,

"We all lived through this once before with tanks on the street, and we didn't leave then."

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Director's NEWS

Obie Shaw, Country Director

Hello All:

To start off, I would like to once again commend you for the outstanding professionalism you exhibited during the recent coup d'état. Your professionalism and cool headedness was greatly admired and appreciated. I am sure some of you may be wondering how the recent change in the political situation here might impact Peace Corps' mission in Mauritania. As a humanitarian aid agency, the Peace Corps' operations will not change significantly under the current rules of engagement existing between the USG and the junta.

I am pleased to inform you that the Swear-in ceremony for the soon-to-be new Volunteers is scheduled for September 15th at 09h00 at the Lycée de Kaédi. As in the past, an open invitation is extended to all PCVs. Unfortunately, Volunteers wishing to attend will have to furnish their own transportation.

Quick News:

The great work of the Volunteers and staff has resulted in PC Mauritania being selected as one of four countries in the Africa Region that the PC's Office of Inspector General will visit as part of a study on exemplary PC programs. The other three are Tanzania, Malawi, and Niger. The objective of this study is to prepare a detailed description of what, how, and why concerning PC programs identified to be exemplary. Jim Scanlon, OIG representative, will be visiting us from September 11 to 18. Jim has a long history with PC, serving twice as a CD, as a regional Chief of Operations, and as the Director of Recruitment.

In the coming month, some of you might run into an individual with an Australian accent claiming to be a Volunteer with Peace Corps. Well, he is legit! Myles Kunzli has graciously offered to work with the Peace Corps

management team in a volunteer capacity. Myles brings to PC Mauritania a wealth of talent. He has a Masters in International and Community Development, a B.A. in Education, and a B.A. in Social Work. Myles' first PC adventure will be as a member of the Adrar posting team for the new PCVs.

I am very pleased to inform you that we will have the pleasure of hosting a visit to Mauritania by Peace Corps' Chief Accounting Officer for Africa, Ms. Winsome Wells. She will be here in mid-October.

As the next issue of the *Nouakchott Notes* is not due out until December, I would like to inform you that I will hopefully be taking a quick vacation back to the States in mid-November.

Welcome to all of the soon-to-be Volunteers scheduled to swear-in on September 15th! You have done an outstanding job at PST and I am sincerely looking forward to getting to know you all in the coming weeks. I would also like to welcome Lisa Anderson to Peace Corps Mauritania. For those of you who may have heard that Lisa's "free agent transfer package" included solar-powered a/c and fridge units and a year's subscription to Orbitz satellite television, I can promise you that these are just rumors circulated by her former CD in Chad!

Finally, I would like to wish a very fond farewell to all of COSing Volunteers including Justin Lawrence. Always remember and never forget ... Once Peace Corps Always Peace Corps.



Obie

HealthNOTES

Daouda Diallo, APCD/Health

It's been a month...

On August 5, 2005, former APCD HE Alassane Abeidy Diakite Alias Cheikh AKA G et al... handed me the keys and left for the embassy. Among the many questions that tore my mind apart that night, one seemed to have drawn my attention the most: How should I begin?

After a quick self-brainstorming (putting my own ideas on a flipchart, ha!), I decided PST should be the top priority. It was necessary to quickly go and make sure that sites, communities and partners were ready for the new volunteers. Without further ado, I jumped into a vehicle (of course with a driver) and toured the country. I was amazed at the warm welcome I found everywhere I went.

Now one month on the job, I am already amazed at the volunteers I have talked to, the questions I have answered (I hope I got them all right...right?), the number of meetings and phone calls and emails (thank you all for the messages of support and congratulations!)... But most amazing are the wonderful community members, the partners and the PCVs I have met in the field. I heard Aw say that about this job before and now I know he is right.

I can already say that being an APCD is a great job, in the sense that it has created for me a new working environment that has positively surpassed all my initial expectations. The initial sector meeting with my 2nd



year PCVs in the field was so productive and has generated great ideas. I can see the team forming itself and I am confident that together we will do a great job.

Beyond stage I am looking ahead at two major initiatives. First, I plan to readjust the project plan to better fit the volunteers' job descriptions and reflect what they are doing in the field. And second, I want to be doing more Health training. Remember, once a trainer, always a trainer.

Much more to come next time... Daouda Diallo

NN's Matt Britton recently sat down for a little heart-to-heart with our Health head honcho...

NN: Welcome to the Peace Corps Mauritania Community Health sector, Mr. Diallo.

DD: Thank you.

NN: What would you like to accomplish as APCD?

DD: I'd like to strengthen the already impressive health program. I hope to focus on training and health education, especially working with community counterparts.

NN: What do you think is the most urgent health issue in Mauritania today?

DD: I think HIV/AIDS education is very pressing right now. We need more testing centers - currently, very few people have access to the existing centers. Also, we need to change people's mentality about the disease; people need to test sooner instead of waiting until they are very sick.

NN: A lot of health education projects involve behavior change. What's the key to success in a situation like that?

DD: I think it's important to have more educational programs, and to work through counterparts to help get the idea of behavior change across to the participants.

NN: What are the most important qualities for a health volunteer to have?

DD: I think volunteers should be motivated and patient. They need to have a good knowledge of their sector and be able to identify community needs, which requires an analytical mind.

NN: You're thought of by PCVs as a positive, even-tempered person. Does anything make you really angry?

