

THE CLARION

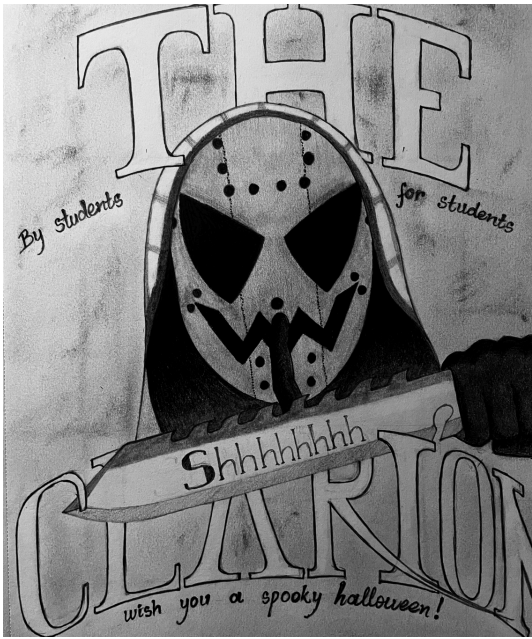
By students, for students



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Menace Santana. By JD Ateyi

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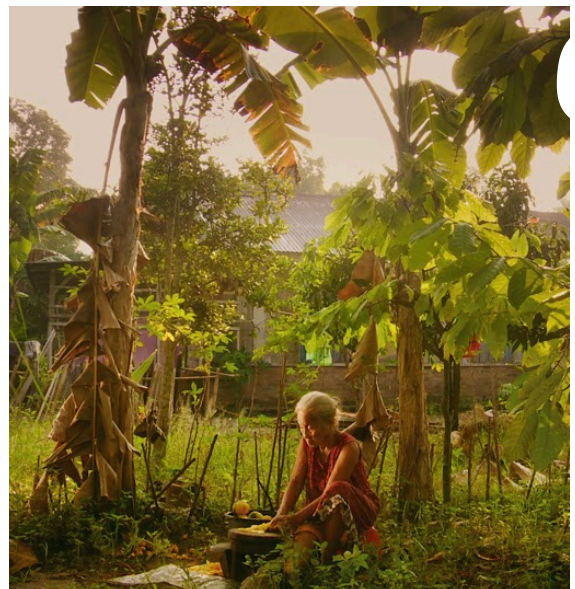
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'Ismael David Mujahid' by JD Atayi

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This magazine was inspired by the idea that the worst nightmares made real. In a way, that sums up the experience of many people this election cycle. In our divided nation lines have been drawn and entire communities and identities have been caught in-between.

Some of the stories we've heard from members of the Jewish community are heartbreaking. That anyone should have to live in the U.S. in such a state of anxiety and fear is unacceptable. In some ways, it reminds me of what my family endured post-9/11. Sadly, as a nation, we seem not to have learned from the past.

We all have a responsibility to fight these social ills. While we may not be able to cure them overnight, we can make sure our neighbors are safe. We may not be able to prevent threats from being made, but we can counter them with messages of love.

The stakes are too high for us to fall short. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "We may have come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now."



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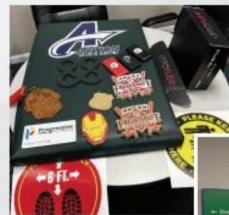


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State of Fear

October's Shadow

Jewish communities face waves of antisemitism across America

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

The month of October has become a time of mourning for Jewish communities around the world. As a result of sentiments related to the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, it has also been marked by a rise in anti-Jewish hate in the U.S. For a religious community that has often looked to America as a place of refuge, the unthinkable is happening: History is repeating itself.

Rabbi Judy Chessin of Temple Beth Or in Dayton, sees her community's ongoing experience as a black mark on their long history in the U.S. Their ongoing struggle has become another sign of the divisive times we live in.

"Right now, we live in a time where passion is being whipped up by both sides and it has been overwhelming. You see a lot of Jews being beaten on the street in the larger urban centers," she said.

For generations dating back millennia, Jews have experienced frequent bouts of persecution. The list of massacres, riots and pogroms is as long as it is tragic.

