

MARYKNOLL FATHERS & BROTHERS

# AFRICA REGION



December 2003

## Youth in Urban/Rural Africa

Often we write about our ministry with youth, people with AIDS, Muslims and so on, but rarely hear from the people themselves who are directly involved. So in this issue we begin with the voices of two African youth — one from Tanzania and one from Kenya. Their views can be a good reality check for us in understanding the life and situation of youth in Africa. Then follows articles and stories of how Maryknoll priests and brothers are involved in youth ministry in both urban and rural Africa.

**INVITATION for Maryknoll Africa Region Society Members: Update the information on your personal pages of the Maryknoll Africa website: [www.MaryknollAfrica.org](http://www.MaryknollAfrica.org). At any time you may send to Dave Smith via email any new materials such as: written articles, photos, slides, negatives, etc., to add to the web pages that describe your ministry, biography or personal reflections on mission in Africa.**

Please send change of address information to:

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[DASmith@Maryknoll.org](mailto:DASmith@Maryknoll.org)

**If you would prefer receiving your copy of this newsletter via Email rather than on paper, just let Dave know!**

**Back issues may also be read on the web at: [www.MaryknollAfrica.org/ComNewsletters.htm](http://www.MaryknollAfrica.org/ComNewsletters.htm)**

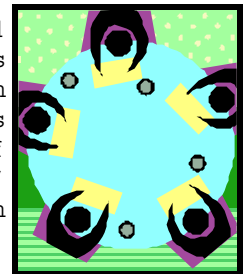
## Participating in the World Youth Congress

By Leonard Boniface

The World Youth Congress that took place in Casablanca, Morocco, from 16 to 28 August, 2003 had a great impact on youth and on the people of the world in general. A lot of issues were discussed including problems that need to be solved to make this world a better place in which to live. The congress involved 1000 youth from all over the world. I was the only representative from Tanzania. This congress was prepared by Peace Child International of UK, the Morocco government, and the United Nations which was a main supporter through its organizations. The main themes of the congress were solidarity, tolerance, and initiatives.

After the days of hard work in discussing the main issues, carrying out action projects and a relaxing day, the youth got back to the Bouznika Congress Camp on 26 August to debate the congress report, the *Casablanca Declaration*. I joined my Africa regional group to discuss it and see where to add or delete material according to the reality of the local situation and what was needed to obtain agreement on solidarity, initiatives and sustainable development. The declaration addresses topics like HIV/AIDS, education, poverty, and the environment.

After the congress 14 youth selected for the Editorial Committee stayed to work with Peace Child International in making a post-congress report. The three from Africa were myself, Bushra Razak from South Africa and Alex Kamweru from Kenya. We provided coverage of the events of the whole congress including the action projects, full programs of the regional debates, and the skills workshops (on topics such as HIV/AIDS, the environment, UN volunteering, and how to create youth networks).



Most of the things written in the *Casablanca Declaration* need to be promoted. As a young person representing Tanzania, I will definitely promote this declaration in my community level by level, and I will present it to the government, local and international organizations, political parties, institutions, media, and all helpful sectors which can use it for the interest of society. "Be The Change" is an important message to follow in order to achieve solidarity, tolerance, and initiatives. As I learned in Morocco from other youth from all over the world, it will help to live out this message in action.

The first congress was held in Hawaii, USA, in 1999 when several delegates from Tanzania attended. The next World Youth Congress will be held in Glasgow, Scotland, in 2005.

*NOTE: This article is edited from a report written by Leonard Boniface who is a freelance journalist and activist in HIV/AIDS education based in Dar es Salaam. Originally from Bariadi, Shinyanga, his journalism studies were sponsored by Jim Travis, M. M. and others.*

## Contemporary Youth Sayings in Nairobi

By Joseph Kariuki

Most of the contemporary sayings in the city of Nairobi, Kenya are coined by the youth. They are coined from popular novels, songs, daily observation and the various mass media like radio and television. Once used, they acquire wide acceptability and get used in particular contexts that fit the users. Nairobi sayings are popularly used within certain occupations like taxi driving and *matatu* (minibuses that ferry passengers) touting and are also in common use in everyday street language. They are also printed in African clothes called khakis and stickers pasted in virtually all *matatus*, buses, taxi and also in mini-shops and other small informal sector businesses popular with the youth.

