



Volume 2 | Issue 1
March 2019

Hello Tujenge

Education
Leadership
Entrepreneurship

Cohort Three: Tujenge Scholars Program 2019

We welcomed cohort three at the beginning of the year. While this is our most diverse cohort thus far, it is also our most selective. We have managed to bridge the gender gap among our scholars and have recruited more scholars from Burundi's rural population. Both are important because: (1) Burundi is one of the most rural population around the world, and (2) Burundi's rural women constitute the marginalized of the marginalized. By including the two vastly neglected demographics, Tujenge is pushing the debate on the necessity for inclusion and diversity as a tool for nation building.

Financial Aid:

Scholars and their families contribute a small portion of their tuition to attend the eighteen-month-long 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 2019 is set at BIF 8,800,000 (about \$3,200). The median student scholarship is nearly \$3,125, which is an indication of how truly impoverished Burundi is.



Lunches:

Lunch is provided for students and staff each school day. This allows us to primarily focus on learning, knowing that the scholars have at least one balanced meal each day. It costs about \$1.05 per student per meal, meaning 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 "Scholar Lunch" in the "special instructions" section.

Board Visit

Towards the end of June, we held our annual board retreat in Bujumbura. We were joined with board members Amy Berkower, Stephen Peel and Wendell Adjetey. While in Burundi, the board was able to learn more about our work and the challenges as well as the opportunities that Burundi offers. Lastly, the board was able to meet leaders within the Burundian government as well as local entrepreneurs.

US Ambassador Hosts Tujenge Scholars and Board Members

US ambassador to Burundi, Mme. Ann Casper hosted the Tujenge Scholars and board members for a reception at her residence. The occasion enabled us to strengthen our relationship with the Embassy by briefing the ambassador on our work in Burundi. This was also a unique opportunity for our students, many from disadvantaged backgrounds, to interact with a world that is different from their own. Our scholar, Desire Hatungimana had this to say: "the opportunity to meet the ambassador was remarkable. Growing up as a member of a discriminated caste, I never imagined that it would be possible to be invited into such distinguished settings. Tujenge has strengthened my confidence."

New Hire:

Brad Gasser graduated from Bowling Green State University, in Ohio with degrees in Philosophy and Psychology. After undergraduate, he received his Ph.D. in Neuroscience under the supervision of Michael A. Arbib at the University of Southern California. For his thesis, Brad developed computationally-specific and empirically-constrained models of primate brain systems involved in learning, cognition and communication, as a research venture towards understanding the evolution of language capacity in humans. Following graduate school, Brad worked with the US Peace Corps in Mbongo, Cameroon teaching mathematics and computer science. With Tujenge, Brad is in charge of the STEM program and is the lead teacher for mathematics, computer programming. In addition, he teaches popular philosophy seminars, which is his main passion.

Nganyu Dominic Nformi is the Lead English Instructor with Tujenge Africa Foundation Burundi. He is a seasoned lecturer, Africanist, poet and experimental novelist. Born in Cameroon in 1973, he studied with the university of Yaounde I and the University of Buea, Cameroon. He lectured with the University of Buea and the University of Burundi before joining the staff of Tujenge Africa Foundation. He was awarded the prize for the best graduating student in African Literature at the end of his M.A at the University of Buea. Nganyu Dominic holds a Master's degree and a DEA in African Literature from the University of Buea and University of Yaounde I respectively.

He lectures literature and English language. He is a political activist, feminist and writer. He is a traditionalist and loves reading extensively. He crusades for social, political and gender justice



Brad



Dominic

Scholar's Highlight

All Tujenge students are required to do a community service project, and one of the most ambitious comes from 2018-19 student Jean de Dieu Ndayishimiye. For his project, he aimed to provide tailoring apprenticeships to two or three street youth in his hometown of Mutumba - one of the poorest regions of Burundi. As a skilled professional tailor himself, along with his father, Jean de Dieu was well placed to engage in such a project, which will make an enormous difference in these kids' ability to earn a livelihood.

Jean de Dieu called the project "Umwizero," which means "hope" in Kirundi, and worked with his advisor, English instructor Carol Jean Gallo, to use a crowdfunding site to sell Umwizero shirts to raise money. He raised enough to rent a studio for six months, buy materials like scissors and irons, buy two new sewing machines, and provide meals for two apprentices. In December and January, he chose four street youth in Mutumba as his students, and is currently looking to raise an additional \$230 for the extra two apprentices.



