

DAILY UPDATES

03 FEBRUARY 2009

Tough times everywhere. We are hearing from Lagos that the amount of money sent back from relatives and friends outside Nigeria (the World Bank defines this as "remittances from the Diaspora") has dropped sharply. However, the number of naira that a dollar will buy has increased from about 117 (when I was in Lagos in April) to over 160. So any dollar sent buys more than it did. Or would if inflation was not taking a large bite.

I am also hearing that the laws have been changed in Nigeria for importing cars. I have friends whose living comes from going to car auctions and sending cars on ships to Lagos. No cars are manufactured in Nigeria, which is the world's leading exporter of light crude oil. Every car is imported. Nigerian law now prohibits import of any car manufactured more than 8 years ago. So going to the auction and buying a serviceable car for USD200 to 300 and sending it to Nigeria does not work anymore. Especially when income is sharply down in Nigeria. The collapse of the financial institutions in the United States has severely affected business all throughout Africa.

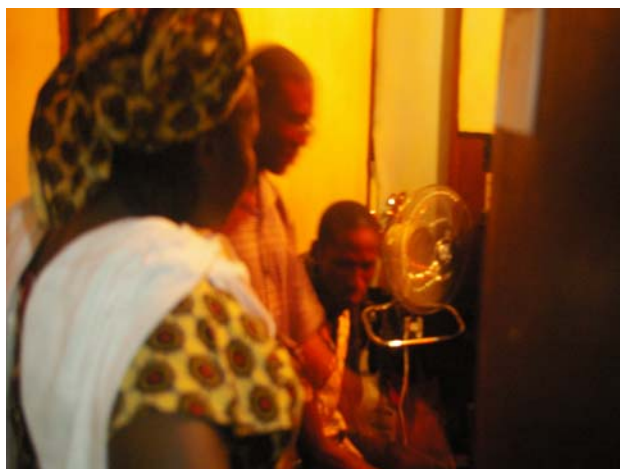
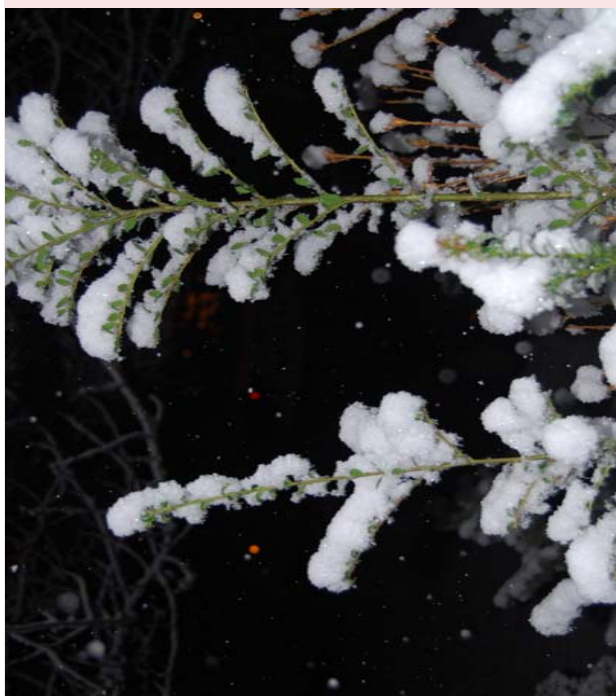
Most striking for me is the loss of jobs in the pharmaceutical industry. On a MJoTA road-trip to North Jersey yesterday, I went with 4 brilliant, well-groomed, highly educated professionals (all beautiful ladies over 40) to a job fair (together, our qualifications are enough to run a small hospital, or a small pharmaceutical company). What struck us was the age and bearing of the job fair attendees: mostly 40s and 50s, mostly management. Lack of available money has shut down clinical trials, research and development, made companies focus on staying alive now rather than their future. Certainly drugs, devices and biologics are being tested by clinical trial, but fewer. MJoTA strongly believes in the

future: we are watching and listening and praying that the clever financial people will figure what to do so the pharmaceutical industry looks far, far ahead again.