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Ed NOTES

M.Abderrahmane O. Bagga, APCD/ED

Hello and welcome to this issue of Nouakchott Notes!

News from DC

As I have already mentioned at MTR, the Ed sector review is scheduled to take place for the period October 10-23, 2005. Ms. Linda Gonzales, the Education Specialist from the Center for Field Assistance at PC/HQ, will be visiting us to facilitate the process.

I have shared with you a questionnaire for data collection via email and Ms. Gonzales will conduct some site visits to gather more information from you and local partners.

I thank you ahead of time for the timeliness of your reports and I am stressing the importance of incorporating your input in this review.

News from PST

PST is going smoothly and entering its final stages with the peak of excitement for ED PCTs as they start the decisive part of training, i.e. the school practicum, or Model School, as we like to call it. Model School started on August 25th at the college de Kaedi - the new venue for this year's practicum - and it's well on track. There has been a high turnout level among the vacationing Mauritanian students who show encouraging signs of motivation and eagerness to learn. More than a hundred students enrolled in 5 different grades.

Our 13 trainees - we only lost one! - are working hard to meet the challenge of this hard and intensive phase of PST.

Thank you to all of you who contributed to the success of this PST.

Welcome Lisa

I'd like you to join me in welcoming our new third year volunteer from Chad, Lisa Anderson. Lisa taught TEFL in Northern Chad for two years before applying for an extension with PC/RIM. We are delighted to be able to benefit from Lisa's expertise and experience in the teaching field. Lisa has humbly accepted to attend the last phases of PST and take part in Model school. Lisa will be posted to Djadibine where she will teach English at the middle school there and explore the potential of the IT Center that Peace Corps set up about three years ago. Lisa speaks fluent French in addition to a local Chadian dialect.

And speaking of sites, the long awaited and suspense building site announcement was finally made on August 11 at the Lycee in Kaedi. Under soft drizzles of rain alternating with timidly shining and cloud covered



sunrays, PC staff, volunteers and trainees congregated around and on a sand drawing of this huge country. People were virtually placed in their sites with cheerful applause and strongly competitive new region affiliation. It was a real feast of thrilling emotions of excitement and joy.

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accepting
submissions

Contact KARIN at

barak.viha@gmail.com

Mohammedou Aw, APCD, AgFo/EE

Hello From the Agfo/EE Evergreen Corner!

I hope that rain has made its way to your area, and that the tail end of the season brings more wetness to the Guidimakha and Assaba. The good news is that locusts haven't been a problem so far this year.

We just finished MTR, and it was nice to reconnect with all of the second year volunteers. The sector meeting was extremely helpful for me; thank you for your suggestions and frankness. I will bring up your ideas during our monthly Programming & Training meeting.

We have recently said goodbye to many of the COSing volunteers. I wish them good luck with their future endeavors. I would also like to thank and congratulate the following PCVs for extending: Brandon (3rd year), Amy Helmick (six months); Lisa Jackson (3 months); and Ayrin Zahner (two weeks).

Environmental Education (EE) Lesson Plans Manual (LPM)

The manual is almost finished. I found some grammatical mistakes in the French version that should be corrected before the next school year. The Arabic version is fine. Amy will send you the English version by e-mail. I am still planning a workshop to improve the manual and tailor it more to the needs of the Ministry of Education, particularly harmonizing between the CCBI (Community Content Based Instruction) approach and the APC (Approche par les Compétences). I have put in a request and if approved by PCW I would like to organize it over Christmas break.

CCBI document

The CCBI document has been translated and bound. We have copies in French and Arabic that will be distributed to the participants by the beginning of the school year.

Eco-Camp

This year's Eco-Camp in Toulde (Boghé) was a great success. The program and the logistics were much improved. I would like to give a special thanks to the organizing team and to Baggah for helping out with the venue. I heard many participants make positive comments about the event and the hospitality of the people. Thank you Ayrin for starting this event last year; it has allowed girls from different backgrounds to come together and learn about

challenges to the environment and possible solutions. One Ministry of Education representative visited the camp unannounced and was amazed. He would like to learn more about it and see how they can use it at the Ministry level.



Environmental Diagnostic Training

This year we were once again able to organize (through post funds, thanks Obie and David) a training for the trainees and their future counterparts on simplified participatory environmental diagnostic training using PACA. I would like to thank everyone for their support during the preparation and implementation. Special thanks go to the villages of Dar El Avia (Pattoukone II) and Pattoukone I for opening their villages and homes to us and for taking out time out of their busy schedule to attend the different activities. They were truly amazing.

National Arbor Week celebration

PC was officially invited to attend the National Arbor Week official opening. I hope many have been involved with your delegations, inspectors and/or your communities to celebrate the week or do tree plantings.

End of PST and Site Announcement

As you all know PST is nearing its end. After site visit, it seems that the trainees are happy with their sites. We have only lost one trainee so far and I hope it stays that way. I wish you all good luck with the end of PST.

Annual reporting

I would like to thank those who have turned in their reports (which is most of you). Just a gentle reminder, the due date is September 15.