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Current hip-hop songs are largely responsible for creating these sayings. These songs are composed blending the various ethnic languages in the city. Like in the common *sheng* talk, Swahili, English and elements of the composer's mother tongue dominate them. These hip-hop songs are currently in vogue among the youth in the city. Young musicians include Eric Wainaina of the popular *Nchi ya kitu kidogo* ("the corrupt country"), Kalamashaka, and Darlin P. Nameless are some of the popular artists whose music dominates the charts and FM radio in Nairobi. Because of the popularity of these songs, the resultant popular phrases become sayings that are used in daily conversation by the youth. Generally music composers have greatly influenced the formation of sayings in the city as the popular Kikuyu saying, *wira ni wira* ("one occupation is just like any other"). This expression was used as the title of a popular song in the early 1990s in Kenya by Joseph Kariuki (not to be confused with this writer). It has since become a very popular saying in Kenya and has even been used in translation in other languages in the country.



Nairobi is a multi-ethnic city with most Kenyan communities represented. One would therefore ask what is the language of common sayings used by the city dwellers. Among the youth, *sheng* language is the most commonly used as the language of interaction. It is a mixture of Swahili, English and also blends of other local languages such as Kikuyu, Dholuo, Kamba, etc. Swahili is the main word donor in the language. *Sheng* language is the youth's answer to the language complexity that exists in Nairobi. The youth come from linguistic communities and devise the language to enable them to communicate among themselves in the subculture they have created.

The *sheng* language is a result of blending various elements of other local languages and fitting them to form new words or vocabulary of the youth. This blending has brought out a new subculture with its own language in *sheng* that reflects the values and norms among many urban youth in Kenya. These new values are reflected in the expressions the youth use in daily conversations and even in new songs that are coming out that are very *sheng* in character. National events also seem to influence the way in which *sheng* sayings come into much use in the city. Such happenings include the death of prominent persons in the country that tends to ignite national debates as the case of S.M. Otieno shows. The youth invention of the *sheng* dance, "*tero buru*," and its instant acceptance by the youth of the city points to this. The *sheng* songs are composed blending the various languages dominant in the city and have become the most popular. Like in the common *sheng* talk, they are dominated by Swahili, English and elements of the composer's mother tongue.



**NOTE:** This article is edited from a 27 page booklet *Hakuna Matata: A Collection of Contemporary Nairobi Sayings With a Commentary (Nairobi: privately printed, 2003)* by Joseph Kariuki, a graduate student at the University of Nairobi and the Assistant Moderator of the African Proverbs, Sayings and Stories Website ([www.afriprov.org](http://www.afriprov.org)). See also the contemporary youth sayings on the website above and the article Joseph G. Healey M.M., "*You Faked Me Out: Sayings of East African Urban Youth*" in *Wajibu (Volume 14, No. 1, 1999)*, pages 2–4.

## Ukweli Home of Hope

By Peter Agnone

Back in 1994 Carroll Houle heard in Rome that I was "up for assignment." He invited me to the then Kenya Region to work with the Brothers of Charles Lwanga. My first assignment with the Brothers was at Kibera Line Saba in Nairobi. Carroll had introduced me to Margaret Wanjau and Francis Gitau, his social workers originally of Our Lady Visitation Parish. He suggested that I accompany them as they made their

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rounds of Westlands and the surrounding area. Our base of operation was the traffic circle at Westlands where we met daily and listened to the boys.

Margaret's dream was to have a home where street boys could recovery from street life. Francis and I scouted the area for a site to rent. Father Noel O'Connor of the Pallotine Fathers was in the process of constructing their Sacred Heart Parish at Dagoretti and offered us temporary (six months) rent free use of a new building. Father Noel gave "Ukweli Home of Hope" its start. After our six month period we rented three different sites within the Kibera area – once in the slums, twice on the outskirts of Kibera, and finally our present home in Kibera Jamhuri not far from Patrick Njuru's Caltex station. It was purchased by the Maryknoll Region for two million, four hundred thousand Kenyan shillings.



Ukweli Home has benefited from several lay volunteers. Vicki Simon, MMAF (Maryknoll Association of the Faithful) joined our staff and with her expertise assisted us in our mission vision and planning. Young Bryan Reinhart, a Franciscan lay missionary, along with Margaret staffed our rent free drop-in center behind the Westlands Consolata Church. Westland's City Council gave us use of their community service center; on weekends it becomes a church. Two SMA seminarians volunteer Saturday mornings to teach catechism to our boys. We also have had several Mennonite Missioners who volunteer at our drop-in center.



The Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers on 3 December, 2000 signed over the Ukweli Home of Hope Project to the Little Sisters of Saint Francis. Sister Kevin Kirimi became the director of Ukweli Home. I was asked to stay on in this transition period which now ends with my retirement. As for my work with the boys, I was limited by my not-so-fluent Swahili. I saw that my usefulness was in being part of the "Ukweli Team." It was good to see the boys recover from street life and to do well in their school work and in some cases excel. One boy is in the seminary. The work that began with Maryknoll now continues its success story with the Little Sisters of Saint Francis and that's not a bad way for me to retire.

## Working With Youth and Children Since 1990

*By Frank TenHoopen*

I have been working with youth and children since 1990. I have worked with many groups both in urban and rural settings in Mombasa Archdiocese in Kenya. This is a blessing that comes with working as a Youth/Children Coordinator for a whole diocese. In 2002 I was asked to look at a whole new group that I had never considered. A German nun came and asked me to help the girl children of Commercial Sex Workers. A whole new world!

After a year we find ourselves with 150 girls who we help with school fees, medical, growing up formation, and a whole slew of things that little girls from birth to 18 years of age need. They are so very much children at risk. They are at risk of being brought into the "business." They are at risk for HIV. The risk is extremely high for them no matter what we do I sometimes think. I then wonder why try, but how can I not try?

The German nun is a gem. She does all the fund raising for this work. This year so far she has paid for the wages of a social worker and all the other expenses that have come up. I have seen her commitment to this work. She'll come through. All I do is help her make it possible and sometimes sit with the littlest ones playing games or drawing and coloring. I also worry about the bills.



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## The Voices of the Youth Can Be Heard

By Tom Tiscornia

A few years ago when I was at Mtoni Parish in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania several mornings of the week I would travel by *daladala* (the local name for a minibus) to celebrate Mass for the Brothers who ran St. Anthony's Secondary School in nearby Mbagala. The Headmaster, Brother Martin, frequently would ask me to be the chaplain for the school. Just as frequently I would tell him that I did not have the time. His persistence finally got to me and I agreed that if he gave me a meeting place I would come once a week and meet with any student who wanted to talk.

Gradually as the students became aware of my presence and a few came to "check me out," the word spread that I was approachable and there was a value to meet with Padre Thomas. The students came, girls and boys, Form I through VI and for many it was just a chance for them to have someone to tell their woes, their fears, their growing pains, their hopes and dreams. Some would even come with a friend with whom they had already shared their concern. For me it was a real eye opener. I came to experience and appreciate another side of the African youth, one who in many ways is so typical of young people's growing stages throughout the world. It was a revelation for me and a "sacred one." The issues which the youth are dealing with are relationships with parents, with their peers, with their boy/girl friend, with teachers, their hopes for their future, health problems, etc. These are issues that each individual encounters during the growing process, especially as youth.

Having returned to this same once-a-week ministry at St. Anthony's, I am grateful for the chance to be available to the students. For sure, because of my experiences with the students in a counseling situation, it has been a tremendous influence on me especially when preaching and dealing with an adult/parent audience. Maybe through me a bit of the voices of the youth can be heard.

## Learn To Dance with the Young

By Don Larmore (somewhere between youngness and youthfulness)

**Youngness is not youthfulness.**

**Youngness is bowing to the illusion of age.**

**Youthfulness is forever and untouched by the foggy illusion of distant death  
the clouds of separation and isolation  
the lightning of fear.**

**Our youth are eagerly accepting**

**unconsciously longing for  
compulsively watching MTV to find  
begging from us**

**all-ways delighting in the paradox of the cross of Jesus  
the challenge of life to the fullest  
the mystery of spiritual poverty  
the mastery of zero and it's joy  
the chaos of death and resurrection  
the dance of existence with our women ancestors.**



**In the words of St. Augustine:**

**"Dancing demands a freed person**

**one who vibrates with the equipoise of all his / her powers.**

**Praise the dance which demands everything: health**

**a clear spirit**

**a buoyant soul.**

**Learn to dance, or else the angels will not know what to do with you."**

**African youth are vibrating with the love of sacred music**

**sacraments of dance**

**the art of liturgy.**

**Let us rejoice and be glad, our youth in African are healing the ill-usions of the planet.**

# STOP PRESS!

By Lou Quinn

*NOTE: What follows below is a completely fictitious account*

Special Report: *Osservatore Romano*, Wednesday, 13 April, A.D. 2039.

