

*Have you
heard from
Ndejje, Uganda?*

*INSTANCES
OF
HOPE*

Ndejje, Uganda is an innocuous village some 10 kilometers outside of Kampala. If you walk down one of its nondescript dirt roads lined with shops and roadside food stands toward the hills overlooking Lake Victoria, you'll come across the Ndejje Youth Center. If you remove the two padlocks and open the steel door, there's a small room filled with tables, chairs, pens, paper, puzzles, and soccer gear that serve the local youth and students of Hope Primary School. The far wall contains a white sign worn with dirt and dust that has been tracked in from outside. In clear and neat handwriting written in blue marker, it reads "Have you heard from Ndejje, Uganda?". You don't have to be a resident of the town to know that most people have not.

I started working in Ndejje with Soccer Without Borders in June 2011. At the age of 23, it was my first venture outside of the United States. To say that there isn't much to do in Ndejje is to say that Las Vegas is a city of shiny lights. And so when I wasn't with the local children, I passed the time by reading. I read about Rwanda and its genocide, about the Democratic Republic of Congo and its wars, and about Kenya and its slums. I read accounts from members of Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and numerous other imbedded journalists in East Africa and elsewhere. It captivated me in a way that no college classroom or professor was able to.

Hope Primary School, which sits directly behind the Ndejje Youth Center, was built to cater to refugees from various war torn countries surrounding Uganda. Its motto is simple and unabashedly typical: "Hope Never Fails." As I continued reading about atrocious war crimes and vast human rights violations occurring in countries within a half-days travel, I began to question the invincibility, and to an extent the very existence, of hope.

In late July, Soccer Without Borders held a talent show for the children of Hope Primary. Over 50 children participated; singing, dancing, and putting on their own skits. Two kids even held an eating contest. Towards the end of the day, Julien and Julie, brothers and sisters in a family of 12, sang a duet. I looked over at their mother, Jacqueline, one of the few parents in attendance. She was dressed in a traditional, colorful Congolese dress. I had never seen her dressed so well and deliberately. When the song was coming to a close I looked back at her. She was smiling proudly, and there was a hint of tears in her eyes. At that moment I knew I wanted to hear from Ndejje, Uganda.

When I first began to document the lives of some of Ndejje's residents, I wasn't fully prepared for what I would encounter. It's one thing to read about ethnic cleansing and rape as a weapon of war. It's another thing to learn that the people you interact with on a daily basis have seen and felt these gross violations. So I tried to focus on the positive. Many accounts of war end with a ceasefire agreement or a return to sense of normality. I wanted to know what the future held. War and despair are forces that are imposed on you without your control. Healing and recovery are the forces you are able to respond back with.

What I have learned is that as easy as it is to become discouraged by the face of humanity's worst offerings, it is just as rewarding to see depression relinquished by a new dawn. In the face of massive adversity and violence, it is easy to forget what we are capable of. For every moment of abuse and abandonment, there are instances of hope that rise to the surface and ring eternal. While humanity may falter, I have learned that hope never fails.

Hope is the thing with feathers

That perches in the soul,

And sings the tune--without the words,

And never stops at all,

And sweetest in the gale is heard;

And sore must be the storm

That could abash the little bird

That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chillest land,

And on the strangest sea;

Yet, never, in extremity,

It asked a crumb of me.

-Emily Dickinson

SAMUEL NKURUNZIZA

WHEN I FIRST MET SAMUEL NKURUNZIZA I THOUGHT HE WAS TRYING TO CON ME...

I was a typical American traveling abroad for the first time. Having spent my first week in Africa in Nairobi, Kenya - almost gleefully referred to as "Nairoberry" in travel books - I was confident that I was constantly a target for theft or bodily harm. I carried the green backpack my mother gave me before I left with an iron grip, always aware of where my valuables were, and I constantly looked over my shoulder while walking the streets. Because of a large barter economy and the fact that I was a *mzungu*, I assumed everybody I encountered was out to scam me.



SAMUEL NKURUNZIZA

A week after leaving Nairobi, these beliefs and cautions followed me to Ndejje, Uganda. My geopolitical sense was as refined as the pothole-clustered dirt roads I traveled on, but I was an American abroad, which meant

that I was honing my international awareness while remaining increasingly vigilant to an invisible threat.

So when Samuel approached me with the promises of a car and a ride whenever I needed it, I assumed there was a catch, that I was new in the village and white, and an easy target. In my infinite knowledge and assumptions, I was unaware that Samuel earned a meager income by offering his services as a special hire. I was ignorant to the fact that five years prior, Samuel had hid under his bed with his brothers and sisters and listened as their parents were slaughtered outside.

Today Samuel is 22 years old, although he could easily pass as being in his early 30s. He has the face and build of a college football player, chiseled and confident. He is assured in his speech, talking slowly but firmly. When I first approached Samuel, I asked him if he was comfortable discussing the events that led to his arrival in Ndejje. He misunderstood my question as one of personal security or expected claims to falsehood.

"There is nothing I am afraid to talk about," he said. "What I'm telling you is fact."

Samuel was born in Musuma, Burundi in 1989. Musuma lies in the Kinyina District of southeastern Burundi, bordered closely to the east by Tanzania, with the capital city of Bujumbura some 70 kilometers to the northwest. Like many other East African nations, Burundi is a nation of people divided by tribal

"distinctions" that were exploited by European colonialists prior to independence. While the three tribes in Burundi - Hutu, Tutsi, and the Twa - are mostly indistinguishable, their subtle physical differences (such as height or nose size) were noted by Belgian and German colonialists and used as an economic measuring stick, and thus as a method of favoritism. The Tutsi minority were predominately taller, raised cattle, and were more economically well off - and thus in the eyes of European colonialists, more Caucasian - than the agrarian, shorter Hutu.

After obtaining independence from Belgium in the early 1960s, Burundi experienced Tutsi-controlled military rule, and subsequent ethnic tensions and conflict. However, in 1993, multi-party elections were held and Burundi's first democratically elected Hutu leader, Melchior Ndadaye, came to power. Ndadaye was assassinated four months later by Tutsi extremists, marking the beginning of civil war in Burundi that would eventually leave at least 300,000 dead. Samuel was three years old when the civil war began.

While his relatively young age at the time of the conflict could play a role, Samuel does not remember anything of note occurring while war raged in his country. He was an average child, attending school, doing household chores, and playing football in his spare time. But when 300,000 people are killed within a decade, war is total and permanent. Samuel's lack of accounts could be due to the notion that after you are affected by violence, the time before it occurs becomes insignificant, because there is no going back.

Samuel was born to a Hutu father and a Tutsi mother. Intermarriage between the two tribes was common, as was everyday intermin-

gling, despite ambiguous ethnic differences. Both of his parents were farmers, trying to subsist off little and send their five children to school.

It wasn't until 2006, a full year after democratic elections were held and the final Hutu rebel group signed a ceasefire signifying the end of armed conflict, that violence came to Samuel's door. He was 15 when men started coming to the house at night to speak with his father. Despite the supposed ceasefire and

because she was Tutsi. At first his father thought the men were joking, but then they began to make visits while he worked in the field.

"My father was a Hutu and my mother was a Tutsi," Samuel said. "They told him he made a grave mistake." As the visits became more frequent, Samuel's parents became more concerned, and his father decided to travel to the closest police station to inform them of their troubles. "They told my father that it



SAMUEL'S SISTER, ABIGAIL

end of war, long-held hatred does not totally die with the signing of an agreement between two rival parties.

Although Samuel cannot identify the men that made frequent visits to his house and does not try to guess, they were most likely Hutu extremists, a splinter group operating outside of ceasefire agreements and committed to Tutsi extermination. The men insisted that Samuel's father needed to kill his wife, simply

was an issue between uneducated people," Samuel said. "They told him to sort it out himself."

Samuel's father had just been informed that the complexities of tribal divisions, generated by colonial rule and built up until the explosion of a decade long civil war, was the result of ignorant minds that should come together to find common ground. He returned home, where he began taking his family into the bush at night to sleep.

For three months Samuel would go to school, come home to eat, and sleep in the forest with his family. During the day his mother was constantly hidden. Their neighbors saw them during the day, and of course, after numerous attempts on the house at night, the men looking for Samuel's mother knew the family was in hiding.

His family grew tired, and began staying in the house at night, discussing their options and hoping the men would be looking for them in the bush, instead of coming to their home. However, one night in May 2006, the men came back.

At around midnight on a cool winter night, a group of men came to Samuel's house, demanding to speak to his father. At first he refused to come to the door, but he eventually left the confines of his house after the men insisted on speaking with him. "I was in the bedroom when my father left the house," Samuel said. "After a few minutes I heard shouting. They asked him 'Did you do it?'".

The men had come to see if Samuel's father had killed his wife, the mother of his five children. After his father responded that he had not, Samuel began to hear him scream and plead for his life.