Seeds

PC Mauritania has received seed donations from third and fourth graders from a Davidson, North Carolina Elementary School. Rosemary

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SED NOTES

Brian Zoeller, APCD/SED

Greetings from the SED/ICT sectors

As I write this, we are enjoying the company of 30+ PCV's in Nouakchott for MTR. It's *paradise* here with everyone around. MTR marks a milestone for me as much as for them. I celebrated my second day anniversary in country when this pod went through their ETR back in February. Ah, the memories... Now they're all grown up. They said they didn't need me any more because they've found harmonic peace at their sites. However, as a result I now suffer from a slight case of empty-nest syndrome that is tearing apart my foundational stability. Don't fret! I am coping with the help of a clandestine animistic doctor who concocted an anecdote of 37 shots of tea and four hours of Ms. Pac-Man per day. It is helpful too that I have a new pod of SED'sters and ICT'ers entering the fold to bring meaning back to my life. *Sigh*.

Training

In all seriousness, transition has been the most salient word of this past quarter. Like the other sectors, we've seen a change of guard with many of the "former" PCV's setting sail for COS trips, while PC staff has been putting forth much preparation and presentation effort for training. The new SED/ICT folks are strong! Many are technically savvy, which should alleviate the computer problems in the field and identify problems and opportunities for most any organization. So if there is a business or technical slant to your work, invite SED/ICT to help you out.

I'm impressed with the way training is being carried out by both Scott and Lisa and with the exuberance of current trainees. Thank you to all the PCV's who assisted with specific sessions. Your sessions were much more fascinating than mine, but, I got higher marks because I used threat and force. The training staff and I collectively feel that the trainees are prepared to get out and see what they and Mauritania mutually have to offer. Site assignments went out and we filled NKT with two ICT guys and their spouses; the other ICT will be in Atar. We sent five SED trainees to regional capitals, one to Chinguetti and another to a small, motivated village north of Selibaby.

Project Work

SED and ICT have produced some positive deliverables, as we say in the biz world. One thing that will help most PCV's in the field is the new Microsoft Word and Excel teaching manual, produced in French and Arabic by Audrey Bottjen and Jessica



Daniels. There is at least one copy for each GMC and every SED/ICT PCV. This resource will make your life much easier if you're asked to teach computers,. Notable too is Jordana Spadacini's Kaedi and NKT teinture project. This project used very good process including HCN involvement, feasibility/research work, and a combination of both business and technical skill training. SED is also engaged with Céréamine promotion and production. We are looking at Céréamine as a business opportunity for cooperatives and individuals so it can produce livelihood in addition to health benefits. Maddie, Luke, Teresa, Jordy, Nina are involved in training and experimentation as are PCVs in other sectors and many stagiaires.

Until next time, keep your feet in the sand and keep reaching for the stars.

Used Donkey

- Price Negotiable
- Low mileage
- Even disposition
- Likes carrots
- Enjoys beatings
- Speaks 36 dialects of donkey, some English
- Will eat your trash



Contact Sidi in Aleg

Funding

The new Ambassador's SPA Funds for Fiscal Year 2006 should be deposited by mid-October. Forms for the new system will be made available by the end of September.

Peace Corps Bureau

The lease on the bureau in Nouakchott will be ending in June of 2006 and we face the possibility of a move. Several options are currently being weighed. The move could possibly occur as early as December.

Inspector General

The Peace Corps Inspector General will be visiting Mauritania September 11 through 18. He will make a stop at the training site in Kaedi but does not plan to meet with volunteers. He will be collecting a sample of the "best practices" used in four African PC countries: Mauritania, Malawi, Niger, and Tanzania.

Emergency Action Plan

Please email Macire and confirm your current telephone number or numbers.

Safety and Security Update

As you are all aware, Maaouya Sidahmed ould Taya was deposed as President of Mauritania. He is currently residing in Qatar and seems to have resigned any aspirations of returning.

The new government, The Military Council for Democracy and Justice has seized control of Mauritania without bloodshed and upheaval. They have released many prisoners from the jails. While the country seems to be stable and calm, it is still essential to remain vigilant. Always report travel between regions and out of the country.

Volunteers COSing in 2006 have now been in country for a year. This is statistically one of the most dangerous points in service. You are now comfortable with local language and feel very comfortable in your sites. It is essential to remain cautious. Always lock doors and windows when leaving the house. Try not to travel at night and report all incidents so that the proper response can be taken to avoid any future problems.

Important Dates and Holidays

Sept. 15 Swearing In

Oct. 04ish – Nov. 03ish Ramadan

Oct. 10 Columbus Day; bureau closed

Oct. 22 GRE in Nouakchott

Nov. 03ish Id el-Fitr; bureau closed

Nov. 11 Veteran's Day; bureau closed

Nov. 24 Thanksgiving Day; bureau closed

Nov. 28 National Mauritania Day; bureau closed

Dec. 26 Christmas Day Observed; bureau closed

Dec. 27 VAC Meeting

Dec. 28 Early Term Reconnect

GAD

The GAD office will be moving to the old third-year volunteer lounge. Bahenna and Kane will be taking over the old GAD space on the third floor of the bureau.

Living Allowances

We reached the required 80% return rate for our living allowance surveys, but the PCRIM administration has unfortunately decided to not ask for an increase in living allowances this year (see page 9 for more details).

AO David Solomon has agreed to provide a deposit breakdown for each volunteer. This should occur with the December/January deposit as well. If implemented, the shuttle will carry the breakdowns to regional capitals in individually-sealed envelopes. We are also working on the possibility of having everyone's deposit information made available in a single email attachment. However, this can only be accomplished if all volunteers agree to having their information shared by signing a release form.

Release forms will be in the hands of the Regional Coordinators by affectation.

Safety and Security

Our Safety and Security Officer, Macire, will be in Ghana until September 19. Please remain extra vigilant during his absence.