"It's been easy for people to turn on the Jews. As a small and successful minority, many targeted them because they represented an ancient 'other'. In the pre-modern world, antisemitism was often driven by religious differences. But it is after the industrial revolution that we see it used more frequently as a political tool," she said.

Historically, she explained, Jews have been a sort of canary in the coal mine for nations.

"I sometimes wonder if we have a trauma gene. Frankly, I imagine Muslims have the same thing as do Christians in some communities as well. In our experience, when a society turns on its Jews they quickly turn on others soon after. That is typically the case when one group considers another to be the source of all their problems," she said.

The cause of the current surge in antisemitism is linked to a flare-up in the Israel-Hamas war. On Oct. 7 2023, a coordinated series of attacks killed over 1,500 Jews. It was the largest Jewish massacre since the Holocaust according to the Encyclopedia Britannica. Israel's response and the reaction of her neighbors has divided people around the world.

Chessin told The Clarion, "Unfortunately, the political differences people may have with Israel's response to Oct. 7 can very easily bleed over into anti-Judaism. Suddenly every Jew is seen as being responsible for every death in the Middle East. It's kind of a blurry line, between anti-Zionism and anti-Judaism, one that has been crossed. We see it on campuses particularly where people who are protesting what is going on in the war is suddenly blocking doors to prevent Jewish students from getting into classes."

It isn't the first time Jews in the U.S. have lived in fear. Attacks on synagogues in 2018 and 2019 put Jewish communities around America on high alert.



In this image photographed in Kyrgyzstan, an artist depicts the ancient Jewish community. Photo Contributed by: Ismael David Mujahid

"In Dayton we have been cautious for several years after a spate of synagogue shootings in the country. We've had to be vigilant, up our guard, keep doors closed, and have professional security teams to keep us safe. While we've been relatively lucky, we have faced difficulties in Ohio. We get a lot of emailed threats and things of that nature but we hope it's just a lot of hot air," she said.

The rabbi sees parallels between the ongoing wave of antisemitism and the Islamophobia Muslims experienced after the Sept. 11 attacks.

"I think in these decades, while it's often started with Jews, what we saw happen to Muslims after 9/11 is the same dynamic. The stereotypes go crazy and suddenly it's good versus evil and whatever group people want to hate that week becomes the root of all evil," she said.

Recent statistics from the FBI bear out the reality that both tend to rise at the same time as they are now. In a statement to Congress in July, FBI Director Christopher Wray stated that since the Oct. 7 terror attack, threats against Jews and Muslims across America have increased.

“Our top concern stems from lone offenders inspired by- or reacting to-the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict, as they pose the most likely threat to Americans, especially Jewish, Muslim, and Arab-American communities in the United States,” Wray told the House Judiciary Committee.

History has shown that the kind of othering we see in America and other societies today has typically been used to camouflage the political aims of bad actors. It’s often the first step toward the precipice, one that typically ends in disaster for all.

“Since Oct. 7 all our holidays have been tinged with a sense of mourning and fear. In America, we thought this nation was always above this kind of behavior. Then we saw it happen for a decade to Islam and still thought we were safe, but of course none of us are safe,” Chessin stated.

Living in fear

It can be hard for some to imagine a life on the edge, one where every religious observance comes with reminders of pain. Even worse, however, is to have a target put on your back for something you have no part in. For Jewish communities across America, that is their lived reality. Boycotts, threats of violence and slurs have become common.

“It’s just this new awareness of the vicariousness of our position in any society, even in the wonderful, golden land of America,” Chessin said.

People, Chessin is quicky to emphasize, all want the same things. They just want to be happy and live in peace. It’s those that bring terror, no matter who they are or where they come from, that is the common enemy of humanity

“Who we all hate are the murderers and the people who bring terror, not a whole religion or group or race. But it’s hard for people to get those nuances when they get their information off TikTok and quick bites on X,” Chessin said.



Hope for better tomorrows

The rabbi like many members of her community is hopeful for the future. This difficult time, as other eras of persecution in Jewish history, will pass.