Meanwhile, MJoTA is gearing up to start publishing 2009, volume 3 number 2 on 15 February. And getting ready to start celebrating Black History Month lectures on Thursday. Do join us.



Job fair in the Northern winter, Philadelphia 2008.



Professor Ekundayo (Deputy Provost, Ambrose Alli Univ), Pastor Edoro and recording engineer in BAV audio and video studios in Surulere, Nigeria.

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08 FEBRUARY 2009

I have been busy sorting out articles for the February issue of Medical Journal of Therapeutics Africa, hosting medical writer Elana Stolpner MD who has been visiting from Ohio, going with her to a job fair and to visit clinical trial professionals and prospective employers, and cleaning my house. I like order, and I like clean, but when I am focused on editing and laying out, bombs could fall and holes could be punched in my walls and I do not notice.

And bombs have been falling, and I have been slow to realize. My youngest son is 20, a keen athlete, 6'4" tall, 195lb, runs every day, lifts weights, does not drink alcohol, take any drugs, nor animal or animal product. Completely vegan, no animal has had anything to do with anything he eats. I had not noticed that he stopped taking multi-vitamins, and that his diet was soy milk, oatmeal, Chinese vegetables, rice and pizza. He collapsed today after Quaker religious services, fainted dead away and awoke with abnormal heart rhythm and clammy hands.

We have a sign in our Quaker Meeting, that "it takes a Meeting to raise a child." By the time I stopped focusing on MJoTA enough to turn on my phone, the 2 Quaker men who have taken on the role of father to Al and his sister had taken him to the emergency room, and all sorts of tests were in progress. Al's godfather is the father of my 2 older sons, he is also a physician on staff at the hospital. He came to see him, looked at his eyes (he is an ophthalmologist), talked to the Emergency Room doctor, and agreed with me in the knowledge that Al's brain and heart looked normal: Al has a nutritional deficiency.

Al's father called from Germany, our daughter texted him from the hospital, he is ready to hop on a plane to see his only son; Al's eldest brother traveled from New York City. We are a family, and this is how we come together when one of us needs help. Everyone pitching in financially, emotionally.

So the way ahead: I bought huge bottles of vitamins, Al is writing a food diary, and I will work with MJoTA Business Administrator Deidre Adore (who also is a nutritionist with 20 years experience) and we will figure out what he needs. Nothing will ever make Al eat dairy or eggs or meat or fish. So we work with what he can eat.

Being nutritionally deficient in a situation of plenty is American. Being nutritionally deficient because food is lacking is also becoming American. I have started reading stories about food lines and food stamps and hunger. These stories are likely to increase as



Upper, restaurant in Pennsylvania; middle, University of Pennsylvania Clinical Trials Co-ordinator Lisa Desiderio; lower, forest near MJoTA headquarters.

the tsunami that resulted from houses being bought by people with no money and by houses being worth less than the mortgages.

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09 FEBRUARY 2009

The continent where 2 of my 3 brothers live, where my parents died, where I was educated from elementary school through PhD, the continent of Australia is on fire. All weekend the news has been of the state of Victoria burning and humans perishing (over 170) because they did not have enough time to get out of the way. I also hear that 37 fires are raging across my home state of New South Wales (which is immediately to the north of Victoria, immediately to the south of Queensland).

A decade ago I wrote a novel, publication of which my career as a medical writer interrupted, called *When Fire Jumps*. I have seen fire jump over a wooden shed and burn down a substantial 2-story brick building. I have been surrounded 360 degrees by fires that were a mile or more away, and then the wind changed and the danger vanished as quickly as it came.

Every year Australia burns. We never had bushes and trees near our house near the University of New South Wales because of that: planting close to a house is to tempt the fire.

A century ago a young girl wrote a poem of longing for Australia when she was far away. We were taught her poem in school, and now I remember, she speaks for me:

"I love a sunburnt country, A land of sweeping plains, Of ragged mountain ranges, Of droughts and flooding rains. I love her far horizons, I love her jewel-sea, Her beauty and her terror - The wide brown land for me!" Dorothea Mackellar 1885-1967.