“AgFo/EE” from page 5

Klein is the teacher heading this program, facilitated through Seed Program Inc (SPI). They would like to see these seeds used to create school gardens, and also want to become pen pals with children in Mauritania.

We have 100 small packs each of the following species: squash, lettuce, okra, cabbage, carrot, water melon, tomato, beet, garden bean, onion, cucumber, radish, mustard and cantaloupe. Each volunteer can have up to three and a half packs per species. Contact me for more information on the seeds. I am flexible about where you can use them, but the goal of SPI is to fight hunger. I just ask you to send me a report at the beginning of the gardening season on how it is starting and stating your objectives, and a report at the end of the season explaining how it went.

“Daouda” from page 3

DD: Well, I don't get *really* angry very often, but it upsets me when people don't tell me what they are thinking, when there's a lack of communication in a working relationship.

NN: And what makes you really happy?

DD: To know that I'm doing my job well, no matter how much time it takes.

NN: What's your work style like?

DD: I like for people to be clear and open with me so that we can keep communication channels open and have a good working relationship.

NN: OK, enough work...Got any hobbies?

DD: I enjoy watching documentaries on TV. I enjoy Scrabble as well.

NN: Scrabble, huh? Are you any good?

DD: Not only am I good, but I think I could beat any PCV in Mauritania.

NN: A challenge!

DD: In French.

NN: OK, we'll see. Back to work...give us the mini version of your resume.

DD: I started by teaching English in the Mauritanian school system for several years. Then I worked as the Language Coordinator for Peace Corps. And now here I am.

NN: I bet as former language coordinator you speak a lot of languages. How many?

DD: Let's see, I speak French, English, Pulaar, Wolof, and Arabic.

NN: What is your favorite food?

DD: I really love soupe kanje.

NN: Mmm, kanje...you're making me hungry. Thanks for your time, and congratulations.

DD: Thank you.

Ask the PCMO

Dear PCMO:

Ramadan is coming up, and I heard this means fasting. Are there any health considerations I need to, um, consider?

Dear PCV: Most volunteers wonder whether to fast for integration or spiritual reasons. Fewer consider the health implications. Whatever your reason for fasting may be, my advice as your PCMO is DON'T DO IT!

If you are concerned about offending people in your home or village, there are a few simple rules you can follow during Ramadan.

Don't eat, drink, or smoke (you shouldn't be smoking anyway!) in front of others. Don't mention that you are secretly eating and drinking in your house.

But, if you are determined to fast, there are a few things to consider about your health. Remember that while some fasting diets involve drinking water only, most Muslims consider fasting to mean no food or water during daylight hours.

Doing this for one month may not be as easy as you think. Being well hydrated is important to good health, and you might have noticed that most of Mauritania is still blazing hot in October.

Dehydration can increase your risk of kidney stones over the long-term while subjecting you to heat stroke or fainting in the short-term.

Limit your activities during the hottest part of the day, and rest immediately if you feel light-headed.

When fasting, wake up before sunrise and drink plenty of water. Your body will soon adapt to not having food throughout the day, but not water. Once the sun sets, you won't have to remind yourself to eat and drink. Just try not to overdo it. Throwing up on your host family does nothing to increase your standing in the community.

At the end of the day, integration is important, but remember that you are also responsible for your well-being.

With your continued good health in mind,
Cynthia

**Your body
will soon
adapt to not
having food
throughout
the day, but
not water.**

Living Allowance Debate Intensifies

Hi folks, it's Tupper reporting in from the Far East. I was just having my annual check-in with Obie over the radio, and he said that some folks actually want a raise! Let's all take a Tupper-Time-Out for a second. I don't like to bang my drum, but as a 5th year volunteer and a senior citizen (86 years-old and still ticking) I feel duty-bound to speak on this issue.

In Brief: My 15,000 UM negotiated monthly stipend (along with my US Army disability and the payout from an annuity to pay for prescription medications) is 100% adequate for anywhere in this fine country. All PCVs should immediately tighten up and help Uncle Sam spend more money where it's needed, like fighting terrorism, and helping battered women.

But how can you do it, you ask? First of all, live with a family. I don't pay a dime, because I teach them English, welding, and improved hygiene. I pay the equivalent of 10,000 UM a month in rent assuming a pro-rated hourly fee of 200 UM for my teaching, and now all of the kids in my family know how to use a blowtorch and administer a hycolon.

Second, try to enter what I call Tupper's No Frill Zone. I grew up during The Great Depression, so I can show anyone a thing or two about poverty. One winter I remember drinking a broth from boiled twigs, and then my brother and I stole a three-legged cow that we ate for six months. And we were thankful.

Needless to say, vacations are out of the question.



Rensdorf, a fifth year PCV, is campaigning for a pay cut.

But I didn't join Peace Corps to hopscotch the world smoking grass. I guess it was the winter of 1953, when the Ranger battalion under my command was ambushed by 25,000 Chinese at the Choisin Reservoir, that I decided I was a homebody.

Whether I'm waiting for a taxi in Bamako or prying rifles out of the frozen dead hands of enemy soldiers in an unfamiliar terrain, I guess I kind of get out of sorts. So staying put makes me happy and thrifty. You can do it too.

Thank you for your time. As year five begins, I want to re-extend my invitation to visit me. I know it's 1200km, and I don't have any beer or naked orgy festivals, but I hope to have my first visitor.