During the 30 years since the intense persecution of the Catholic Church began in Africa, the area had been all but hermetically sealed off from the rest of the world. In an effort to throw off the last vestiges of colonialism, Christendom and economic imperialism, regional governments in the Sub-Sahara had cut ties with the globalized world including the Republic of South Africa in the extreme south. Below is a recent report by a small team of investigative journalists, the first since the cosmetic openings by rulers in central Africa.

IN CHURCHES, CONVENTS, SEMINARIES AND PRIVATE HOMES WE MET STAUNCH CATHOLICS WHO KEPT THEIR BEDROCK FAITH DESPITE YEARS OF PERSECUTION AND ISOLATION. "WE COULD NOT PRAY PUBLICLY, BUT EACH FAMILY PRAYED AND KEPT THE FAITH ALIVE BEHIND CLOSED DOORS," SAYS ONE FARMER INTERVIEWED.

AN EVEN GREATER MIRACLE IS THAT THEIR FAITH DID NOT REMAIN BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. ALTHOUGH THE SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS CONTINUE TO RESTRICT RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, THANKS IN LARGE MEASURE TO ZEALOUS LAITY, NEVERTHELESS HAS GROWN FROM A MODEST REMNANT IN 2009 INTO A LIVELY PRESENT. AT THE SAME TIME PERSECUTION FORCIBLY STRIPPED THE CHURCH OF DEPENDENCE ON OUTSIDE FUNDS AND PERSONNEL. DURING THAT ERA WHAT EMERGED FROM THE FIRE OF OPPRESSION AND CHAOS IS A TRULY LOCAL CHURCH RELIANT UPON ITS OWN RESOURCES AND LEADERSHIP. AS SUCH, THE CHURCH HAS BECOME FULLY AFRICAN AND A VITAL AND INTEGRAL (ALBEIT ILLEGAL) LEAVEN IN AFRICAN SOCIETY.

## Happy Birthday to You!

John Lange	January 18	Ed Davis	April 6
David Smith	January 19	Moe Zerr	April 7
Don Donovan	January 20	Frank Flynn	April 26
Frank TenHoopen	January 25	Joe Healey	April 29
Cyril Vellicig	January 28		
Tom Tiscornia	February 5		
Lance Nadeau	February 10		
Bob Vujs	February 17		



# I Am the Dancing Man

By Brother Carmine, S.M. (Southern Africa)

Once in a small village in Lukulu village in southern Africa near the river, there lived an orphan boy named Joseph. When he was still very small, Joseph knew that life in the village was dreary and hard. No one laughed. No one danced. But Joseph saw that all around him the world danced. Fire danced near the village huts. Trees swayed in the wind. Clouds danced in the sky.

And then, one evening by the river, Joseph met an old man with silver sandals who was indeed "dancing the waves." The old man swept off his hat and bowed. "I am the Dancing Man," he said, "and I have a gift for you."



The gift was a pair of silver sandals, and before long Joseph began to dance, taking the old man's place. He danced from village to village and people responded. An old woman gave him a flower, and Joseph danced with the flower. He met a young child who was ill and in pain and, as he danced, the young girl smiled. He met a farmer and saw him sowing seeds. As Joseph danced, the farmer danced as he sowed. Wherever Joseph danced, there was life – until the day came when he was old.

Then one day Joseph looked up and saw standing by the river a young boy waiting as long ago he had waited. The boy drew near. Joseph knew the words to say. He swept off his hat and bowed. "I am the Dancing Man," he said, "and I have a gift for you."

## Conference on Solidarity Between Catholic Church in U.S. and Africa

By Dave Schwinghamer

*NOTE: A conference entitled "A Call to Solidarity with Africa: Americans and Africans in Dialogue About Africa's Promise, Needs, and Image" took place at Notre Dame, Indiana from 21-24 September, 2003. Dave Schwinghamer participated and shares these reflections:*

This major conference on building solidarity between the U.S. Catholic Church and Africa was planned in 2002 and carried out in 2003 by a narrow range of U.S. and African church institutions: the USCCB, some departments of the University of Notre Dame, Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and various church groups in the Nigerian Catholic Church. Solidarity with Africa is already growing in the grassroots of the U.S. Catholic Church through diocesan and parish twinning programs. This fact was not mentioned much nor were there many representatives from parish groups. As a result, there was very little sharing of experiences in how the relationship of solidarity is actually being worked out between local churches.