10 FEBRUARY 2009

I read a post on LinkedIn about the need for manufacturers in Africa to learn about how to sell their products in the United States.

Medical Journal of Therapeutics Africa published an essay in which the author made the case that unless manufacturers know how to market their products to supermarkets, and learn how to buy shelf space, they will not be able to penetrate the American mar-

kets (access this article from http://www.mjota.org/images/mjota_issue7LeadershipMach.pdf.)

I am interested in hearing from manufacturers who want to export. I know clothes manufacturers export from Africa to the United States, and certainly tea, cocoa, coffee is exported (but I would not call those manufactured products). I really don't know what else is being made, and I would like to know.

When I go to Nigeria, I stay in the house of a manufacturer: she has 2 factories making plastic bags and they certainly don't make enough to export. Nigerian food heavily depends on tomatoes, and from what I was told, all canned tomatoes are imported from other countries.

Drugs are certainly not exported from West Africa, or from East Africa. Wish they were, but the manufacturing capacity is just not there. We published an article on pharmaceutical manufacturing in *Medical Journal of Therapeutics Africa*, which was written after attending the Corporate Council on Africa Health Forum in November in DC. We are talking about the pharmaceutical industry and initiatives to nurture its development in Africa in our Black History Month webinars.



Lagos, Nigeria, manufacturing plastic bags, above. Left, billboard in Lagos. Below, wrecked car that was repaired to look new in Lagos.



DAILY UPDATES

19 FEBRUARY 2009

Today I arose at 4:30am to drive to Washington to Georgetown University to listen to a lecture and panel discussion on HIV/AIDS and philanthropy. They were all there! The Gates Foundation, PEPFAR are the big names. I heard for the first time that PEPFAR is planning to train 140,000 health workers to combat HIV/AIDS. I want to know more. We will talk about the panel tonight in the Black History Month webinar, and about HIV/AIDS in general. When I worked as a full-time paid medical writer, I spent over a year working entirely on HIV/AIDS projects, all over the United States, and was sent to Greece and Spain.



20 FEBRUARY 2009

I realized this morning that I have not taken a day off since I nearly froze to death at President Obama's inauguration, but then neither has President Obama, so why should I. However, the President has a whole country on call for him, and MJoTA has a group of trusty volunteer editors and staff.

In the interests of MJoTA really being a force for transformation, and the continuing problems we are having with GoToMeeting, I have decided the following.

We invite anyone interested to be the guest speaker at our informational meetings

We have 3 themes for the Thursday meetings:

- i how diseases are handled across Africa
- ii development of a microcosm pharmaceutical industry in a country in Africa
- iii encourage the development of an all-Africa regulatory authority for pharmaceuticals, devices, biologics and vaccines.



DAILY UPDATES

14 FEBRUARY 2009

Happy Valentine's Day! MJoTA loves you, because you are reading MJoTA. MJoTA loves you because you care about health in Africa. Caring about humans you will never meet, and the only reason you care is because they are human: this is the supreme act of love and on this day MJoTA celebrates you and sends you love and blessings.

I never really was much for falling in love with men, more like loving a man on a parallel track, and I love you still. I love my children most (because mothers are their greatest advocate), and my coworkers and relatives. My cat, whose birthday is today: this is not so much love as coexisting in an armed truce. The nature of love is permanent, someone I love, I love forever. That is the way love works for me, I forgive everything and believe to my DNA in redemption. If I love you, nothing you can do can make me stop loving you.

My preferred style is to fall in love with a country, or even a continent. I fell in love with Australia when I was about to leave it; I fell in love with America when I came here, I fell in love with Germany when I spent a sabbatical there in 1986, and with Nigeria when I was warmly welcomed into the Nigerian community in Philadelphia, Baltimore and the suburbs of Washington.