We're breaking ground at a refrigerated meat storage facility soon, and I'd love to have a few extra hands on a pickaxe.

Signing off,
Tupper V. Rensdorf
Capt. (Ret.), Nema

Dear Editor,

As you know, it is my policy to not comment on private conversations I have with Volunteers. Understanding that Tupper has made this a public discussion, suffice it to say that I am proud and honored to be serving in PC Mauritania with Tupper! His resilience, service to country, and self-sufficiency should serve as an example to all PCVs! I would not want to worry the other Volunteers needlessly, but it looks as though based on Tupper's Living Allowance Survey, there will be no justification for an increase in PCV stipends this year. In fact, it looks like folks are getting too much to live off of! David and I just could not, in good faith, recommend an increase knowing that a fine American like Tupper was able to make it on 15,000 ougias, and more importantly, is opposed the idea. I hope the other Volunteers do not end up blaming Tupper for the coming reduction in their stipends.

Obie Shaw
Country Director

Hall of Shame

The following PCVs failed to turn in a living allowance survey, demonstrating their complete lack of consideration for the comfort and well-being of their fellow Peace Corps RIM volunteers:

**Maggie Donovan
Laura Monahan
Heather Smith
Jennifer Justice
Jordana Spadacini
Amy Helmick
Lisa Jackson
Mitch & Kari Brashers
Erin Ellingson
Becky McKnight
Karl Adam
Teresa Chesno**

Gittleman Gets Punked on Ghana Vacation

By John Walsh
Crime & Travel Editor

Andrea Gittleman had just eaten a juicy avocado sandwich one August night when her life changed forever. Out of the dark Ghanaian night, bandits descended on her, throwing firecrackers and cutting her purse strap.

They sped off on a motorcycle with her handbag, wallet, and a slice of her faith in mankind.

"I loved that purse more than I love my region mates," Andi told Nouakchott Notes after her return. "It was cute, brown, yay big, and it fit all my stuff. And the wallet, it had these autumn leaves stitched on it..."

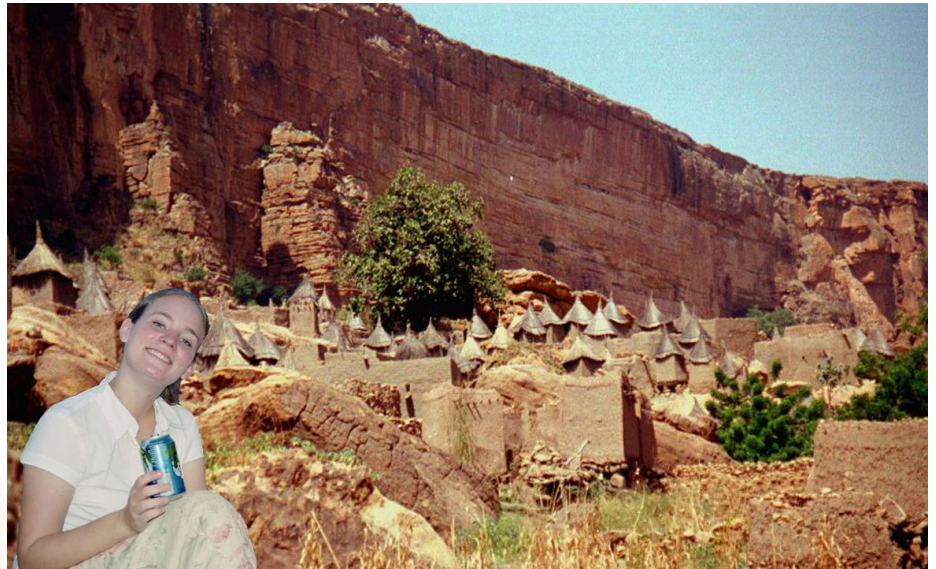
She trailed off as tears formed in her eyes.

Her handbag was loaded with goodies that night, including cash, keys, and her airline tickets. Instead of paying a \$200 re-ticketing charge and returning via Bamako, she opted to fly to Dakar and return overland via Rosso.

Gittleman's voyage - which took her through Mali's Dogon country, into Burkina Faso, and then Ghana - was replete with moments of shared exuberance and fruitful reflection. Yet it also captured the shallow and pointless side of human existence.

"On one bus ride I was reading an issue of People, and I learned that I went to school with a participant on the new Beauty and the Geek reality show," Gittleman claims. "He was such a geek, and I always avoided him when he flirted with me, but now he's famous and I wonder if I made the right choice."

Andi's feminine undercarriage wonders about her choices too, specifically her decision to hitchhike on the back of a soda bottle truck in Mali. "It got me to the



After losing her camera to marauding bandits in Accra, Andrea Gittleman can only recreate virtual vacation memories of Dogon Country, Mali.

border, but the female body just wasn't designed to sit on jagged bottle caps." That's a valuable lesson for volunteers of both sexes.

Ghana's Peace Corps program was a silver lining in her security incident, as Andi was able to go straight to their SSO, Dani. "Like our Macire, Dani was wonderful," said Gittleman, recalling how he drove her to the authorities and helped with the police report. "I just wish I had been more vigilant," she added.

The easy-going Gittleman had her fair share of mishaps on her trip, and she even caused other people to suffer. Like the young British woman she met in Burkina Faso who she bullied into eating street food.

"She got sick and the doctor told her she had parasites," Andi says with traces of a smile on her face. "But I don't feel bad because nothing happened to me."