While his father was being killed outside, Samuel was in his room with three of his siblings. His mother came in with his youngest daughter, Abigail, then two years old. She gave Samuel his sister and instructed the children to hide under the bed. She then left the house to find help, but was caught within earshot of her children, who were cowering in the dark under their bed.

"I heard some words," Samuel said. "They told her they had been looking for her, that she had brought shame on her family. They told her 'Pray for yourself and for your children for the last time.'"

He lay there with his brothers and sisters, silent, as their mother was murdered next to their slain father.

Samuel does not know why he did what he did next, but he jumped

out of a window and hid in a nearby banana field, telling his brothers and sisters not to leave their hiding place. He stayed there for two hours, not knowing if his parents were still alive, and unaware if his siblings had been found. He returned only when the silence of the early morning was constant enough to make it feel like it was safe to go back to the house.

Samuel described these events without flinching or wavering. As his story went on, I became more aware of my own voice changing pitch and a feeling of emptiness in my stomach. I wasn't sure how I wanted the rest of the interview to proceed, how much I wanted someone to relive the slaughtering of their parents. I offered to get Samuel some water and food. What I really wanted was to take a walk, smoke a cigarette and gather my thoughts.

Samuel looked at me quizzically when I made the offer to take a break. It seemed like he wanted to continue, as if retelling the story was a cathartic release, and that if he took a break,

then the story of his parents' murder would evade him "Sit down, my friend," he said as he tilted his head to one side. "Let us continue talking."

After leaving the safety of his hiding place, Samuel ventured back to his house to find what happened to his family. It was six in the morning, and dawn was breaking, overtaking the darkness of the night.

"I found my father down lying in a pool of blood next to my mother. They had cut them with *pangas*," he said.

Despite the screaming of his parents as they were hacked to death, no neighbors came outside to investigate.

handful of kilometers separated them from their parents' killers.

They walked from village to village until they found Mugunzu, where Tanzanian authorities and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had set up a refugee camp. After a series of interviews, Samuel and his siblings obtained refugee status.

Samuel's parents had obviously been concerned for their safety; a failed attempt to the police station and three months of sleeping in the bush prove that. However, when I asked him why his parents didn't

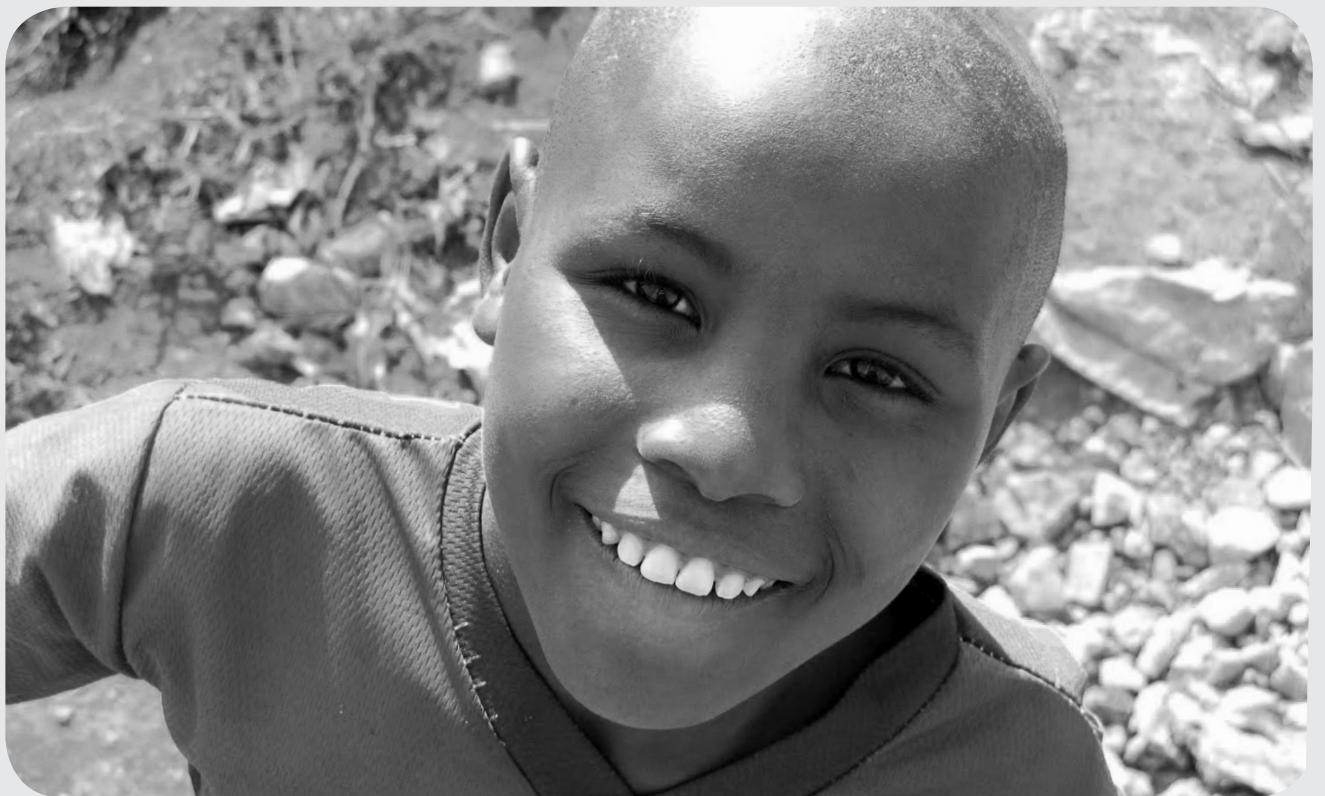
"ONLY AN INVISIBLE BORDER AND A HANDFUL OF KILOMETERS SEPARATED THEM FROM THEIR PARENTS' KILLERS."

The proximity at which Hutus and Tutsis intermingled throughout Africa is curious given the ethnic conflicts that divided them. In most instances, their demise at each others' hands was as personal as the lives they lived together. In neighboring Rwanda, where the most efficient and widespread genocide since the Holocaust was carried out by Hutus against Tutsis in 1994, the favorite method of the Hutu *Interahamwe* death squads was to kill by machete. In nearby Burundi, Samuel's parents had been killed with a butcher knife designed to cut the bones off of meat.

Upon entering his house, Samuel found his brothers and sisters alive under the bed. The men had come inside looking for them, but because of a lack of light, they had been unable to find them and left. Samuel, now the head of the family, gathered his two brothers and two sisters and began walking to nearby Tanzania, where he knew Burundi refugees were residing. After six hours they snuck in to the country. Only an invisible border and a

simply cross into Tanzania, Samuel wasn't sure. Most likely, it was because it wasn't simple. The Tanzanian government had housed refugees of the Burundi civil war in refugee camps for years, and many were still there. However, there was officially no longer a war in Burundi, and you can't have refugees without a war. By allowing Samuel and his siblings into the country, Tanzania acknowledged that violence was taking place only after it had taken place. It was like hearing a violent car crash outside your door, but denying its occurrence until the victims came staggering to your house asking for help.

After being granted refugee status, Samuel and his siblings were transferred to the Mkugwa Protection Camp, a refugee camp patrolled by soldiers that was reserved for "special refugees". Refugee camps in Tanzania were filled with Congolese, Sudanese, Rwandans, and Burundians escaping ethnic conflict. Many of these camps housed both legitimate refugees and perpetrators of violence. There were simply too many



SAMUEL'S BROTHER, JELEDI

refugees, and not enough time or resources, to sort the people coming in to the camps. Even in camps designed for safety, ethnic tension and violence were still rampant. Because Samuel and his siblings were born to a Hutu father and Tutsi mother, they could not be identified as belonging to one tribe or the other. They were both and they were neither. And this made them vulnerable.



SAMUEL'S BROTHER, ACHEAL

Samuel and his family stayed in Mkugwa from July 2006 until March 2007. During that time, Samuel enrolled his brothers and sisters into a free school established by the UNHCR, while he went to work.

"I woke up very early to prepare them for school," he said. "When they left I started my work." The UNHCR was unable to provide enough food for Samuel and the four children, so he worked as an excavator, planting vegetables for money.

In March 2007, Tanzanian authorities shut down Mkugwa and transferred the family to another

camp. The family was put in a reserved area with the rest of Mkugwa's refugees, but without the protection of armed guards, Samuel constantly felt like he was in danger.

"They knew these people were from Mkugwa, and that people from Mkugwa were different," he said.

Despite the unease, Samuel continued to work while his siblings went to school without problems. However,

sneak into a country for asylum. With the money he had saved as an excavator and with the help of a local pastor, he bought bus tickets to take his family to the Tanzania-Uganda border. At nightfall they slipped into Uganda without visas or passports, into a country where they did not know anyone.

The morning after crossing into the country, Samuel paid a pickup driver to take him to Kampala. Sitting in the bed of a truck intermingled among boxed vegetables, the family ventured to the capital city in search of asylum. They were directed to the Old Kampala Police Station, where they waited for refugee status as officers registered and interviewed them.

