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Tujenge Quarterly

Education

Leadership

Entrepreneurship

Peace-building

Updates from the heart of Africa

Cohort Two: Tujenge Scholars 2018

2018 is here and with it a new class of Tujenge Scholars! Our second cohort of twenty-two students started in late January. Each day, they attend two English classes, one math class, and a course on African literature. Our emphasis on English reading comprehension has already led to demonstrable language improvement among the students.

Scholars represent a diverse geographic cross-section of Burundi, from the renowned Lycée du Saint Esprit in bustling Bujumbura, to the remote Lycée Muyinga, more than six hours away by bus. Tujenge has brought this extraordinary group of young scholars together, and they now have the unique opportunity to engage with new ideas and challenge one another to grow.

College applications are a long way off, but students have already begun thinking about their university aspirations. Students in this second cohort are largely interested in studying in the United States, although some hope to pursue programs in Europe or Africa. Each scholar has already qualified to begin studies at the highly-selective University of Burundi in early 2019, should they decide that the programs offered are the best fit for their career aspirations. The scholars are interested in everything from developing pharmaceuticals using regionally available raw materials, to studying poetry and capturing Burundi's national discourse through art.

Financial Aid

Scholars and their families contribute a small portion of their tuition to attend the eighteen-month program. Each scholar receives a financial aid package from the Foundation to cover the remaining cost. The amount of financial aid is determined based on family income and expenses, and careful consultations with parents or guardians. While Tujenge's tuition for 2018 is set at BIF 8,800,000 (about \$3,200), the median student scholarship is nearly \$3,125, indicating the level of impoverishment in the country.

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Tujenge family photo 2018

“By facilitating access to world class education for a diverse group of Burundi’s most talented youth, the Tujenge Africa Foundation helps further the project of post-war nation-building.”

*—Stephen Peel
Philanthropist, Private
Equity Pioneer and
Tujenge Board Chairman*

Student Nutrition Initiative

Lunch is provided for students and staff each school day. This initiative allows us to focus more fully on learning, knowing that the scholars have at least one balanced meal each day. It costs about \$1.05 per student per meal, which means that feeding a single student for the year takes about \$215. If you are interested in sponsoring a student’s lunch for a portion of the year, you can make a donation at www.tujenge.org/donate and put “Student Nutrition Initiative” in the special instructions line. The seed funding for this project comes from a forward-looking donation from the Zelinsky Family.

Critical Thinking and African Literature

Scholars find themselves in a seminar-style learning environment about four times each week. Two different classes, led by Executive Director Etienne Mashuli and English Instructor Carol Gallo, challenge the students to think critically about readings and work to develop crucial skills of analysis and argument. As students engage with the authors and one another, they open themselves up to new ideas and equip themselves to collaborate on a variety of issues in the future. The task of nurturing ethnic reconciliation is critical given Burundi’s precarious history of civil wars and genocide.

These classes are fundamental to our mission of inspiring strong, ethical leadership, as the ability to have an open dialogue about intractable problems is a fundamental requirement of any hopeful leader.



Tujenge Scholars '17 in February 2018, while attending a seminar discussion with English instructor Carol Gallo



Above, **Roland Rugero**, Burundian author of the novel *Babol*, speaks to students during Tujenge Scholars Program’s Speaker Series. Below, **Ivan '18**, asks a question.



College Applications

It’s college decision season and the first class of Tujenge Scholars are anxiously awaiting admissions decisions from U.S. universities. Eight scholars have been working on applications to colleges and scholarship programs in the United States. These students have taken SAT and TOEFL standardized exams, written application essays, and coordinated teacher recommendations. As they await admissions and financial aid, these scholars are continuing their studies with Tujenge, participating in seminar classes designed to ensure that each student is prepared for rigorous college-level reading and writing.

Tujenge Scholars Program is at its heart a leadership and peacebuilding initiative. And as we believe that tertiary studies are important for all of our scholars, many of them will be attending university programs across the African continent. Some continue to submit applications to university and scholarship programs in the region, and many have already begun their studies at universities in Burundi. Even as students matriculate and “graduate” from the Scholars Program, they remain connected to Tujenge through periodic meet-ups, social media, email, and WhatsApp groups. This connection forms the backbone of future collaboration and collective initiatives.

Kindles for College

Throughout the university application process, scholars have used their Tujenge-provided Amazon Kindle Fires to the fullest possible extent. They have written essays, filled out the Common Application, and sent email, all from these versatile and highly cost-effective platforms. Making innovative use of the flexibility of technology continues to be a critical goal of Tujenge as we strive to find the most efficient and effective ways to provide educational materials to these scholars. We thank the generosity of the Young and Dickensheets families who made these devices available for what is now two generations of Tujenge Scholars.