Chessin said, “We are living in a divided time where it is in the best interests of politicians and the media to divide us. We as citizens have to fight that and overcome it. I don’t mean censorship or anything like that. I mean we have to find platforms and avenues to bring people together to see that the people they are prejudiced against are just like them; to realize the humanity of our neighbors.”

The majority of people are well-intentioned and educatable, the rabbi believes. In her eyes the challenge is getting them together to recognize the humanity they share with others.

“Its hard but I think we have to make it happen. Together we have the ability to get people passed their polarized views, their segregation of the ‘other’, and get them to realize that their children play together at school and everything is fine.”

The first step is getting through this challenging time. In an era rife with disinformation designed to confuse electorates that can be difficult. Still, Chessin remains optimistic.

“If we can just keep our cool while this particular moment in history passes, whatever it passes to be, it will bring about something new and different,” she said.

Her hope extends to the Middle East, which is currently embroiled in another round of war. Cycles of violence, after all, can and have been broken.

Until then, the Jewish community’s long struggle for acceptance continues. Whatever happens, as their past and the experiences of other marginalized groups shows, they have the strength to endure it.

Antisemitism Facts

- The earliest recorded pogrom occurred in 38CE according to the European Review.
- In Europe and other parts of the world, Jewish communities would face frequent bouts of persecution. This includes being expelled from England in 1290 and the infamous Spanish inquisition following the Reconquista.
- During the Holocaust, over six million Jews would be slaughtered in a state-sponsored campaign by Nazi Germany.
- In 1972 at the Munich Olympics, members of the Israeli Olympic team would be targeted in a terror attack that would leave over a dozen dead.

Bicolor Dreams

Haiti's diaspora speaks

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

When Jean Roma Bathelemy and Roudachel Charpentier learned that Haitian migrants were a hot topic in the US Presidential Election, neither were surprised. It would not be the first time stereotypes and prejudicial statements had been used against their community had been used to stir up votes. The Sinclair students hail from the Haitian city of Thiotte and understand the sad reality their people have faced in many countries in recent years.

"Living in the states, the prejudice is less pronounced but it's still there. When Donald Trump said that Haitians were eating cats and dogs, at first, I didn't take it personally. But over time, I realized people were thinking it was true, that Haitians were breaking into homes to steal and eat their pets," Charpentier told The Clarion.

For a nation that has endured prejudice since independence it's nothing new. In Brazil, the Dominican Republic, and many other places anti-Haitian sentiments are common once an election cycle rolls around. They are tired and yearn for a chance to speak their truth.

"My message is one of encouragement to all Haitians back home and abroad. The situation is catastrophic. We would love to return, to live back home. I hope other countries can help Haiti overcome these challenges."

Barthelemy and Charpentier defy the stereotypical image many imagine the Haitian migrant to be. Both are educated, graduates of the Centre d'Etudes Diplomatiques et Internationales and Université Episcopale d'Haiti respectively. Like many international students, they are here to study and have plans to return to build a better Haiti. But that's easier said than done.

"The biggest problem is security. Haiti isn't a producer of weapons, but there are guns everywhere. It wasn't always like that,"

As they explained, the roots of this prejudice are deep, goes back many years, and has the real potential to ruin lives. A look at Haiti's past shows that.

"It dates back to before 1804, when we were fighting for our freedom. Haiti at the time was colonized by the French, who stratified society into multiple racial classes. In the minds of the colonials, the idea that blacks could fight for their freedom and win was unacceptable. They did not want to accept us as equals," Barthelemy stated.

Haiti's revolutionary war would last from 1791-1804 and include brutal fighting across what was referred to as the colony of Saint-Domingue. France would leave but would return 21 years later with an armada, demanding payment for the lost profits in slaves when Haiti gained independence. According to the New York Times, it would not be completely paid off until 1947.



Charpentier is pictured here on his farm in Haiti. Photo contributed by Roudachel Charpentier:

In Charpentier's eyes, the debt is proof that the roots of Haiti's modern woes began in the 19th century. Like an avalanche, it built up over time.