While waiting for refugee status, the family had nowhere to go and no money to pay for shelter. For three weeks they slept outside the police station, eating any food the policemen didn't finish. Samuel began going to a local church, where he met a Tanzanian pastor. Around this time, Samuel and his family received an asylum sticker, but were still waiting for official refugee status. It would take five months to officially become registered refugees.

The pastor found Samuel's family a house in Ndejje, a village less than ten kilometers from Kampala, and agreed to pay the first five months rent for him. He also told him about Hope Primary School, a school in Ndejje set up for refugee children.

Samuel went to Hope Primary School, where they accepted his asylum card, and allowed him to enroll the children in school after he received employment. Hope Primary was established to provide less expensive education to families in need, namely refugees. Samuel got a job and his three older siblings went to school, at the cost of 360,000 Ugandan shillings, or about \$145, a year.

Samuel began working construction for 5000 Ugandan shillings (\$2), a day. After five months, he also began paying for half of his rent.

With little savings to spare and no prospect for the future, Samuel took a more permanent job as a hotel housekeeper, making the same amount of money but working steady hours. He also began saving to take the driver's permit test.

"I didn't study much, I am not qualified for teaching or anything. I realized driving can save my life, can keep my brothers and sisters in school," he said. There was no option to go back to school, get a degree and start a career. So Samuel viewed a car as his education, a permit as his degree, and driving as his best option.

He received his permit and met a man with a car that allowed him to take it to Kampala as a special hire in exchange for weekly payments. He eventually left his job at the hotel, and today Samuel makes an average of 20,000 Ugandan shillings (\$8) a day working full time as a special hire in Kampala. This is where Samuel is today, and where he was when I thought he was trying to scam me for money.

When I asked Samuel about his hopes for the future, he chuckled as if he didn't know how to approach the question. I asked many open ended questions like this, hoping an answer would come to a question that held no ground. When there are no savings and no prospect of a higher paying job, the future is not years or months down the road. It is tomorrow – it is the food on the table, the tuition paid, the kids in school.

When I kept pressing for an answer, for what gave him hope, Samuel thought to his siblings. Unsure of his own personal aspirations, he turned to those who relied on him for food and shelter, and insisted that his future was determined by the outcome of theirs, which ultimately lay in their schooling.

"Education is more than an investment," he said. "If they don't go to school, they don't study and don't leave primary school, they cannot reach anywhere in their lives. What gives me



hope is that these guys have schooling, and that they are not hungry."

His smile was still present when I brought up the notion of giving up. He was confused, as if it wasn't an option. I tried explaining what I meant, asked him why he never felt sorry for himself and crumpled under the conditions that had been imposed on him.

"At times I sit down and ask my heart 'Why did this happen to me? Why am I an orphan, why am I a refugee, why am I here?'" he said. "So what I do is work, to get some money, to help my brothers and sisters. If I give up who will take care of them? No one."

The issue of hope is complex, but it is inherently human. We decide when to keep struggling or to give up, to put others before ourselves or to wage terror against our neighbor. The decisions are always ours' and ours' alone. The basic duality of good and evil is

present in all of us, and the actions we make in the face of, or in the name of, tragedy are what make us who we are. But despite our actions or the actions of others, the ability to never give up on hope is what makes us all human.

Despite armed conflict in the name of arbitrary ethnic differences that left his parents dead and his family displaced, Samuel was most at ease when I asked him about humanity's self-enacted separation.

He smiled and cocked his head again, replying without hesitation.

"We were all created as one people. When someone is segregating others, but when they are not the one that created human beings, then what are they? If you are saying this one is this and that one is that, you are forgetting what it is to be a human."

JAQUELINE & AUGISTIN

THERE ARE SIX GIRLS AND FOUR BOYS, INCLUDING TWO SETS OF TWINS, BORN UNDER JAQUELINE AND AUGISTIN...

The oldest is Giselle, aged 19, and the youngest are John and William, twins that are five years old. Recently relocated to America, in Ndejje the family lived in a two room house where they spelt, ate, and did chores together. A half-mile uphill is a Quality Supermarket, where members of the United Nations that live nearby in Southwestern style houses, well off Ugandans, myself and the occasional lost tourist can do their shopping, get coffee or go to a hair salon.

I passed by Jacqueline and Augistin's house every time I got tired of Ndejje's dust and street food and decided to

say hello, one of the children would get off and sit on the floor for me. If food was available I would be fed despite my protests, and there would always be 12 more mouths to feed.

Jacqueline is the reason I wanted to start hearing the voices from Ndejje, Uganda. Until I began talking to her, I was unaware of the hardships her family had faced. I just knew that they were refugees from the Congo. I met Jacqueline within my first two hours in Ndejje, and I have considered her like a mother ever since.

During my first interview with Jacqueline, I asked her to tell me about her life. She said that "it is a story about torture and violence against women." With that, she apologized for her English and retreated to another room to find a copy of the testimony her husband had written when he was seeking refugee status in Uganda. She did not speak in English again throughout the interview, and her three oldest daughters - Giselle, Delphine, and Blandine - acted as English/Swahili translators for the next two hours.

Jacqueline's assessment that life in the Democratic Republic of Congo was, and still is, about death and sexual violence is a terribly accurate one. A 2007 Washington Post article (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2007/09/08/AR2007090801194.html>) described rape and violence against women in Eastern DRC as the worst in the world. An estimated 200,000 women have been raped, and up

“JAQUELINE IS THE REASON I WANTED TO START HEARING THE VOICES FROM NDEJJE, UGANDA.”

walk to the shopping center. There was always someone at home – the family could not afford to send the four oldest children to secondary school, and so they spent the day preparing food and doing laundry in the creek downhill from their house. There was a wooden bench that sat in the entrance of the house, and if it was occupied by too many people when I dropped by

to 5.4 million people killed, since armed conflict began in the DRC, then known as Zaire, in 1996.

By 1996, Paul Kagame's Rwanda Patriotic Front had pushed Hutu rebel forces out of Rwanda and in to neighboring Zaire, effectively ending the large scale genocide of Tutsis in the country. In Hutu refugee camps in Zaire, rebel Hutu soldiers mixed with civilians escaping conflict, controlling the international aid that flowed through as they saw fit, and intimidating and killing innocent Hutus and Tutsis at large. From these camps in Eastern Zaire they launched counter-offensive measures back into Rwanda, and began exterminating Congolese Tutsis outside of the camps.

Rwandan Hutu forces were quickly joined by Zairian armed forces in their campaign against Rwanda and Congolese Tutsis. Since 1971, Zaire, the second largest country in Africa, had been under the power of Joseph Mobutu and had been backed by the United States government, who viewed Mobutu as a Cold War ally against Communism. Mobutu drove the country into debt by steering international loans into his own bank account, leading the country into a spiral of corruption and human rights violations. As the Cold War ended, the United States lost interest in Zaire but left Mobutu to his destructive devices. Less than a decade later, these included housing perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide, and committing his army to help Hutu rebels retake Rwanda.

In response to Mobutu and Hutu rebel actions, Rwanda and Uganda invaded the country, with the ultimate goal of overthrowing Mobutu and acquiring access to Zaire's mineral resources. In 1997, *Alliance des Forces Démocratiques pour la Libération du*

Congo-Zaire (ADFL) forces, containing Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers led by Laurent-Désiré Kabila, stormed Zaire and overthrew Mobutu within a year. Kabila took power and reinstated the previous name of the country, the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Kabila became fearful that he was now a puppet to a Rwandan government that wanted to control the DRC's vast resources, and he sent foreign soldiers in the ADFL back

home. His fears of a coup were correct, and Rwandan and Ugandan soldiers formed two new rebel groups to attack the DRC and gain control of its zinc, diamond, and cobalt resources, to name a few. Kabila was eventually assassinated in 2001, leaving his son Joseph to run the country. Joseph Kabila remains in power of the shattered country today, which still experiences vast amounts of corruption and human rights abuses.



JAQUELINE SHOWS OFF HER SEAMSTRESS WORK

Jaqueline, Augistin and their children, like many of the refugees I have spoken to, begin their life stories when violence first directly affects them. When I asked them to describe their lives before conflict, they simply say "It was good," or "It was safe." Listening to the stories of their lives feels like starting a movie that is already half-way though, and in their eyes nothing important has happened in the beginning acts so there is no need to go back.

scribed their day to day activities as fearful but otherwise normal – they remained vigilant but the children went to school and went on with existence. To help raise their children, Augistin worked in construction and Jaqueline was a seamstress.

In 2004, the two soldiers whose father had sold Augistin his land began coming to the house, looking for him. The soldiers, having left their land ten years earlier in Rwanda to

gistin describes what happened in his testimony to acquire refugee status in Uganda as follows:

Because I am not living there they came with anger and killed my brother SEBASHYITSI BIYOMBO as well as his son of 14 years old, because they were using my field. After killing them they raped his wife and before they left, they penetrated the knife in his genital organs. They left her suffering and she died after one week. That sorrowful news [had] reached [me] in Goma but I didn't go there for funerals because I was afraid. They were killed on my behalf.