Jean de Dieu '18 grew up helping his father sew in the family's tailor shop. He joins Tujenge Scholars Program from Bujumbura Rural province, from the town of Mutumba.

SAT/TOEFL Preparation

While the fundamental goal of the scholars program is to prepare students for leadership, university preparation and admissions are major components of the day-to-day at Tujenge. For international students who studied high school in a language other than English, standardized tests are almost synonymous with university admissions. One way that the program can chart student progress is through the use of diagnostic SAT exams taken throughout the course of the year. Among our scholars, we saw tremendous progress in both the English and math portions of the exams; the average SAT score improved by a remarkable 325 points over just six months. This is an important metric not because it suggests anything about a student's future ability to contribute meaningfully to his or her community, but because top standardized test scores open opportunities that would otherwise be closed.

Beyond the Scholars Program: Notebooks for Batwa

In September 2017, the Foundation distributed school supplies to 110 Batwa students as they began the school year. Considered a hunter-gatherer indigenous group, the Batwa (pejoratively identified as "pygmies") are highly-marginalized and lack access to education, especially at the university level. With a generous donation from the Chanoff Family, Tujenge was able to provide notebooks, pens, pencils, and paper to students from first through thirteenth grades. These young scholars are from a community in Bujumbura Rural province, a community, in fact, where the family of one of our former Tujenge Scholars still lives.

While primary education in Burundi is ostensibly free, the cost of uniforms and required school supplies like the ones Tujenge distributed can be enough to deter parents from continuing to send their children to school. As an organization, we are continually looking for ways to encourage students to stay in school, and looking for partners to help with these initiatives.



English instructor Elvira Iradukunda hands out notebooks to an excited student

Below: an enthusiastic recipient of school supplies, with Lake Tanganyika in the background.



Staff Searches

Summer Internships

Tujenge Africa Foundation is looking for summer interns this year to assist with teaching and to conduct research with the Tujenge Institute. We welcome applications for these positions from a wide variety of backgrounds. More information about these positions can be found at www.tujenge.org/join, or by emailing us at intern@tujenge.org.

Lead Instructors

The Tujenge Scholars Program is searching for lead instructors to oversee development of STEM and Humanities curricula. Job postings for these positions can be found at www.tujenge.org/join, or by emailing us at careers@tujenge.org.



Marie-Ariella Iranzi '17 waits to hear back from U.S. universities about admissions decisions.

Scholar Highlight: Student to Mentor

Two exceptionally talented scholars from the first cohort have joined the Tujenge team as peer mentors. Marie-Ariella Iranzi '17 and Eliel Dushime '17 have been working with students on standardized test preparation, helping with homework, and tutoring students in difficult subjects. In addition, they have taken on the challenge of developing recruiting strategies for the organization's next group of scholars. They've already been invaluable in helping the scholars adapt to the rigorous workload, and we look forward to having Marie-Ariella and Eliel here with us until they start university next fall.

Fundraising Corner

Newman's Own Foundation

In November 2017, Tujenge Africa Foundation received a \$25,000 grant from Newman's Own Foundation, the independent charity created by the late actor and philanthropist, Paul Newman. The award was made by Newman's Own Foundation as part of its commitment to empowering individuals worldwide. Tujenge Scholars will use the grant to expand operations for its second cohort of students.

Philanthropist and Tujenge Africa Foundation Chairman Stephen Peel

In December 2017, Tujenge Africa Foundation received a historic and ground-breaking \$100,000 pledge from philanthropist and private equity pioneer Stephen Peel. Mr. Peel has supported the Foundation generously since its inception in 2015 and currently serves as the board chairman.

Burundi's needs are significant, while its resources are some of the world's most limited. But the potential for a transformation of Burundi's political and economic system is real. By facilitating access to world class education for a diverse group of Burundi's most talented youth, the Tujenge Africa Foundation helps further the project of post-war nation-building. I am therefore delighted to be able to continue supporting the great work of the Foundation.

Stephen Peel, Board Chair

Stephen Peel understands Tujenge Africa Foundation's role in peace-building and reconciliation in Burundi. His latest gift will support our mission of shaping the next generation of Burundian leaders.

Etienne Mashuli, Executive Director

*Press releases and
foundation news can be
found at
www.tujenge.org/press*

Website Update

The website has gotten a makeover as we keep up with all of the recent developments at the organization. With new information about the Foundation and the Scholars Program, the updated site is a compelling introduction to the organization's exciting work.

A special thanks to Tujenge friend Nicole Young for her invaluable work in the process.

If you would like to subscribe to receive future newsletters, please email us at info@tujenge.org.