"The destruction of Haiti was planned a long time ago. It is by design," Charpentier stated.

In 1937, anti-Haitian sentiment would a historically ugly turn when an orchestrated massacre in the Dominican Republic would leave an estimated 20,000 Haitians dead. On the orders of Rafael Trujillo, the fascist leader of Haiti's Spanish-speaking neighbor at the time, neither men, women, or children were spared. The Parsley Massacre remains a bleak chapter in the island of Hispaniola's history.

"When I read about such incidents, I feel shocked. I feel hate inside me when I hear these stories," Barthelemy explained.

Like many of its neighbors, Haiti would endure a savage and oppressive dictatorial regime during the Cold War. Francois 'Papa Doc' Duvalier and his son Jean-Claude 'Baby Doc' Duvalier would become bywords for brutality. But even by the extreme example they set, the situation in Haiti now is worse according to the pair.

"It's worse now than when the Duvaliers were in power. It's getting worse and worse. Papa Doc was incredibly oppressive. But security and the ability to eat in peace was guaranteed. Now we don't even have that. Now there is no guarantee of anything.," Charpentier said.

"We were also respected back then. Not any group of people could beat the French and win their liberty. Not many black people beat Napoleon for their freedom. We had respect for that. But now we are just discriminated against and the victims of great racism," Barthelemy added.

Despite their nation's many woes, they are eager to emphasize that Haiti is more than the sum of its catastrophes. It's a place full of history, culture, and the arts. Jubilantly, the pair play the country's most famous cultural export, Compa music, while speaking glowingly of their compatriots that have won fame around the world: Georges Sylvain, Dany Laferrière, and Kreyol La among others.

A land full of potential

Charpentier is passionate about his country's agriculture, frequently citing its vast potential for an organic and sustainable future. He gushes when talking about the fruits and crops that grow there.

"Agriculture in Haiti has great production capacity. We can grow coffee, mangoes, watermelon, bananas, cherries, papaya-practically everything except wheat," Charpentier stated.

The only thing Haiti lacks, he stated, is political will and the rule of law. Despite that, he still has dreams of revolutionizing agriculture in his country. He's already started a number of projects to push that vision closer to reality.

"Students graduate from universities with great ideas but don't have an opportunity. I am an example of that. I'm a graduate, I already know what I want to work on back home, but the only thing I lack is the money."

While both are eager to study and better themselves, neither has abandoned their country. On the contrary, they are determined to help Haiti get through this tough period.

More than a stereotype

We've seen the memes, heard the popular depiction of the voodoo-obsessed Haitian migrant. In newspapers, movies, books its what has captured the audiences. And, unwittingly, tarnished the image of an entire people.

"Voodoo is part of Afro-Latin heritage. It played a part in the revolution. Before major battles voodoo ceremonies were used as psychological warfare. But also to give heart to the troops. If voodoo was part of that we can't neglect it. We care about it because it is part of our history and liberty," said Barthelemy.

While like in every community, Haiti has its bad apples, they by no means represent the majority. The truth is they are an island full of good people yearning to live in peace and security.

"As a Haitian, I see each of us individually as a symbol of freedom. Not just anyone could beat Napoleon to win their freedom. We fought with blood and fire to earn our liberty and till today we represent that," Charpentier said.

They remain proud of their heroes and their contributions to the world. That pride is only fueled each time they are asked if they eat cats and dogs. Still, the comments hurt just as any insult to their nation does. In their eyes, the new, biased discourse on Haiti is a reminder of the need for peace back home.

"It shows no respect for the years we fought, the lives and blood we gave to America, or the people back home that are suffering. When Haitians are insulted by Trump like that, it's a reminder that we need to build up are country and go back. We can't be insulted like that," said Charpentier.

Both understand and respect the reality of immigration, that if the laws get tougher they may have to leave. Neither fears that prospect, saying they would obey the law in the US no matter what.

"The law needs to be respected. I only ask is for one week to prepare and then I'll go home. I'm a professional and have no problem returning. I came here to better myself but if the president says to leave then I have to respect that.