Gittleman set off on her trip with Chinguetti PCV Jeff Field, who was a pleasant travel companion, "even though he kept trying to sneak into my tent at night," she said with a giggle.

From Mali, Gittleman set out on her own, a tactic she encourages others not to overlook.

She was rarely lonely, meeting travelers like the Brit mentioned above, and "three Dutch girls who got into trouble and had to borrow money from me."

While Gittleman has found peace with

her experience and tries to only remember the good moments, she would not mince words if she had the opportunity to speak to the band of criminals that so dramatically altered her life's trajectory.

"I would probably say 'I want my purse back.'"

We can only imagine what her purse - brown, yay big, perfect - would say right now.

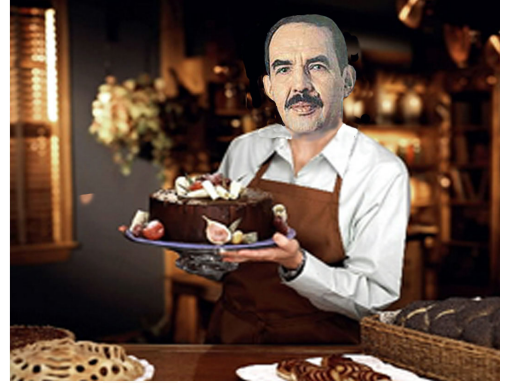
The easy-going Gittleman had her fair share of mishaps on her trip, and she even caused other people to suffer.

Two Decades of Memories: a tribute to the “Big M”



*Clockwise from
top left:*

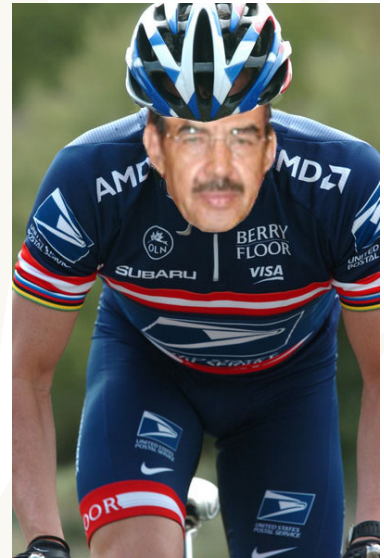
Prior to assuming
the presidency,
Maaouiya served
on Nixon’s com-
mittee to re-elect



the president... Even
while holding the highest
position in the country,
Maaouiya could be found in
the kitchen making his
signature Choco-Mousse
Surprise with sprinkles...



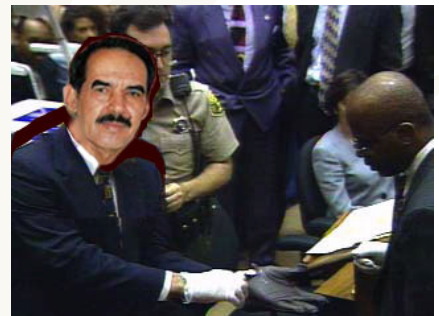
Maaouiya’s stunning seventh
victory in the Tour de France spurred
the rubber bracelet trend all over
Mauritania.... On trial for his life: “If



the glove don’t fit, you
must acquit.”... MTV
Music Video Awards
2003: The kiss that
shocked the world...



Among the last diplo-
matic missions of his
presidency , Maaouiya
joined throngs of
Jackson’s supporters
outside a California
courthouse.



A Short List of Boring Coups

2005 - Mauritania - While President Taya is out of the country a military junta headed by the former president's best friend takes over and won't let him back into the country

1997 - Turkey - President Cevdet Sunay receives a memo from his chief of staff informing him of their discontent and plans to use force to take over. He resigns later that day.

1947 - Thailand - Pridi Phanomyong returns from a tour of the world to find his old friend Plaek "Pibul" Pibulsonggram had organized the military to take control of the government.

1961 - France - After a run-in with schoolchildren, a spotted dove residing in Tuileries Garden is reduced to "weeing" in place of the more traditional "coo."

1972 - Ecuador - Lucio Gutiérrez takes control of the country as head of a military junta and is forced to step down less than 24 hours later by his co-conspirators.

1953 - Iran - Exiled dictator Shah Pahlavi overthrows democratically elected Prime Minister Mossadegh after months of skimishes with CIA-equipped and trained Stalinist Tudeh Party members.

1985 - United States - Mrs. Hagy's third graders declare her classroom a sovereign and independant nation. It is held for three glorious hours through the clever use of deadbolts and Chinese handcuffs.

1992 - Peru - Alberto Fujimori led an "auto-coup" against the government that he already headed dissolving the congress and judicial system.

2000 - Peru - After accusations of election irregularities Valentín Paniagua takes Fujimori's office while he is at a conference and he is declared "morally unfit" to govern.

1967 - Canada - The accidental contamination of Sally McGovern's feed supply with insecticide does in her entire brood while she is away on vacation. The coopful of corpses is not discovered for nearly three weeks.

"Coup" from page 1

and keeping family and friends back home up to date.

Alicia Liebel in Tidjikja was anxious when the coup occurred that her work would be interrupted. "I thought, after all that I've gone through, things are finally starting to go well, and now they're going to send me home," she said.

For many volunteers the coup was a fascinating way to contrast the political culture of Mauritania with other countries around the world. Like Oudane PCV Saman Wijesooriya, who was surprised about the lack of resistance to the coup. "I thought people would be showing more support for the old regime," she said, "but it seemed like everybody just immediately switched over."