U.S. policy towards Africa: Steve Morrison's analysis of the orientation of the Bush administration towards Africa was perhaps the most interesting part of the conference for me.

Morrison's topic – "Implications of President Bush's \$15 Billion HIV/AIDS Initiative on Foreign Aid" – was part of a night session entitled "The Future of U.S. Foreign Policy Assistance and Africa's New Agenda." Africa as a priority is being pushed up on the administration's agenda – e.g. Bush's trip to Africa, the money for AIDS, the involvement in Liberia. But what is pushing it up?

1. The post 9/11 concern about counter-terrorism.
  2. The war on Iraq: We need some bases in Africa.
  3. AIDS: Bush does have a moral concern for what is happening. Someone got through to him.
- But there are also security concerns.

President Clinton set a precedent: high level engagement is good for foreign policy and for domestic policy. Bush recognizes this, and knows that is relatively cheap to do. He has two African Americans in his administration who can push the Africa agenda: Powell and Rice. In the post 9/11 world, Africa is the soft offset to the hard engagement in Iraq. Also, small failed states are now important because terrorism seeks such places to operate. In addition, there are 145 million Muslims in Africa.

AIDS: the U.S. was asleep on this issue. The pandemic got ahead of policy makers. We are trying to catch up. The \$15 billion was a surprise. It is seen as both a moral imperative and also represents a doubling of foreign aid into Africa, into countries that are not prepared to absorb it. There is concern about whether we will be able to sustain the commitment to this program. Congress will ask what are the other rich countries doing. The new AIDS Czar Randall faces many debates about a lot of issues: condoms, sex education. etc. At the table are representatives of the religious community, conventions advocates, health care advocates. The US helped start the Global Aids fund but has now walked away from it. A further concern is whether the US will bleed other funds to pay for the \$15 billion. So it will be a highly risky, messy, and contentious debate over this program.

## Remembering our Maryknoll Ancestors ( Missioners who served in Africa )

### January

Fr. Albert Good                      January 2, 1984  
Fr. Ronald Rak                        January 12, 1994  
Fr. William Collins                  January 20, 1974

### February

Fr. William Murphy                February 7, 1985  
Fr. Charles Kenny                 February 19, 1973  
Fr. Joseph Brannigan              February 26, 1999

### March

Br. John Walsh                        March 2, 2000  
Fr. Delbert Robinson              March 15, 1991  
Fr. Louis Bayless                  March 16, 2001  
Fr. Joseph Trainor                 March 28, 1997  
Fr. George Pfister                  March 30, 1994

### April

Fr. Brendan Smith                 April 10, 1989  
Fr. Thomas Shea                    April 14, 2002  
Fr. Thomas Mantica                April 28, 1978  
Br. Justin Joyce                     April 29, 2002

## What Would You Buy If You Were Given \$150?

*By Joe Healey*

For two years during the late 1970's I lived with three Tanzanian schoolboys in what we affectionately called the "Bishop's House" (a simple mud house with a tin roof named after the charismatic Bishop Christopher Mwoleka) in Nyabihanga Village in Rulenge. One Saturday afternoon I was chatting with Thomas, John, and Christopher outside our house. I asked each of them what he would buy if he were given \$150. Thomas said he would buy a portable radio. The boys love to listen to the disco music from nearby Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Tanzanian soccer games. John said he would buy a bicycle, one of the most prized possessions in the village. Then he could ride around visiting his friends. Christopher thought for a long time and finally said: "If I had \$150 I would buy a cow. I would feed the cow until she got big and fat. Then I would sell the cow for \$300 and go out and buy a portable radio and a bicycle."

Yes, even in then socialistic Tanzania there were budding capitalists.

## Call for Articles for Our Next Issue

Date: April, 2004

Theme: Health Care / AIDS in Africa

Material to Editor by: 1 February 2004

Please send material to the Editor, Joe Healey, by Email to:

JGHealey@aol.com or by paper mail to: Maryknoll Society House,  
P.O. Box 867, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (for scanning into a computer).