But the current climate of anxiety hanging over their community has brought back fears of anti-Haitian incidents like the Parsley Massacre. After all, few communities in the Western Hemisphere understand just how quickly rhetoric can lead to violence like they do.

"It could happen here. During election times anything is possible. If people want me to leave that's no problem. But don't kill me, don't fight me. Just tell me and I will go. I don't want to fight anyone. I respect the law. Just don't harm me," Charpentier stated.



Charpentier dreams of growing a plethora of fruits and vegetables on his farm in Haiti. Photo contributed by Roudachel Charpentier

What Unites Us

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

Like every election cycle, immigration has been made an issue that never seems far from the ongoing political narrative. The stereotyping of international students and immigrants appears on our screens every day. That's why we were proud to interview an entire ESL class to explore the hopes, goals, and values that unite us all. We conducted 19 interviews over a two-day period and proudly share the most extensive below. Meet some of the hardest working students at Sinclair. People with big goals and bigger dreams, just like you and me.

Photo Credit: Ismael David Mujahid

Sarah Alsafiin, Jordan

Wesley Joseph, Haiti



"I am studying so I can save lives. My dream is to be a good doctor like my father."

"I chose Sinclair because it was a college with a good reputation."

"Eid Al Fitr, because it comes at the end of the month of fasting. We gather, clean the house, prepare gifts, and have lunch as a family."

"I was born in Haiti and lived there 25 years. After that, in 2018 I traveled to Brazil where I lived for about 5 years in Porto Alegre. It's a very nice city. Afterwards I traveled to US last year and started my new life here."

Yuliia Chernysheva, Ukraine

"I hope things in my country get better because of course I love my homeland. I also hope to improve my education and plan to one day develop my own startup."



"In my country I worked in computer science, so in the future I'd like to continue to do so."

"New Year because it represents new hopes, new beginnings, and a fresh start."

"I hope my son can go to university and that we both can live in a safe environment."

Esther Quintanilla, Honduras



"I want to get my career started so that one day I can become a chef. I love cooking traditional Honduran food and want to learn other types of cuisine."

"In the future I hope to open a restaurant and be with my family. I want my son to live a good life."

"I like Christmas because I get to hang out with my family and friends."

Lin Meilin, China



"Right now I just want to improve my language skills. I have three kids so when I do select a major I hope it will likely be a shorter program. I just hope I can maintain a balance and continue to study."

"My older daughter is a high-school student and I hope she can achieve her dream college. She likes design and art. For my two youngest, I just hope they study and are happy."

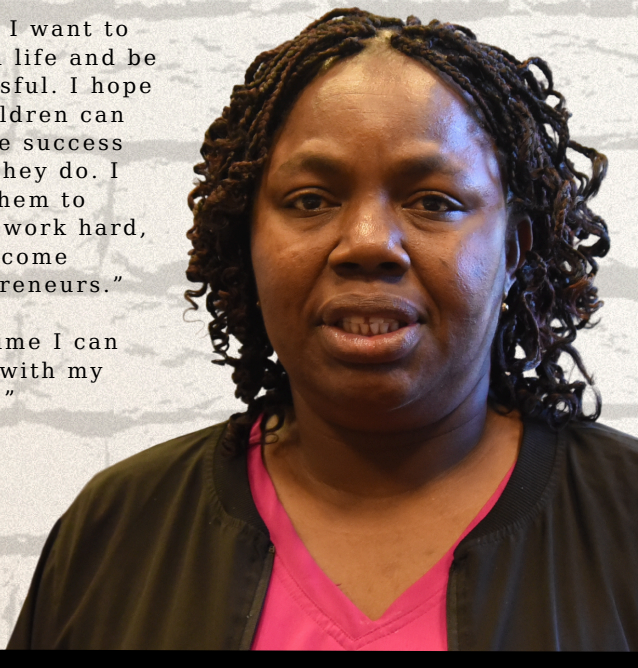
Mazimpaka Gatabazi, Rwanda



"First, I want to build a life and be successful. I hope my children can achieve success in all they do. I want them to study, work hard, and become entrepreneurs."

"Any time I can spend with my family."