Beneficiaries

Faculty Highlight

Carol Gallo who spent the entire of 2018 with us in Burundi left to pursue a teaching position with Temple University. Every summer, Carol will continue to return to Burundi to teach a seminar on leadership as well as peace and conflict resolution. Carol is a scholar at University of Cambridge where her research focuses on peace-building initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Carol has this to say on her experience at Tujenge and her desire to return every summer for a course: "Teaching at Tujenge is a great experience - the students are incredibly bright, and as a liberal arts teacher it is wonderful to see the light bulbs go off as you go through the process of encouraging critical thinking. I look forward to returning to Tujenge each summer because it is so important - not just to me, but in general - to open up opportunities for bright students from marginalized countries to access high quality tertiary education. I've also forged some close friendships with students and taken on mentees, and so I'm excited to reconnect with them when I return in the summer!"

And on why she will keep traveling to Burundi for summer classes: "I look forward to returning to Tujenge each summer because it is so important - not just to me, but in general - to open up opportunities for bright students from marginalized countries to access high quality tertiary education. I've also forged some close friendships with students and taken on mentees, and so I'm excited to reconnect with them when I return in the summer!"

College Acceptances from 2018 Cohort

While we are still waiting for regular decisions, our students have already been accepted into University of Burundi, Carleton College, Agnes Scott College, Vanderbilt University, Quest University, Cornell University, United States International University in Kenya, Africa University and the American University of Beirut. The amount of scholarships that our scholars have received so far are in excess of \$1.5 million. Additionally, five of our students are Mastercard Scholars and will be attending their conference in June at the University of Rochester. This will be their first time on the plane and outside the African continent!

News and Media Highlights

Harvard College also profiled Wendell Adjetye and Elliel Dushime '22 on their respective journey to Harvard. In the article, Wendell talks about how his experience with poverty and past failures have influenced his involvement in Tujenge. Wendell also emphasizes the important of our reconciliation work in Burundi between Hutu and Tutsi people: "As a historian, I know those really critical conversa-



Executive Director Etienne with two Tujenge Scholars: Desire and Ariella. Both are recipients of a scholarship



Étienne and two Tujenge Scholars. To the right is Osian who will be attending Cornell and to the left is Aarnie who will be joining Carleton College.



Tujenge students during lunch time. The meal program is crucial to the success of the Tujenge Scholars Program



Osian, a member of Tujenge's 2018 cohort



tions cannot take place if it's just one elite group speaking to one another.”

Our director, Ben Dickensheets was profiled by Harvard University’s engineering program or their alumni magazine. An alumna of Harvard who grew up in Bozeman- Montana, Ben previous worked as an engineer for SpaceX before joining Tujenge. On his time in Burundi, Ben observes: It’s been a lot like you would find in a startup in Silicon Valley; it becomes a labor of love,” Adding that: “There is always a problem that needs to be solved. The experience has been really immersive, just diving into this ecosystem and trying to build an educational environment where these students have the opportunities to thrive and reach whatever potential they have.”

Fundraising

Methodist Church Donation

The Bozeman United Methodist Church in Bozeman, Montana recently donated a major portion of its Christmas Eve offering to Tujenge Africa Foundation. Every dollar of this substantial gift will go toward providing students with a healthy, balanced lunch during the school day. Tujenge Scholars Program director Benjamin Dickensheets attended church services at BUMC as a child and teenager and says that it holds a special place in his heart even today. “I am deeply touched that the church where I grew up decided to make such a generous donation to a cause that I believe in so strongly.” Tujenge students come from a variety of socioeconomic situations, and a number of their families only expect to see one or two meals per day. The lunch provided each day is an essential part of the service offered by the Scholars Program. Says Dickensheets, “It is truly a blessing to know that all of my students are receiving at least one hot, nutritious meal every day to support them in the herculean task of learning and growing as young.

Student Testimonial

“My experience at Tujenge has really been life changing. I mastered first of all a new language, thus, a new way of thinking. I acquired the belief that in life it's not enough to just aspire for a living, but also to make a difference in the life of others. This has really changed the lens through which I see things, how I perceive my life here on earth.

In addition, the experience helped me to discover that I knew little about my community and the world in general. Right now, I have a more understanding about how things here in Burundian society are the way they're, why people behave the way they do. In fact, the experience gave me a privilege to learn to learn how I can impact my community, regardless of the scale”.