I say without reservation that I love the continent of Africa. I love the countries of Africa, the peoples of Africa. I may be the only European who showed up at a wildlife park in Kenya and decided against going in because the benefit to me was not worth the cost of the ticket (I should pay to see cats!). But I did take plenty of pictures of Americans swarming in to look at the lions. And school children from Kenya. God bless them all, I love them too.

I remember the time and the date and where I was when I started loving the 53 countries of Africa. I was in London, walking through Westminster towards the bridge crossing the Thames to the Florence Nightingale museum in St Thomas' Hospital. May 5, 2005. 11am. I had just walked past the statue of Nelson standing on a high pedestal, and the statue of Florence Nightingale. Walking past statues strewn with red poppies to remember the end of World War II, 60 years previously. I suddenly became aware that the tall buildings of Westminster were built on the blood of Africa, and I knew that every breath, every penny from then on would be expended in redemption for the sins of my ancestors.

My Valentine's Day wish for you is to love what you love. Pick them up when they fall. Help them however you can. Be creative in letting them know that you are there for them, guiding them if you are their elder. Forgive them what they have done in the past, and do everything you can to make sure the evil they have done is not visited on anyone else. Because that is an act of love for all humanity.



Left, Publisher at wedding in Lagos; above, deaf girls in school in Lagos; below, Patience Dodgson with friend.



DAILY UPDATES

21 FEBRUARY 2009

Yesterday I stayed in Washington overnight, because Neema Mgana invited me to come to the headquarters of the Ashoka Foundation to interview 3 scientists from Africa whose passion for science and humanity have intersected into viable projects that are improving the lives of many in their own countries.

I rode on the metro all the way through Washington across the river to Virginia. And met 3 gentlemen who work has transformed the lives of many around them. I did not hear that any of them came up with their ideas at a large, expensive conference in Florida, or anywhere, or a United Nations mission reception in the Helmsley Hotel to talk about poverty in Africa. What I did hear was 3 hard-working professionals kept their ears to the ground, saw a need that was obvious to everyone except those who go to large conferences and receptions, and figured out ways of addressing the need.

Trevor (with red hat) kept seeing children walking home when they should have been in school, and the answer to his question "why are you not in school?" was "because we need to go home to use the toilet," transformed his life, that of his wife (a medical doctor, they met as university students in South Africa) and thousands of children. Quite simply, what Trevor does is clean toilets. (*The Clean Shop. We clean school toilets to keep children in school. FT Mulaudzi. Med J of Therapeutics Africa 2009:3(3):83-6; accessed at <http://www.mjota.org/images/mjota2009vol3no3pp83-7thecleanshop.pdf>*)

David Kuria is an architect (with blue hat) who built toilets and implemented a system for their maintenance in the Kibera slums. I took his picture, but his National Geographic took my interview time. His profile from the Ashoka Foundation: "David successfully constructed and manages hygienic public sanitation facilities in Kenyan slums and other informal

settlements. He engages urban communities in the design and construction of his *IKO toilet*. David has made sanitation facilities a profitable venture for the urban poor as well as the business community by collecting dues and providing innovative financing schemes in collaboration with local and international financial institutions and funding partners."

I interviewed Dr Joseph Adelegan (in gray jacket), and will feature him in a future issue of MJoTA. From his profile on the Ashoka Foundation website: "Dr Joseph Adelegan has brought technological innovation to conventional anaerobic biodigesters. He designed a reactor dubbed *Cows to Kilowatts* that treats slaughterhouse waste in an effort to abate water pollution and mitigate greenhouse gas emission. He engages local communities in the implementation of his project which produces biogas usable as domestic cooking gas to create a commercially sustainable solution to a persistent environmental problem."



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Global Funds For Social Change

Ashoka Bring Entrepreneur Sub-Saharan



DAILY UPDATES

25 FEBRUARY 2009

Today the British newspaper announced the death of a child who suffered from birth from cerebral palsy and epilepsy, with picture of him with his father kissing him. He was 6, and he was the son of the British Leader of the Opposition. The Prime Minister is known to have lost an newborn daughter, and have a small son with cystic fibrosis, which is likely to shorten his son's life.