A friend of Nancy Pile in Boghé illuminated the high level of acceptance many Mauritians have of a system of regime change that seems decidedly undemocratic by American standards. "It's like chebbujin," he told her. "It's nothing. It's everyday."

So where does the coup leave PCRIM's programming and recruitment efforts? Nobody is going anywhere with their tail between their legs, according to Obie. In fact recruiting is already beginning for next year's group of 52 trainees.

"As a humanitarian organization, we're invited here to do a job, and as long as we can do that job we can stay," he said.

He puts things into perspective with mention of the attempted coup in 2003. "We all lived through this once before with tanks on the street, and we didn't leave then," he said.

In fact, most adventure-seekers would probably agree with Sarah Shanabruch that the coup was, well, kind of a letdown. "We were dreaming of evacuation to the beaches of St. Louis, Senegal," sighed the Sintiane Dama volunteer, "but it turned out to be the most boring coup ever."

*Additional reporting by
Cailin McGough*

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News of Coup Prompts Move From Matelas

After a full year of hind-end stasis, Fatimatou mint M'Barrack rolled off her matelas last week in order to get a better view of the TV. PCV Alexis Aguilera, who lives with M'Barrack, remembers: "I was sitting in front of the tele watching M6 when this bloke walks in and says there's been a coup in Nouakchott. I change the channel to Mauritania TV when the chap starts getting cheeky asking me when Luis is getting back, and whether or not I've been lonely. He must have gotten in the line of view of me granny, because I hear this rustle in the far corner and look over to see her crawling to the matela we normally put the wee baby on. I was more shocked by her moving her large bum than the successful coup."

There has been speculation about the permanence of this movement. Signs seem to pointing to an affirmative. Early this morning she had her 3-year-old grandson bring over her tea set, pillow and the nasty goatskin she uses to make zriig. It is still unclear, however, whether or not this exodus will lead to a change in daily regiment.

Tea is normally served when the sun hits Fatima in the back corner, waking her from her



Alexis' host grandma reportedly moved from her matelas to watch images like this on Mauritanian TV

5-hour afternoon nap. Due to the architectural layout of the sitting room, it is possible that tea time may be moved to as early as 4:30 or even 4.

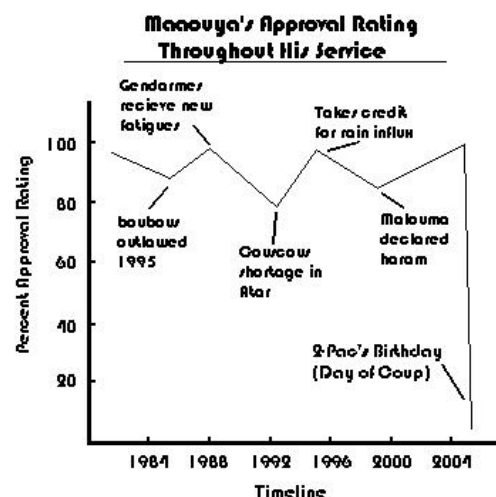
Approval Rating Drops 100% After Coup

After 20 years of a near constant 100 percent approval rating by the citizens of his country, former president Maaouya ould Sid'Ahmed Taya faced a sudden drop in his approval rating after being overthrown on 2-Pac's birthday.

This change in public sentiment seems to be absolute throughout the country. In an interview three months ago, Mohammed Sidi ould Brasheer, director of Ecole 8 in Atar told NN, "Maaouya is the savior of Mauritania. He has brought education, wealth and democracy to our people." Asked his opinion of Colonial Mohamed Vaal yesterday, he replied, "Mohammed Vaal is the savior of Mauritania. He has brought education, wealth and democracy to our people."

This flip-flop tendency of the Mauritanian population has come under close scrutiny by international press. Citizens have been characterized as a group of sheep that will follow any random mustachioed colonel willing to fill out the proper paperwork. Inflamed by these comments, Alyoun Cher Ba, resident of the Brakna region, made a public

statement last Wednesday. "Sheep are actually quite stubborn animals. I had to care for a herd as a child moving them between oases. One time a lamb got into a bunch of low lying Balanites trees. I spent three hours trying to get him out," he said. "I don't think our dissenters have truly done their homework on sheep behavior."



Macire's Emergency 'Action' Plan



Macire, SSO

Picking your target

Always be vigilant and take time to choose a mate. Don't take the first person who comes along because there isn't any nicer person than the bandit who approaches you wanting to steal your valuables. Ask yourself, is this person known, respectable, serious?

Making your move

First find out if the person is in love with you. There are many key signs, for example they will always talk about love. They might tell you that they like people who are just like you. You can ask suggestive questions like, for example, could a girl like you like a guy like me? One thing is certain: always be sure of the person's sentiments before you attack. You don't want to be sending your troops into unknown territory.

How to spot infidelity

See where your mate goes. Take attention to the hours of their rendezvous. For instance, one night you have a meeting with your girl at 8 and she tells you she has to see her brother. The next night she has to see her father. The next night her mother is sick. Obviously she has something going on with someone else at 8.

Another problem is a mate will often introduce someone as a brother or sister that may not actually be a relative. Check with the family. Does the girl have a brother named Sidi and does he look the same as the person you saw her with? If you find your mate has been cheating, then breakup immediately. If someone cheats on you once, they will do it again.

Does she like you?