Deborah Oluduyile, Nigeria



"I pray that God helps me make it. I would like to be a traveling nurse, go around the country to take care of people."

"I miss the weather back home. We have summer all-year round. The highest it can get is about 50-60 degrees and that's only for two weeks."

Anne Marie Bigrinka, DRC

Sayuri Ulsan, Japan

Ying-Tse Hisao, Taiwan



I would like to study Computer Science. Afterwards, one day I hope to own a design a company.

Weddings in my culture are my favorite. Its a week-long celebration where family and friends all come together.

“Right now I’m focused on ESOL. In the future I dream of being a counsellor helping patients or kids.”

“I do miss the food and the weather. Okinawa is usually warm most of the year.

“In Japan I love New Year’s. We go to shrines, clean our homes, make traditional food, meet family, and wear nice clothes. It’s like Christmas is here.”

“My dream is to become a chef. I love cooking, experimenting with new flavors and recipes. Recently I even tried making an American burger and steak.”

“One day I’d like to open my own restaurant by I still have a lot to learn. Currently, my favorite dish to make is General Tsao’s Chicken.”

Minh Anh Nguyen, Vietnam

Sue Cloonan, Costa Rica,



“I hope that my family will always be ok, that my career goes well, and for everyone to live in a peaceful world.”

“I miss a lot of things. The food and culture but America is a really great place. You can meet people from all over the world, learn about their culture and food.”

“Semanta Santa is my favorite. As a Catholic, it is a massive celebration. Family comes together, follow certain customs, and attend church together.”

“I miss my family. A lot of my friends live here but I feel like my heart is in San Jose.”

The beauty of being an ESOL Teacher

Meet some of Sinclair's most passionate teachers

By Esperance Amuri, Intern

Those interested in being teachers have plenty of good examples to follow. Even on a campus full of educators, the passion of Sinclair's English professors stands out. Heather Johnson-Taylor, ESOL coordinator, and Ginger Sietman, a faculty member at Sinclair Community College, share their experiences with The Clarion.

ESOL stands for English to speakers of other languages, so ESOL classes are for those whose first language is not English. Johnson-Taylor's journey as a teacher started in the year 2000 and has been an ESOL teacher for eight years.

"I wanted to teach ESOL at Sinclair because I have always been fascinated by different languages and love the global perspectives my students bring into the classroom. In addition, reading and writing are transformative. I enjoy watching students learn to use language and literacy to shape the world and reach their goals," Johnson-Taylor said.

Johnson-Taylor believes that students learn best when they are actively engaged, when the teacher is able to build from their interests, and when the teacher is able to connect with them. Students believe that building community and helping students feel comfortable in a classroom helps students allow themselves to make mistakes, as it is a part of learning a new language.

"My students are such good people, such kind and wonderful people, and I think that they are especially good at supporting one another, building community, helping me to create a safe classroom space," Johnson-Taylor said.

She also likes that her students cheer on one another and are ready to build each other up instead of criticizing one another. Looking forward to future educators, she advises students who would like to be teachers like Johnson-Taylor to believe in themselves and in their dreams. "If a student wants to be a teacher, I'm confident that they can achieve that, and I think that students shouldn't be afraid to seek mentors. Most of the teachers here at Sinclair would love to help a student interested in getting in that field," Johnson-Taylor said.

Sietman's teaching journey started at Purdue University, where she taught public speaking. After graduating with her master's degree, she went to Beijing to teach English at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

After living in China for 13 years, Sietman realized she wanted to learn more about teaching English, so she went for her PhD in Language Education at Indiana University.

"Our program serves both local community and international students. We have a lot of students coming from all over the world, and being able to serve these students is why I chose to be an English teacher at Sinclair. I just love it that I get to serve the community," Sietman said.



Ginger Sietman used to teach English in China before coming to Sinclair. Photo Credit: Esperance Amuri

Sietman also loves the joy and challenge of living in a culture other than her own, so being an English teacher at Sinclair allows her to experience these emotions.

"One of the principles that guides my teaching is that my students are people worthy of respect. While the differences between me and my students may be vast, we are all people that need respect." Sietman said.