Buyombo's family was killed for using land legally purchased by a family member, who had refused to give in to the demands of soldiers seeking to take it back because they thought the language he spoke indicated he had helped commit genocide against Tutsis. The soldiers, not content with slaughtering his brother's family, moved on to Goma, looking for Augistin.

By the time the soldiers found Augistin's family in 2006, Augistin and Jaqueline had eight children. The youngest were Yvette and Yvonne, three-year-old twins. When the soldiers found Augistin with his family at home and demanded he step outside, Augistin at first refused. The soldiers then began shooting their weapons in the air, and Augistin decided going outside would be the safest thing for his family. When he stepped out of the door he was tied up and beaten. Another group of soldiers entered the house and raped Jaqueline. She was five months pregnant.

I sat next to Jaqueline as she relayed the story of her rape and her husband's beating to her oldest daughters, who translated to me. The daughters told me the series of events as a matter of fact in two short sentences. They already knew the story. Jaqueline was raped in 2006, and at the time



JULIEN AND THE AUTHOR

The family's story, then, begins in 1995, a full year before Kabila entered the DRC. Augistin purchased 30 acres of land in Eastern DRC from a man moving to Rwanda. Augistin allowed his brother, Biyombo, to use the land while Augistin lived in nearby Goma. A year later, ADFL forces, including two sons of the man Augistin bought the land from, invaded the DRC.

While war and social and political strife raged through the country, Augistin's family tried to live as normal of a life as possible. They de-

fined in the DRC, accused Augistin of being a Hutu *Interahamwe* and demanded he give them his land. Augistin was born into the Munyabwisha tribe in Eastern DRC, and spoke a language similar to Kinyarwanda, spoken by Hutus in Rwanda. At this time Augistin was still in Goma, and the messages from the soldiers were being relayed to him by his brother, who was staying on the land. After repeated refusals to give the brothers the land, they came back with a group of soldiers. Au-

Giselle, Delphine, and Bladine were 14, 13, and 11, respectively. They were in the house when the rape occurred.

After she was raped, Jaqueline was taken to a local hospital, unaware of what had happened to Augistin. After being tied up and beaten he listened to Jaqueline scream in their house before being taken to a military barracks. There he was tortured to the point where his back was broken.

friend that the soldiers were still after him, and that if he did not leave the country he would be arrested and killed. So fearful was he for his life that he did not inform Jaqueline he had fled until he reached his sister-in-law's house in Kiwanja, where Yvette and Yvonne were staying. In the space when Jaqueline had not heard from her husband, she automatically assumed he was dead.

"BUT AUGISTIN WAS NOT A PERPETRATOR OF VIOLENCE, AND THIS WASN'T ABOUT JUSTICE OR RETRIBUTION."

Augistin was beaten and tortured, his wife raped, and his brother's family wiped out under the pretext that he was a Hutu *Interahamwe*. Even if Augistin was a Hutu militiaman that participated in gross human rights violations, justice is not achieved through an equal measure of rape, torture, and extermination. But Augistin was not a perpetrator of violence, and this wasn't about justice or retribution. When relatives found Augistin at the military barracks three days after his torture, they were allowed to remove him and take him to a hospital after paying the soldiers \$200.

Augistin was admitted to the same hospital where Jaqueline was being treated for her rape. While he began treatment on his back, the couple decided to send their two youngest children to stay with a relative close to the Ugandan border. When Augistin's back cast was removed after two months, he had not fully healed, but by this point had no money when the doctor recommended he be transferred to another hospital. He had no choice but to leave and carry out therapy on his own.

A few months after leaving the hospital, Augistin was informed by a

Augistin felt like a marked man, and for all intents and purposes he was. He could not go back to Goma, where he was being searched for, and he felt unsafe in Kiwanja, which was under the control of DRC soldiers. He made the decision to cross the border into nearby Uganda with Yvette and Yvonne, with the hope that Jaqueline could eventually cross with the other six children. In May 2007, Augistin waded across the Ishasha River while his daughters walked across the border under the story that they were going to a nearby market and would quickly return. The trio were soon reunited, now on Ugandan soil, and made their way to Kampala.

In Kampala, Augistin and his two daughters were directed to the Old Kampala Police Station, where they were eventually given refugee status by Ugandan authorities and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Soon after they found a house to rent, and began to wait for Jaqueline and the rest of the family. However, despite the illusion of comfort on a relatively safe foreign soil, Augistin's troubles followed him. He had not been in Uganda for more than two months

when two men attacked him outside of his house. The men told him that after his long journey, he had been caught. Augistin was able to scream and two passerbys intervened, sending his attackers off into the night. Augistin has not felt safe since that night; he was targeted and followed, even after he tried to flee with part of his family. Following the attack, he moved again, to nearby Ndejje.

For all of the hardships and tragedy that has befallen Augistin, Jaqueline and their family, there have been

moments of promise, and lifelines to grab on to. Jaqueline and the rest of the couple's children were able obtain refugee status and join Augistin, Yvette and Yvonne in Ndejje. The children were enrolled at Hope Primary School for a fee of 15,000 Ugandan shillings (roughly \$6) a term, lunch meals not included. Jaqueline continued her work as a seamstress. And after four years of requesting assistance from the UNHCR, the family was given approval to move to the United States. The UNHCR assisted the family in

getting visas, and loaned them money for airfare and housing upon arrival in the country in September 2011.

That isn't to say that everything is better: Augistin cannot work because his back has not properly healed, and the family could not afford to send any of their children to secondary school in Uganda because of higher costs, leaving them behind in their schooling. However, there is finally something to hold on to.

Jaqueline will always be first and foremost a mother. As the only pro-

vider in a family with ten children, being a mother is her most comfortable role, and one she exerts with ease under all of those that fall under her grace. In early August, Jaqueline and her eight oldest children came to say goodbye to a volunteer going back to America. In total there were 17 people to feed, and for four hours Jaqueline, Giselle, Delphine, and Blandine cooked countless chapattis, beans, posho, cabbage, and ground nut for everyone. As Jaqueline began handing out plates of food to children, many of whom weren't her own, I tried thanking her again and begged her to make sure she got her own food.

Finally, Delphine said, "I know when I reach there I will study. School is better and free. I have not been studying very well because I have moved around so much." She went on to explain how she takes after her mother and wants to become a designer.

With that their collective thoughts and aspirations poured forward, each of them describing their hopes to be able to go back to school. "When you study, life changes," said Bladine, who wants to become a doctor. "It is possible to earn money for the family."

When I left to go back to my house, Julien walked back with me, and we

Education is the children's hope for the future. For Augistin and Jaqueline, their hope for the future is their children. When I asked Augistin why he never gave up, he had a tough time finding an answer. I followed up the question by asking why he never lost hope and what he looked forward to, and he replied that he hadn't lost hope because the UNHCR was sending his family to America where they would be safe, and he looked forward to doctors fixing his back. He asked me if that had answered my question, and in literal terms it had. But of course I was looking at hope in abstract terms, and so I led him. On a



LEFT TO RIGHT: GISELLE, JAQUELINE, DELPHINE, YVONNE AND BLANDINE

"EDUCATION IS THE CHILDREN'S HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. FOR AUGISTIN AND JAQUELINE, THEIR HOPE FOR THE FUTURE IS THEIR CHILDREN."

She smiled wide and said, "There is a lot of food, and there are so many children. And the children must eat."

And with that she continued to hand out food, refusing to take her own until all of the children had their full.

During a trip to the family's house a month before they left, I spoke with Giselle, Delphine, Blandine, and Julien, 12, and Julie, 14. I asked them about their hopes for life in America, their fears and their expectations. In previous conversations with the children they had enthusiastically asked questions about the food, transportation, and even what kind of flooring is used in America. When I was the one asking the questions, they were hesitant, as if nobody had ever asked them what they wanted before, because the family unit had always taken precedent over the individual.

talked casually about America. He talked about his apprehension of taking the "underground trains," and his nervousness of missing a schoolbus. Julien was interested in college, and I did my best to explain majors, terms, and credits to him. As we talked I looked over my shoulder beyond Julien's house, up the dirt path and past the houses surrounded by 12-foot high gates topped with barbed wire. I looked up to the Quality Supermarket, where a day earlier my lunch had cost 10,000 shillings and my coffee had been 5,500 shillings – enough money to put Julien in school for a term in Uganda. He asked me if it was possible to take two majors at once, and I nodded my head. Julien wants to design airplanes and to become a doctor, so that he can cure AIDS.

piece of paper I wrote "If you don't have hope then...?". He stared at the paper for a few moments, smiled and said, "You ask very hard questions."

The answer could be so hard to find because hope is not abstract to Augistin. To him, hope has been survival, and seeing that his children are safe and have a future of possibility. Hope is not always intangible. It can be seen in the faces of optimistic and excited children, heard in their voices as they talk about their educational goals, smelled in the porridge that is cooking and will feed 12 mouths, and felt in a father's handshake as he bids you farewell. In the Jaqueline and Augistin's family, hope is family, and it is constant.