Girls are often incapable of just telling a person that they are interested in them. She will have a psychological reaction when she sees the person she likes and react in a way that is not normal. She will say hello overenthusiastically and do anything to get close to that person. A girl can get by this by confiding her true feelings in one of her

friends and have them ask her interest what they think about her.

Planning the perfect date

Most importantly, dress well. Men should take their girl someplace nice, but often a girl may be scared to go somewhere with you alone. In this case you can ask to meet her at her home with her family present. Another important point is don't get ahead of yourself. Don't show up with a condom in hand. If your date is a respectable person, they will be offended. On the first date discuss your common interests. The first night is not for touching. Don't act like an animal in heat, act like a human being.

Crashing weddings

I met my wife at a wedding, and it was love at first sight for the both of us. I asked if I could escort her and her friends back to their house and they agreed. When I got there they invited me inside for tea, but I was a gentleman and refused. They asked me to come back the next night so I did. For the first 3 to 4

dates I came to her house, drank tea, and didn't even speak to her to show that I was a very respectable person. On the next date I asked her if she would be interested in dating me and she said yes. After two months of dating I asked her if she wanted to marry me. Her parents agreed and we were married soon after.

Question of the Month:

I'm a male volunteer, I'm Asian and my name is Jae. I'm interested in a girl in the south of the country, let's call her Susan. I have tried on numerous occasions to let her know how I feel, but she seems to either not know or is playing hard to get. What do I do?

Go to where she lives. Stop the subtleties and tell her directly that you are in love. She will tell you what she thinks. The problem with games is often when a lady says no she means maybe. When she says maybe, she means yes, and when she says yes, she is not a lady. If a girl really means no she should be stern about it to protect herself from trouble.

RIMventions by Mudstone

Mudstone has "RIMvented" a camion full of accessories for better desert living. Call now for prices.

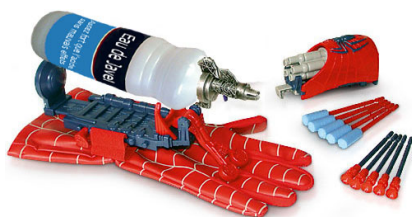
"Garage Door"-Style Tent Opener



Tired of putting your matelas and pillow in the dirt while you struggle to open your tent? Open your tent with

the push of one button, from up to 100 yards away with this fiendishly clever remote control! Includes 150-decibel panic button for wild animals and drunk guys.

JavelMan Wrist-emitted Bleach Squirter



Rock climbers! Bicyclists! Hikers! Want to travel light? Quit lugging around a full bottle of Eau de Javel! On your way out the

door, conveniently attach the JavelMan to your wrist, or other appendage, and you're instantly equipped with a portable water-purifying system. (Also available for lefties.)

Rock-shooting Hand Prosthesis



Quit using that cumbersome slingshot and get your own rock thrower attached today. Solar powered, with moveable titanium parts,

this model can propel a five-kilogram stone up to three blocks! (Prior removal of real hand a must.)

Advice-Giving Prophylactic

Did you sleep with that shady Sengal PCV without thinking twice? Were you caught up in the moment when your counterpart offered you tea? The new Advice Giving Condom senses subsonic love vibrations, projecting a red or green light on the package.

Taxi brousse collapsible cubicle privacy system

Never again will screaming children, fat ladies, or HCNs impressed with your local language proficiency bother you! If you're annoyed, aggravated, and on your way out of town, stop by your local epicerie and get yours today!



Butt Fender Poo Protector System

"Oh zoinks! I just ruined another pair of Tevas!" With the B.F.P.P.S., kiss underwear stains goodbye! Light-weight, discreet, and portable, this system can protect your pants or pagne from the high-incendiary demons living in your digestive system!



Five-button Keychain Phrase Box

Says mashAllah, may your father burn, America bad, give me that, pay you tomorrow. With extra applause button for meetings and trainings. A great gift for Mauritanian men and women everywhere! Don't waste your energy saying the same things over and over...just press a button! Also comes in a huggable furry goat-hair model!

Velcro Wrist Leash For Well Buckets

Bucket fell in the well again, butterfingers? Not anymore, with this new industrial-strength wrist strap. Simply hook it to your wrist, and watch your pathetic bucket-dropping problem disappear!



We could be heros... or not.



"I sure am glad I brought my gear to stage. I was afraid that break dancing was considered lame in Africa, too!"



Caleb grew the biggest tomato at the county fair. His prize...a baby girl.



Jake cheers on two amorous locusts, unaware that in Mauritania it is rude to observe the intimate moments of others.



Amy, Crista, and Nicole pose for the camera after a session on Gender Empowerment Through Pantomime.

Final Thoughts by Will

After comparing the biographical information of the new stagiaires to the current volunteers, I have discovered that the mean differential of the ages between the oldest and youngest volunteer for the new group is exactly half that of the current volunteers. Statistically speaking, this means that the nominal median of the age differential between the ages of the second youngest stagiaire and twice the age of the oldest current volunteer should be equal to the sum of the birth year of the five youngest and five oldest stagiaires divided by the number of COSing volunteers in August and September. But because the stagiaires have only one member who is currently in their thirties, the actual sub-quotient of the standard deviation between the height of their shortest member and the weight of their heaviest member (at the start of stage, not current weight) is exactly equal to the mean relative difference of the absolute value of the total combined weight of all the white Moors in Kaedi subtracted from the distance from Mbout to Boutilimit! I just thought y'all'd like to know.