To Sietman, learning is more likely to flourish when the students feel their teacher's genuine respect, care, and concern.

"I am so impressed by my students' tenacity. I respect them so much. They are fighting for their education and the skills they need to make a better life for themselves and their children," Sietman said.

Sietman's advice for students who would like to teach like her is to "learn another language. My struggle to learn and communicate in Chinese for over thirteen years is fundamental to my understanding of my students."

As we learned from our interviews, the beauty of being an ESOL teacher is its impact on both the teacher and the students. For teachers like Johnson-Taylor and Sietman, it is about more than simply teaching English; it is about building a feeling of community, respect, and personal development. Their stories show the power of cultural exchange and commitment to helping students reach their goals. ESOL teachers find joy in guiding students through language barriers while learning from the different experiences that students bring to the classroom.



Professor Heather Johnson-Taylor has been a coordinator for years. Photo Provided by Johnson-Taylor:

Togo's gift to the world

By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor



For this month's recipe, we decided it was high-time we try a dish from Togo. Despite her small size, Togo and her people have had a major impact on world culture. But its their delectable cuisine that we'll be focusing on here. The Clarion's Distribution Coordinator and Photographer JD Atayi, who hail's from Togo's capital, was happy to help. Here's what he had to say about his favorite Togolese dish.

"When I think of Ayimalo, happiness comes to mind. Because it's a delicious staple food. No matter how much money you have, whenever you are hungry, its easy to find. I'm used to eating it with my friends and that's one thing we used to do. Its so cool. Sometimes, we will be in class and will make an Ayimalo party. We give the money to one person who then goes out to buy it for everyone in class.

Its more street food for us. You can cook it home but it would lack the vibe and atmosphere that comes with eating it outside.

For us, ayimalo is a truly Togolese dish. Its right behind akume and veyi in terms of importance. You can mix it with anything, add anything to it to make your own, and it will still have that signature ayimalo taste.

The recipe below was my first attempt to make it in America. Although it worked and was delicious, I did cut a few corners due to a lack of ingredients. To show the diversity of ayimalo, I had my friend Caritas Klouvi (insert lastname) send a photo of his morning ayimalo and, for fun, one of a typical vegetable market in my hometown Lome. Bon apetit!"



Atayi's first attempt at making ayimalo in America was a delectable extravaganza. Photo Credit: JD Atayi

Ingredients:

- Half a bowl of black-eyed beans
- Full bowl of basmati rice
- Tomato sauce (small can)
- Ginger powder/ginger root (smashed)
- 1 sliced onion
- Chili powder
- Chicken broth/magi
- Two chicken drums

Instructions:

Rice

- Boil water and add the beans, let it boil till soft
- Wash rice and add it to the pot with the beans without adding extra water. The water will have already darkened. Cook it as you would normal rice.

Sauce

- Put oil in the pot, let it heat
- cut the onion in half, blend one half, and slice the other and add it to the pot
- add tomato sauce
- add chicken broth and all spices (depending on your spice tolerance)

Chicken

- season drumsticks as preferred
- add chicken to the sauce and boil it till the chicken is completely cooked
- Add it all together and you're done



Klouvi sent this photo all the way from Lome. It shows just how diverse ayimalo can be. Photo Credit: Caritas Klouvi

The Clarion Reviews: THE LOOK OF SILENCE

By Jessie Ngowoh, Reporter

Many countries have gone through dark times suffering from war, political issues, and genocides. With Rwanda being one of those countries that went through a heart-breaking genocide, Indonesia has also had its own fair share of dark moments as they crawled through the 1965-1966 Indonesian Massacre. That is what *The Look of Silence* is about.

For five decades, Indonesia has hidden in the shadows of a tumultuous past where mass murderers roamed free, and their crimes condoned by the state. A silence has lingered around blocking the truth about one of the most barbaric atrocities. But as they say, "the truth cannot be hidden far too long from the sun."

In 1965, President Sukarno of Indonesia was overthrown by the Indonesian military. They later began a campaign of violence, where thousands and millions of people were killed, imprisoned, and forced to exile.