RAPHA MURUMBI

GIVEN TODAY'S CIRCUMSTANCES, IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE HOW RAPHA ISN'T FRUSTRATED AND OVERWHELMED...

It is late in the afternoon on a dry, hot July day, and the occasional gust of wind whips dirt through the air. The Women's World Cup, which Rapha helped organize with Soccer Without Borders volunteers, is coming to an end. After compiling eight teams and planning eight matches throughout the course of the day, as well as feeding over 90 young girls, the final two games are almost underway.

The tournament was organized to celebrate females in soccer and to promote gender equality in the Ndeje and Katwe areas, but there is a hitch – a team of older girls, brought by the Soccer Without Borders volunteers, feels it has been cheated and

Later that night another Soccer Without Borders volunteer, Ethan, and I sit down with some beers and try to make sense of the day. Both of us are exhausted as we discuss what went right, what went wrong, and what we would have changed to make things run more smoothly. If the major blot on the day was a team walking out mid-tournament, the bright spot had been Rapha. Of the eight teams in the tournament, he had brought six of them. He had arranged for a tent and chairs for spectators, certificates for the players, a news station to cover the tournament, and even a DJ to play music during the games. Just after Ethan told me that Rapha was his hero, our phones buzzed. Rapha had sent us a text message that said, “I am broken, but you guys are good. Thank you for today, I will never forget what you have done.”

Rapha gave us all the credit and accepted the blame for a team he had no control over walking off the pitch. His emotions had never betrayed him on the field, but the weight of the day had finally come down on him. Instead of placing the blame back on us, where it rightfully should have been, he shouldered it. After reading his text, I knew what Ethan meant about Rapha being a hero.

If Rapha didn't tell you, you wouldn't guess he is in his mid-20s. He has the facial features of someone ten years older and a composure that isn't easily shaken. From eight in the morning until the nighttime hours

“INSTEAD OF PLACING THE BLAME BACK ON US, WHERE IT RIGHTFULLY SHOULD HAVE BEEN, HE SHOULDERED IT. ”

refuses to play in their third place game. They take off their boots and stockings, change into flip-flops and trudge off the field, muttering under their breath. Rapha lets them go. The tournament is about fun, creativity and a sense of female empowerment, not about winning and losing. He jogs to the other field; another match is about to begin.

he is teaching English, playing games with children, or training on the soccer pitch. Rapha rarely takes a day off.

Raphael “Rapha” Murumbi was born in May 1987 in former Zaire, now known as the Democratic Republic of Congo. He grew up in Bukavu, South Kivu, with six brothers and three sisters in a community centered around the Imani Panzi Church, where his father was a pastor. The community was a self-contained complex stretching for miles and had its own schools, university and government administration. It was on these grounds that Rapha went to school, learned the game of soccer and where he was exposed to the social justice movements that would help shape his future.

Led by Rapha's father, Mihogo, the Imani Panzi Church served as a resource for raped women, providing assistance for what was becoming a pandemic in the country. In 1996, the same year that Paul Kagame was pushing Hutu rebels out of Rwanda into Zaire, Rapha's father publicly declared that the majority of the women seeking refuge in his church had been raped by government soldiers. Emboldened by his courage, women living in Bukavu began demonstrating on the streets, demanding President Joseph Mobutu and his government respect their rights.

The words of Rapha's father and subsequent demonstrations did not go unnoticed by Mobutu, and in 1997 the pastor was kidnapped by government forces. The community immediately rallied around the family, protesting the kidnapping and demanding freedom for Mihogo. Rapha's family never requested the demonstrations take place. Instead, the community was doing what it felt was right, lending their voices to someone who had spoken up for them

when they were afraid to do so themselves. A few days after the kidnapping, Rapha's father was found dead.

“As if killing my father wasn't enough, the government continued treating the remaining members of my family poorly,” Rapha said. “They alleged we had intoxicated the youth to demonstrate.”

From 1997 to 2007, Rapha continued going to school and playing soccer. He played first division professional soccer starting in 2001, and made it to college in 2005, going to Bukavu's UAE University to study agriculture. However, the ten years between his father's murder and his eventual exit from the country



RAPHA, VOLUNTEERS, AND PARTICIPANTS AT THE WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

As conflict in Rwanda spilled over into Zaire, government soldiers continued to harass the family and community at large. Three of Rapha's older brothers fled to various East African countries in early 1997, fearing for their lives. Rapha and his remaining family didn't have the financial resources to leave after the death of Mihogo, and stayed in Bukavu.

were fraught with conflict that still reverberates throughout East Africa. After Mobutu was ousted in May 1997, the country changed its name back to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Laurent Kabila took over, but a scramble for power and for the country's mineral resources began. Africa's bloodiest war, involving the DRC and the majority of its neighbors,



RAPHA PREPARES TO CUT WOOD TO MAKE GOALPOSTS

has resulted in over 5 million casualties and has raged from the time Rapha was in primary school though his years in Bukavu's UAE university. Conflict continues today.

While Rapha lived in Bukavu, government and rebel soldiers waged war on the civilian population, indiscriminately murdering civilians and creating widespread famine, leading to the rampant spread of disease. Soldiers also kept threatening Rapha's family and killed two of his uncles. By 2006, all of his siblings had fled the country, leaving Rapha and his mother alone in Bukavu. The DRC had been in a tailspin for a decade, and egregious human rights violations compounded the effects of the multi-party conflict. Mobutu was gone and everything had changed, but nothing was different.

"I remember on October 1, 2007 at around 8p.m., the same people entered my house," Rapha said. "They gang raped my mother and beat me. I screamed and tried to stop them. I ran off when my mother started crying. I ran, ran, ran. I was afraid. I didn't think my mother would survive."

Rapha fled for five days until he reached Goma, on the other side of Lake Kivu. He had no money and didn't know anyone in the city. For two weeks he was homeless and lucky to find enough food to eat once a day. After two weeks Rapha came across a truck driver he knew from outside Bukavu who agreed to smuggle him into Uganda on his next journey. Rapha hid under sacks in the back of the truck as the man took him across the border to Mbarama, Uganda. He quickly filed for refugee status with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and was placed in a refugee camp, where he stayed for six months before deciding to leave.

"I saw that life was very difficult in the camp," he said. "There are no jobs, I didn't know anyone. There were little rations from the

UNHCR - around 15 kilos of maize, two kilos of rice, and one bottle of water a month. It was hard to survive."

The conditions Rapha faced in the refugee camp are familiar to many refugees seeking security in Uganda. Since the mid-90s, the country has been the destination for survivors of conflict from Rwanda, DRC, Burundi, Sudan, and numerous other countries. The resources to accommodate millions of people simply do not exist, and the strain on the Ugandan government and subsequent disdain from some

soccer. Having played professionally in DRC, he now hoped that soccer would provide a foundation for stability in a foreign country. The refugees could not play on an established Ugandan team due to the bureaucracy of the leagues, so Rapha decided to form his own team. "One time we see that we are many, and we can buy a ball and play together," he said. Proper fields are rented by local teams, so the time they had together was limited to when they could find an empty pitch. But it was a chance to play as

in charge of the three youth teams they established during Ben's time in the country. When Ben left, he promised Rapha that he would return in a year with more materials and more volunteers, and that together they would expand the Soccer Without Borders Uganda program, which already existed in nearby Ndejje. In the meantime, Rapha would be one of the men in charge of getting the Nsamba program off the ground.

The amount of trust it took to agree to begin a program with a man Ben barely knew, and who he would

"LOOKING FOR A SENSE OF HOME, RAPHA BEGAN ORGANIZING OTHER REFUGEES IN THE AREA THAT WANTED TO PLAY SOCCER."'

of the native population creates additional problems. Many refugees have two options: live in impoverished conditions under the protection of the UNHCR with little chance for upward mobility, or try their luck on their own in an unfamiliar country. After six months, Rapha left for Kampala.

It was now early 2008, and with nowhere else to turn Rapha went to a Kampala center for refugees when he arrived in the city. It was there that he learned that one of his brothers, Byamo, had registered as a refugee and was now residing in Nsamba, a neighborhood to the south of Kampala. They were reunited, and Rapha began living and working with his brother, who had established himself as a tailor. He also found out that his mother had survived the attack a year earlier, and was still living in DRC.

Looking for a sense of home, Rapha began organizing other refugees in the area that wanted to play

a team, a rough war torn group coming together to form a small fractured community and kick the ball around.

In March of 2008, Rapha met Ben Gucciardi, the founder and head of Soccer Without Borders. Soccer Without Borders was established to help at-risk youth in Uganda and various sites in North and South America to positively change their lives through soccer and education. Ben was looking to expand his program and was accompanied by the director of an NGO working with refugees who knew Rapha and his team.

"This man is interested in soccer and wants to help you," said Rapha, recalling the conversation with the NGO director. "Do you want help? And we did. He brought balls, jerseys, and helped to train local coaches. One of those coaches was me."