Children die of disease and injuries to the brain in rich countries. What is unlikely in a poor country is that the sons of either men would survive beyond infancy because they both need expensive constant medical and nursing attention. And anything could kill them: certainly malaria would do it.

The Prime Minister stated it best "The loss of a child is something a parent should never have to bear."

World Malaria Day 25 April. We need to lessen the burden of malaria. Children are dying.

27 FEBRUARY 2009

The last week in February is always nuts, the month sometimes has an extra day in it, and when it does, the whole world stops to play games together in the summer, and the games are called the Olympic Games because the Greek gods hang out on Mount Olympus. Not this year. No extra day, no Olympic Games. February ends firmly at midnight tomorrow night. The Greek gods do not like this abrupt end, and so they sow discord, fear, and lack of trust in the minds of mortals.

MJoTA has been in chaos because

- 1) we are completing vol 3, no 2,
- 2) individual members continue to be harassed by owners of a web-site who are trying to shut us down and want USD1million (or is it USD1billion?)
- 3) we have all been sick a little bit (me) or a lot (others)
- 4) I have been finalizing materials and schedules for 3 classes of medical writing webinars that start on Monday
- 5) I am getting some of our people ready to write a clinical document for a wonderful company,
- 6) the Ivorian delegation came to Philadelphia.

Let's get this out in the open. Cote D'Ivoire is cool. Cote D'Ivoire sits next to Ghana in West Africa, is globally the greatest producer of cocoa, has a population size the same as my lovely Australia, and the Ivorian flag has the same colors as the country of my mother, Ireland. Philadelphia, by which I mean the great and greatly loved Stanley Straughter (gray suit, top picture; black suit, red tie, front, squatting in bottom picture), put together a 3-day program which started and ended by good wishes in Philadelphia City Hall.



After the business forum on Wednesday, I met Chief Lookman Sulaimon (dark blue suit, middle picture), who is trained in graphic art, journalism and business. He publishes *NY Echo*, a free print and online newspaper, <http://www.nyecho.com>. The Chief, and he is a real Chief in Nigeria (Borokinni of Ojora-Lagos), is preparing to expand his African communities newspaper to Philadelphia, echo@nyecho.com.

DAILY UPDATES



During the Thursday visit to West Philadelphia to the Enterprise Institute (in the building where *American Bandstand* was produced), I met Dr Eric Edi (bottom picture, previous page, translating into French the words of Carol Brooks; left, second from right; bottom left, second from left) who is Chairman of the Ivorian Diaspora group, and is in the running to be recognized as the pre-eminent African scholar and teacher of history of Africans in and out of Africa. After the official farewell in the Philadelphia caucus room, Dr Edi organized a dinner in a house-restaurant in West Philadelphia, filled with gentle French-speaking Ivorians who live around Philadelphia or were visiting from Cote D'Ivoire. We ate rice and pepper fish. Wonderful. More and more I wonder how I survived a childhood in England, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia eating boiled carrots, boiled cabbage, boiled meat. Often all boiled together.

MJoTA is an occasional visitor to the Cote D'Ivoire Embassy (below, Christophe Kouakou, Deputy Chief of Mission) in Washington DC. It is on Massachusetts Avenue, the walk from Dupont Circle and the Center for Global Development passes the bronze statue of Ghandi that I frequently photograph, and the Embassy of another small country that defines East African cool: Kenya. MJoTA was there first in June, and again in August for the celebration of the Ivorian independence from France.

MJoTA has come to the conclusion that independence from any oppression is a good thing, and that



kicking out oppressors in the Northern Hemisphere summer is a really good idea, because Embassy independence parties are wonderful outdoors with flowers blooming in the long August



summer evening of Washington. However, MJoTA enjoyed the respite from the cold winter that was the Kenyan United Nations mission party in December. MJoTA hopes for blessings on the Cote D'Ivoire, and wishes the 17-member delegation safe journeys.

By *Wanjiru Akinyi Waruingi BSc(Hons), PhD*