A powerful documentary, pouring light on this event, "*The Look of Silence*" directed and filmed by Joshua Oppenheimer, reveals the truth through a young man named Adi Rukun an optometrist whose brother had passed away during the time in a brutal murder.



An iconic image from the documentary. Photo Credit: Final Cut for Real ApS



For years, victims of the 1965-66 massacres were forced to suffer in silence. Photo Credit: Final Cut for Real ApS

This newly revealed evidence sparked a certain boldness in Rukun driving him to confront his brother's killers. An unthinkable move in a country where power belongs to the perpetrators.

This film has received showers of awards and recognitions, collecting grand jury prize, 71st Venice international film festival, international film critics award and winner of 70 international awards.

"*The Look of Silence*" has brought out awareness and international outrage about the Indonesian genocide. It has brought out justice for victim's families and contributed to the growth of reconciliation amongst people.

A challenge has been set out for us to confront our relationship with the past, to find truth, acknowledge pain and strive for a future where such ill situations do not occur again. This documentary inspires hope for a time where silence will be replaced by dialogue and amnesty gives way to justice.

Painting the Khmer Rouge

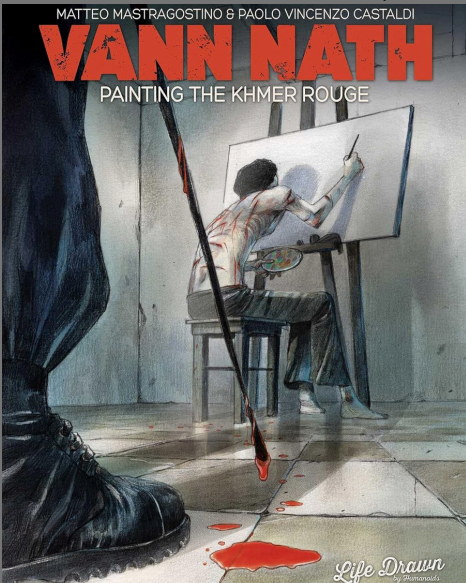
By Ismael David Mujahid, Executive Editor

Calling Vann Nath’s life in Khmer Rouge-era Cambodia nightmarish would be a massive understatement. Few words, in fact, can capture the sheer brutality he was exposed to while imprisoned in the infamous S-21 Prison. There, tens of thousands of innocent Cambodians, were interrogated, tortured, and put to death. Only 12 would survive. Nath was one of them and would spend the rest of his life haunted by his experience.

“Painting the Khmer Rouge” by Matteo Mastragostino and Paolo Vincenzo Castaldi attempts the near impossible. In taking on the task of telling Nath’s story and educating the public on one of the worst genocides since the Holocaust is no enviable task. Nath, a painter, would become a legend for the haunting works he spent the rest of his life creating after the fall of Pol Pot’s regime. How does one even begin approaching such a powerful story, in graphic novel form at that?

Mastragostino and Castaldi began with the man himself. From a terrifying dream sequence to the end of his days, we are taken on a tour of Nath’s life including his darkest moments. Snippets of dialogue fill in his background in a way that feels naturally. Castaldi’s style perfectly captures the story being told here: at times it has a wispy quality to it like an old memory and at other times it’s as vivid as the worst nightmare.

The graphic novel is an unforgettable labor of love. Photo Credit: Life Drawn



Bookended with the infamous Comrade Duch’s trial and Nath’s own obituary, Painting the Khmer Rouge tells a heartbreaking but highly important story about the dangers of fanaticism. Right or left, no matter the group’s faith or political persuasion, history has shown us how extreme ideologies lead to unfathomable crimes. In Cambodia’s case, an estimated 1.6 million bodies would be found in 25,000 mass graves after the Khmer Rouge’s fall as the book explains. A gallery of Nath’s work is at the end of the book and captures the horror of what Cambodia experienced.

Sad as it is to see, the lesson it tells is one humanity needs to heed. Painting the Khmer Rouge is a unique, artistic triumph not just for its overall message but for its depiction of a brave soul fighting for justice.

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