Ben stayed in Uganda for two months, training 12 volunteers and putting Rapha and two other coaches

go a year without seeing, is considerable. But Ben was confident in the men he had trained, and Rapha never doubted he would see Ben in a year's time. Rapha was committed to Ben's vision, even if it meant giving up the majority of his free time to help a community he was not native to.

"For me I can say it was a hope," Rapha said. "The promises he gave, he never gave up since he came. He wrote me every week, and started paying for the pitch."

The team of refugees that initially had to pool money for a soccer ball now had its own field and equipment, and three other youth teams beneath them. With Ben's confidence backing him, Rapha began establishing more teams.

One of the most impressive things about Rapha is that he never had to take on the position of starting the Soccer Without Borders program in Nsamba. The position was purely a volunteer one, and Rapha is col-

lege-educated and speaks English, French, and Swahili, among other languages. He worked and lived with Byamo and could have easily participated in the team while concentrating on bettering his own situation in Uganda. But he felt like he could make a difference in the community through soccer and use it to connect refugees and forgotten youth who had little else. A monetary incentive wasn't his priority. The other two coaches appointed by Ben, however, took a different approach.

When Ben departed from Uganda, he left Rapha with three bags of soccer equipment. Each coach received one, with which they were to train with. The equipment included balls, jerseys, pumps, and other materials that are uncommon and expensive to buy in an area like Nsamba. The two other coaches splintered off from the Soccer Without Borders program, selling much of the donated gear. They

accused Rapha of stealing the third bag, and Rapha was arrested while he was coaching his own youth team.

Rapha spent two days in jail without food before he was able to convince the police officers of his innocence. Ben was also forced to step in, writing a letter from 10,000 miles away pleading for cooler heads to prevail. When Rapha was finally released, Byamo encouraged him to leave the program out of fear for his safety; however, Rapha had a vision for what soccer could do for the community, and was determined to see through what he had started.

"When you have no hope, you cannot continue with anything," Rapha said. "You can start something and quit in the middle and run away. If you have a dream, you work. You never give up if you are having a difficult time. If I didn't have hope, a dream, maybe I would have left. But I hadn't fulfilled my dream, so I didn't run."

Instead, Rapha went on training the other nine original volunteers and stuck to his word to expand the Soccer Without Borders Nsamba site. By the time Ben returned in late 2008, Rapha had created six youth teams, and he coached most of them as well. Ben pledged more funds, materials, and volunteers to the site, and allowed Rapha to decide the best ways to continue community and refugee development in Nsamba. When Byamo moved to Tanzania in 2009, Ben began paying for Rapha's room and board to ensure he would stay on with the organization.

"Ben told me, 'In whatever you can do to help the community, I support it.' I'm doing my duty," Rapha said.

Rapha's main initiative in Nsamba following Ben's departure was to create a youth and English center for refugees and the at-risk native population, primarily focusing on female education. The center started with



RAPHA AND MEMBERS OF HIS YOUTH CENTER

one room and two students. Two years have passed, and Rapha is now operating in a two room center that is open from 10 a.m. until the children, some of whom are homeless, leave. He reads to the kids, plays games with them, and provides a free space for creativity which is otherwise lacking in the community. Before the center opens, "I cannot make all of the trainings, Rapha holds English lessons for two classes, and make more teams. I work hours, free of charge and open to anybody looking to learn the language.

"If you cannot express yourself in English, or read or write, you cannot establish yourself," Rapha said. "As I passed that kind of life, I understood

morning to evening every day, Monday through Sunday, without break time. But when I am not on the ground, if I go a day or two without seeing the kids, I feel embarrassed. I feel like I have lost something, like something is missing."

'IT HAS BEEN MY DREAM TO HELP THIS COMMUNITY PLAY AND LEARN TOGETHER.'

my fellow immigrants need help to set up their broken lives. These people just left their countries, they're afraid. When they're struggling to eat or pay rent, they cannot afford school. I don't have my own primary school to send them to, so I do what I can."

Over 40 children and adults now attend Rapha's English lessons, with the same number attending his youth center hours and football practices. On the weekend when other local youth are not in school, up to 90 children can come to his trainings. The program has taken off since 2008, but that isn't to say that there are not daily obstacles to overcome. Financial difficulties occur, and there are times when Rapha does not have enough soccer balls or jerseys to train with. Many of the nine volunteers Rapha trained in 2008 were relocated by the UNHCR or became disillusioned with the volunteer position and sought employment elsewhere. By 2010 there was only one full time coach in the program besides Rapha; although three more local staff members have recently been added to

Logistic and time constraints aside, Rapha is looking to expand the Soccer Without Borders program to other areas of the community, hoping to reach more children on the fringes of society "get their lives back." His students "graduate" from his center when they are old enough, and many of them have gone on to attain employment in various fields.

"When I see some of my boys and girls getting things like a diploma from the center, and hear they got a job, I can say I am doing good. At least on some levels I can say there is hope."

Rapha is adamant to point out that his center is not just for refugees. Despite his background, he sees no difference in children that need help, native or otherwise. His center and English lessons are open to anybody who wants to come. His soccer teams are comprised of players from a handful of countries, and he hopes the unity they establish on the field will translate to cohesion in the community.

"It is not a matter of refugees only," he said. "There are some na-

tionalities, like street boys and illiterates. They are not in a good family that can take care of them. I have to do what I can, that is what has made me stay in this work. It has been my dream to help this community play and learn together. I want to see them express what we have taught them. I want these people to get their lives back."

During a recent graduation ceremony for the students at his center, a miscommunication occurred between Rapha and the Soccer Without Borders volunteers. He had been expecting to rent a projector to play

a movie for the graduating children, and he promised them it would be there. The funds from Soccer Without Borders, however, were not. So Rapha found a friend with a television, lugged it to the center, and played a movie for the children. He refuses to give up on community, refuses to stop pushing forward despite the numerous obstacles, and refuses to let down the children he works with on a daily basis. It's easy to see why people consider him a hero.

One of the best sources of hope in a population where the innocence of youth has been robbed or never existed in the first place, comes from within that community. Rapha's sense of normalcy, dreams and aspirations were taken from him in DRC, and he was forced to Uganda to start over. He lives in a community he never intended to reside in, but one whose population has a story similar to his. So he took a soccer ball, a group of refugees, and a dream, and instilled hope into those who needed it the most.

BANGI SAYID

ON A COOL JULY NIGHT, BANGI SAYID AND I SAT ON THE PORCH OF MY HOUSE DISCUSSING UGANDA AND ITS POLITICS...

Two men spoke outside of the gate, and the cool breeze carried their voices faintly to where we were sitting. I asked Bangi about reports that Uganda's leader, President Museveni, had murdered his own civilians a decade earlier in Northern Uganda, in order to blame opposition and rebel leader Joseph Kony and his Lord's Resistance Army. Bangi looked down and was silent. "Cory, let us go," he said quietly. We left the house and walked up the road to a hotel.



BANGI AND LOCAL NDEJJE YOUTH

The men outside the gate, I had forgotten, were soldiers in the Ugandan army. As hesitant as he had been, Bangi still answered my query with confidence when we were out of earshot of the soldiers.

Bangi is the first person to make me realize that I am, and what it means to be, privileged and secure by location of birth. His answers to my prompts on life in Uganda have made me feel lucky, even guilty, and the questions he has posed to me have made me feel more inadequate than I ever have. Bangi is 21 years old, with a skinny frame, inquisitive eyes, and aspirations to become a lawyer. He is the only person I've met in Ndejje who is willing and enthusiastic enough to talk about Ugandan politics. And Bangi loves to talk, to speak his mind to anyone willing to listen. Unlike the other residents of Ndejje that I have spoken with, he is not a refugee or survivor of war. His story is, however, a linear journey of orphanage, new beginnings, and false promises with the constant belief that he will overcome.

Bangi was born in Mityana, Central Uganda, in 1990. Shortly after his birth, his parents were diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. By the time Bangi was two, both his parents had died, having succumbed to a disease as treatable as diabetes in the United States.

At his father's funeral, Bangi's uncle made arrangements for Bangi and his seven year old step brother to stay with their grandmother, who lived in another village in Mityana, an hour's journey on a bicycle. As Bangi's step brother peddled the bike, Bangi sat on the handlebars, his legs wrapped around them with banana fiber.

The brothers lived with their grandmother for nine years, from 1992 to 2011. His uncle, a father to over 40

children, a result of polygamous relationships with numerous women, lived nearby. When Bangi became old enough, he began attending a school established under Uganda's Universal Primary Education program; this allowed students to attend primary school for free, albeit under disorganized conditions and teachers constantly on strike, demanding higher wages.

"One thing I really remember about my grandmother is that she loved us," Bangi said. "But she used to tell us this saying: 'When I die you will eat feces.' She wanted to tell us when she died life would be hard for us. And she was right."

In 2001, Bangi's grandmother died of natural causes, leaving the orphans effectively alone. Bangi's nearby uncle was a step brother of Bangi's mother, and the heir to Bangi's grandfather's 15 acres of land. Basic land rights are, however, not so simple in a polygamous family whose complicated bloodlines branch out in all directions like a spider web. His uncle began fighting with his step brothers for control of the land and refused to acknowledge responsibility for Bangi and his step brother. The boys continued to live in their grandmother's house without a guardian.

When I asked why his uncle didn't do anything, knowing two relatives aged 11 and 15 were living alone in the house, Bangi exclaimed, "Like what?" The reckless abandonment of youth is an unfortunate theme in Bangi's life, but one that he never feels ill-will toward. Instead, he finds a way to empathize with it and acknowledges it as a fact of life. Since he was 11 years old, he has believed his uncle had too many children to care for, and was too busy to take care of him as well.

Bangi's step brother, without supervision since the death of their grandmother, left school to hawk so-

das to passing motorists in another district. For three months, Bangi lived alone in the house. He ate by going into a nearby forest to collect unripe jackfruit and bananas, stowing them in the house until they were fit to eat.

to sit in the bed of his truck when he traveled to the city. Bangi made the five hour journey with the man at night, sitting between boxes of fruits and vegetables, exposed to the conditions. It rained for much of the journey there.



BANGI HELPS AT THE WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

In the summer of 2001 there was a family funeral in town which was attended by one of Bangi's aunts, who lived in a suburb of Kampala. He jumped on the opportunity to talk about his living conditions to someone who could possibly help.

"When I saw her the situation was eating me," he said. "So the moment I saw that lady, I told her everything."

A month later, Bangi received word that his aunt and uncle would help him if he made it to Kampala. An agricultural transport driver allowed him

"When I left the village and went to the city to work, I had lost it with education," Bangi said. "I wanted to work, and I thought Kampala was heaven on earth."

At dawn he reached the city, and the driver left him in a local market. Bangi found a wheelbarrow propped against a wall. He wedged himself into the hollow end with the wall acting as a slight barrier to the cold air outside. "Trust me, sleep comes. That's the funny thing about sleep," he said.

The next morning, the driver came back and told Bangi that, although he did not know where his uncle was, he knew a woman in the market who used to date Bangi's uncle. Bangi found the woman, and she took him to his uncle's house. As he settled into his third home in 11 years, he listened to radio reports of terrorists crashing planes into buildings 7,000 miles away from Kampala.

the ripped paper every chance he got. After mastering his art in the kitchen, Bangi was promoted again, this time to the head of the shop where he dealt with transactions and handled money. The shop owner, however, had not paid Bangi for his work, and used the shelter and food she provided as an excuse. She became increasingly paranoid of competing shops and feared Bangi leaving.

"The first day I met this woman I was scared of her, and this worked in her advantage," Bangi said. He laughed as he described her as a "big, strong, black African woman," flexing his arms and puffing out his cheeks in exaggeration. The woman never discussed payment with Bangi, but agreed to let him sleep on a two inch mattress in a spare room in her house. Now 13 years old,

trusted her because of her own job. The irony of the situation is that the woman was a lawyer, focusing on women and children's rights. Bangi was 13, illegally employed for no pay when he should have been in school. Everyone receives their aspirations from somewhere; the woman's hypocrisy inspired him to become a lawyer.

"The law is in place, but the people are using their knowledge to enslave others, not help them," he said.

After two months of work, Bangi questioned the woman about payment. Instead of paying him, she told him she would use the money to send him back to school. What Bangi didn't know at the time was that the school was a part of Universal Primary Education and was free of charge.

While in school, he continued to work, now doing his chores at night and going to school during the day.

He worked 4 p.m. - 11 p.m., going to sleep only until 3 a.m., when he would wake up and continue his chores until 7 in the morning, when it was time for school. He maintained this schedule for eight months until

he started P7, the last year of primary school. He left P6 with the highest marks in his class, despite the hectic schedule. The woman he worked for continued to beat him if she did not approve of his house work.

A teacher at his school finally began noticing bruises on his arms, and after Bangi confided in him, the teacher offered to help. Not long after, Bangi came home from school to find the woman he worked for was having a house party for coworkers.

When she refused to let him inside he sat in the damp grass for hours, crying into the night. The next day she told Bangi that she would pay him, but she also told him to leave her house for fear of getting caught for abusing him. He went back to the school to find the teacher who offered to help him. Bangi never received payment from the woman.

When asked if he ever saw the woman again, Bangi laughed unexpectedly for a while. Bangi has a rare sense of humor for someone whose life has been full of abandonment, and I was confused by his

response. When he settled down, I asked him to explain his reaction. He told me he had recently searched for and found the woman on Facebook. With a slight sense of self-gratification, he sent the woman a friend request. She didn't accept it.

After returning to the school, the teacher who had offered him help set Bangi up with the new headmaster of the school. In exchange for working for her, her husband and his two children, Bangi was able to live with them and continue school. It was his fifth living arrangement in 14 years. Bangi finished P7 in the top five of his class. He also met a volunteer from the Peace Corps who was working at the school, and he formed a casual friendship with her.

After finishing primary school, Bangi entered a nearby secondary boarding school. The woman he lived with begrudgingly paid for his schooling at a price of 50,000 Ugandan shillings a term, and Bangi could feel their relationship sour. Before the start of the third term, a weekend party was held to celebrate the com-

"AS HE SETTLED INTO HIS THIRD HOME IN 11 YEARS, HE LISTENED TO RADIO REPORTS OF TERRORISTS CRASHING PLANES INTO BUILDINGS 7,000 MILES AWAY FROM KAMPALA. "

Bangi's uncle was unable to provide for him, and so he took Bangi to Natee-te, a slum outside of Kampala. His uncle convinced a shop owner to let Bangi work and live with her. She agreed to house him and pay him 20,000 shillings (\$8) a month to peddle *matoke*, an African banana, around the slum.

"That's where I learned to work," he said with pride. "I mastered it, I knew every corner of the slum. She really loved me for that, I was making her quick money."

Bangi was quickly promoted to the woman's kitchen to cook potatoes and *chapatti*, fried African flour. He rode a bicycle through the slum to collect the raw ingredients, and worked over a stove to fry the food.

As he described his experience he lifted up his pant leg, showing off his oil burns like a badge of achievement.

Bangi acquired more than oil burns from his time in the kitchen; he also acquired a love of reading. *Chapatti* is often wrapped in newspapers for customers, and Bangi read

"Sometimes she would tell me, 'You have to be here, you have to work. Your parents are dead, you have to survive,'" he said.

According to Bangi, when he was promoted to shopkeeper, the woman began practicing witchcraft in hope of retaining customers. She asked Bangi to help, and he began to feel increasingly uncomfortable. Feeling discontent with his lack of pay, he began telling people around the slum about the woman and informed them of his desire to find another job.

He was soon approached by a friend, who informed him of a wealthy woman in nearby Namugongo looking for a houseboy. He requested a year's payment from the shopkeeper, and when she refused he left for Namugongo. He had worked for the woman for close to two years without receiving compensation.

The woman in Namugongo was a recently divorced lawyer and lived in her large house with two dogs. When she saw Bangi she sized him up, doubtful of his ability to be a houseboy.

Bangi's daily tasks were to look after the woman's dogs – washing them, preparing their food, washing the kennels and picking up after them – wash the woman's car and clothes, trim her hedges and cut her grass. If it was not up to the woman's standards, she beat him. Despite this, he was able to keep up his reading habits.

"As a lawyer, she has so many papers," he said. "When she gave me papers I took them to the back of the house before I burned them to heat the stove." He was caught numerous times and beaten, but he continued to read.

After a month of working for the woman, Bangi still hadn't been paid, nor had money been discussed. However, she threatened him that if he broke a kettle while cleaning it, it would cost him a month's pay. He valued the kettle at 50,000 Ugandan shillings (\$20).

Bangi had never asked about payment because he was afraid of the woman, and possibly because he



BANGI AND SOCCER WITHOUT BORDERS VOLUNTEERS

ing end to the year. "I danced, danced, danced!" Bangi exclaimed. Although he didn't know it at the time, the woman hadn't paid for his final term.

He returned home from the party to a locked door. When he knocked, the woman told Bangi to go away, yelling at him that she was not his mother. He spent the night in a store attached to the house, and the next morning he begged for the woman to let him stay. She refused. When he returned to school on Monday, he wasn't allowed inside the gate since he hadn't paid for the term.

"This was the hardest, most difficult moment of my life," Bangi said. "Saturday I'm chased out of the house, Monday I'm kicked out of school. Life had become hopeless."

Still, he empathized with the woman, and believed she wanted to save money so she could leave her husband.

With nothing to do and nowhere to go, Bangi began to walk toward his old primary school. Like so many other times in his life, a chance encounter inserted itself into his dire situation. "If there is no god, there has to be something driving my life," Bangi said.

As he walked to his old primary school, he ran into the Peace Corps volunteer he had met in P7. The woman took him back to his secondary school, and a week later he was enrolled again. The woman had paid for his schooling. During the week in which he waited, Bangi was able to move in with another local fam-

ily who sympathized with his situation. Having been let down by the masked kindness of others before, he pumped water, cut grass at a graveyard, and carried cement in his spare time in order to make money to eat. He made around 4,000 shillings (\$2) a week. When the Peace Corps volunteer went back home to America, she found a sponsor to pay for the remainder of Bangi's secondary education.

When his first year of secondary school ended, Bangi entered into a government-sponsored youth development program. The kindness of others loomed large over the disappointment inflicted on him by former employers, and he wanted to turn his life into a positive example for others. To date, he has participated in

over 20 different speaking engagements, discussing responsibility, politics, environmental and health education with younger children.

"One topic I've always talked about is smiling," he said. "No matter the situation, I try and smile. It heals."

However, as is the case with Bangi, when opportunity replaces despair, a return to trauma is in order. If there is something guiding his life, it strictly adheres to creating random events and circumstances to erase a constant source of security.

Every weekend, Bangi's school held a visiting day in which parents could visit their children. As an orphan, Bangi felt left out. On Sunday, July 11, 2010, he decided to leave the school to watch the World Cup final in Kampala. He met old friends and they traveled together to a bar to watch the match. In the 86th minute of the game, a loud bang rang out. At first Bangi thought it was the generator exploding, but then he saw people running toward him and heard another blast.

"I started looking for the people I came with. I was crying. Finally I saw them coming, holding each other. One had a bomb fragment in her neck."

The terrorist organization Al-Shabab had planted a bomb inside of the bar in response to increased Ugandan troop pressure against them. Bangi was close enough to the explosion that blood splatter landed on his shirt. He survived, and so did his friends. More than 90 people were not as lucky.

Bangi was able to go back and complete his secondary schooling. He graduated with high marks, and was accepted into the Uganda Christian University law program after passing a vigorous interview process in which less than 25 percent of applicants were admitted. Bangi was assured by the organization working with his sponsor that half his funds would be paid for if he could provide the other half.

He moved to Ndejje to live with his cousin. While in Ndejje, Bangi began volunteering with Soccer Without Borders, never asking for money for his work. However, a month before he began school, he was told that funds he had been expecting for months would not be coming.

"He just pulled out like any other donor because of the economic situation," Bangi said. "It was like striking a sharp dagger into my heart. It was unexpected. I had done everything."

With little over a month left before the semester began, Bangi took action. He had recently become a paid employee of Soccer Without Borders at the insistence of a Soccer Without Borders intern, and began working closely with volunteers returning home for America.

With the money he made he bought goods from local markets and gave them to Soccer Without Borders volunteers to sell at a marked-up price in America. With only two days to spare, he was able to pay for half of his first semester of college (roughly \$300), taking out loans to pay the remainder of tuition costs. He does not know how he will pay for his second semester, or for the rest of his education, but he is confident he will be able to complete his studies.

"My life has always been something bad happens, and then I find a solution. So no matter the situation, tomorrow will be different. I am confident there will be a solution."

While a large part of being hopeful is due to the hardships he has already overcome, Bangi also places the quest for knowledge in the highest regard. He stays up late to listen to BBC radio broadcasts of Western news, and devours autobiographies of the likes of Obama, Mandela, and Poitier with pleasure. Within my first hour of meeting him, we were discussing the socioeconomic impact of placing a chain store in a small village. His desire to learn comes from a self-acquired intel-

ligence that has made him increasingly aware of the world around him, and what happens when education is put anywhere but first.

"I lived in the slums, I saw the illiteracy and brutality," he said. "But I also heard other children talking about school and becoming something in life. I realized without school, you die with nothing. From the day I went back to school, I never thought of stopping. Education is the way out."

If Bangi helped me realize what it is to be privileged by proxy of birth, he has also taught me how one can be selfless when those who are privileged use their position to exploit others. The boy who worked for a lawyer that deceived and beat him for years now wants to become one himself, so that his experiences may not befall others vulnerable to unchecked power.

"It disturbs me when I see someone suffering," he said. "I would love to help people who have done nothing to deserve their suffering. The law rules the world, but to the people who are lawmakers, the law is just on paper. They preach what they don't practice. If I have knowledge in the law, maybe I can help shape the world."

Once every four months, Bangi goes to a graveyard to visit the parents he barely knew. He goes to trim the grass around their markers, and the day-long trip serves as a reminder of what he has gone through, where he has been, and how it has shaped his life. Not content with just bettering the negative circumstances that he faces, Bangi finds hope in the possibility that he might help others along the way. In his eyes, recovery means little if it is an individual redemption.

"When I go, I don't clean only my parents' graves," he said. "I clean all of them. I don't see the logic in cleaning one spot when there are so many others."



BANGI AND RAPHA AT THE WOMEN'S WORLD CUP

HOW TO HELP

My original intentions for Instances of Hope were to document the lives of the people I met, worked with, and became friends with in Ndejje, Uganda. After each interview, however, came a request: "Please show this to someone who cares and who can help."

The direct hand-out culture that has been established in East Africa is, in my eyes, a negative one. It can breed dependence and expectations that cannot, and should not, be consistently met. With that said, despite best efforts, or in the face of ill intentioned ones, indirect donations through a third party have their own obstacles. Donations sent without specific instructions are hard to track, and ear-marked money can be spent on unneeded initiatives due to constraints.

With these limitations and obstacles, where does this leave us? While certainly coming from a biased viewpoint, I know that the subjects mentioned in these stories do not

survive on donations alone, and are as self-reliant as they can be. I think any donation would positively affect that daily life, and could be used to further initiatives already having direct effects on the local community. If bottom up societal change (as opposed to the much failed top-down approach that has been occurring for decades) is to occur, and the money can be tracked and put to good use, I see little argument for implementation.

Unfortunately, the stories documented in Instances of Hope are not unique to the region. Millions have been directly affected by war and its consequences. The stories of those I have written about came about simply: I worked with the subjects on a daily basis and established a relationship that led to interviews on their lives. I am in no way suggesting that anybody in these stories deserves donations more than anyone else. But I do know any donations will be put to good use.

If you would like to donate to Samuel, Augustin and Jacqueline, Bangi, or Rapha and their families or programs, the process is quite simple and can be done online through PayPal. PayPal is reliable and secure, and can be used to transfer funds by anyone with a checking account.

TO DONATE:

1. Create a PayPal account.
2. Send a payment to instancesofhope@gmail.com
3. In the message of the payment, specify who the money should go to. If there is nobody specified, the money will be given to Soccer Without Borders to help continue their programming throughout the world.
4. The money will be transferred to a Soccer Without Borders volunteer, who will be directed on how to distribute the donations. They can withdraw the money at a local ATM for \$1 and give it directly to the specified family.

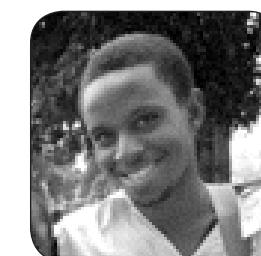
The cliché of "For \$5 a day..." has run its course, but the amount of money that can create positive change is true. The Ugandan exchange rate hovers at around 2,500 UGX to every American dollar. To send a child to school for a term is 20,000 UGX, or roughly \$8. Donations will be distributed in the following ways, per family:



Money sent to Samuel will go toward the education of his four siblings. The price for school will increase when they enter secondary school, making any donations beneficial for the present and future.



Because Jaquelin, Augistin and their family have been relocated to the United States, the challenges they face are different, but not reduced. Money donations are accepted, but clothing, food and other resources are helpful as well. Please contact instancesofhope@gmail.com for more information on how you can give.



Bangi was able to pay for his first semester of college, although just barely. He does now know where he will receive funding for his remaining education, and any funds will be put toward that end.



Money sent to Rapha will be used to expand his program in Nsombia. This includes going toward football and school supplies, and other necessities to keep his youth center for refugees open and thriving.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



SAMUEL'S BROTHER, ACHEAL

Instances of Hope wouldn't have been possible without the very helpful hands of the following people. I am so grateful for the time you have put into this project with me.

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I would like to thank Wade Vanover, Bill Breslin, Colleen Hayes, Blake Williamson and Kate Gibson for their talented editing eyes and suggestions. And finally, thank you to the people of Ndejje, Uganda, for sharing your homes, food, and stories. May your voices forever ring free.

YOU HAVE
HEARD
FROM
NDEJJE,
UGANDA

AUTHOR'S NOTE

There are many historical references and figures I have included in the stories of *Instances of Hope* that do not have citations. This is, of course, one of journalism's cardinal sins, and one I am not proud of. Time and electricity constraints, as well as having my laptop stolen halfway through my trip played some part in that, although there is no excuse.

Many of the statistics I have used can be sourced through the United Nations and various other agencies on the ground of Eastern Africa. I also relied heavily on the following four texts: *An Imperfect Offering* by James Orbinski; *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With our Families* by Philip Gourevitch; *Africa United* by Steve Bloomfield; and *The Untold Truth: Poverty and Human Rights* by Irene Khan.