

# GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP Begins Right Here

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“If we are to prepare our students to be effective citizens in the 21st century, we must ensure that they are comfortable with and capable of living and working effectively in a diverse community. They must be prepared to live and work in an increasingly diverse America, as well as function effectively in a global economy.”

—*Strategic Plan*, “Cultural Fluency,” The Putney School, March 2008

**M**any of you have heard this one by now: **A person who speaks three languages is called trilingual. One who speaks two languages is bilingual. And the person who speaks but one language? That’s an American.**

But there are also Chinese who don’t know that it’s sometimes rude to ask Americans how old they are (they do it to establish order of deference to elders) and maybe a Swiss kid who doesn’t know that it’s even ruder to step over a Chinese person’s bed (it’s considered incredibly bad luck for the bed owner). And any Westerner is prone to walking into a Korean’s room with his shoes on, which is tantamount to wiping your feet on the divan.

There are less awkward cultural moments, as well. At lunch the other day two boys, one from Afghanistan and the other from China, were remarking that their countries share a smidgen of a common border and that their faces have some physical similarities. What they weren’t realizing right away was that they had to come to Putney, Vermont to have that conversation—that they are much less likely to cross paths in Kabul or Beijing.

With current students from 17 countries, not including the U.S., The Putney School is a crossroad for these cultures and more. In 1954, Putney School founder, Carmelita Hinton, wrote what she believed to be the fundamental beliefs of the school, one of which reads, “To combat prejudices caused by differences in economic, political, racial, and religious backgrounds; to strive for a world outlook, putting oneself in others’ places, no matter how far away or how remote.”

Ask the same young man from Afghanistan if he’s ever been camping with his family and you may be surprised. “Yes,” says Assad ’11. “I went with my father and uncle to the mountains, but I had no shoes or extra clothes. We were hiding from the Taliban.” Which brings us to the core purpose of global citizenship, which is world peace. Item #2 in the United Nations Charter, chapter 1, article 1, states, “The purposes of the United Nations are: To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.” Assad’s father and uncle were eventually found and killed by the Taliban.

Since world peace has only been a theory, no one knows for sure if the more time we spend in each other's moccasins, the better we'll understand each other's values. But it seems to make more sense than walling ourselves off from each other. At The Putney School, the better we understand each other's values, the less likely we are to cause each other offense. Applied on a global scale, who knows where this could lead? And what better place to start than with the international student sitting with you at lunch, or in class, or on a couch in the common room?

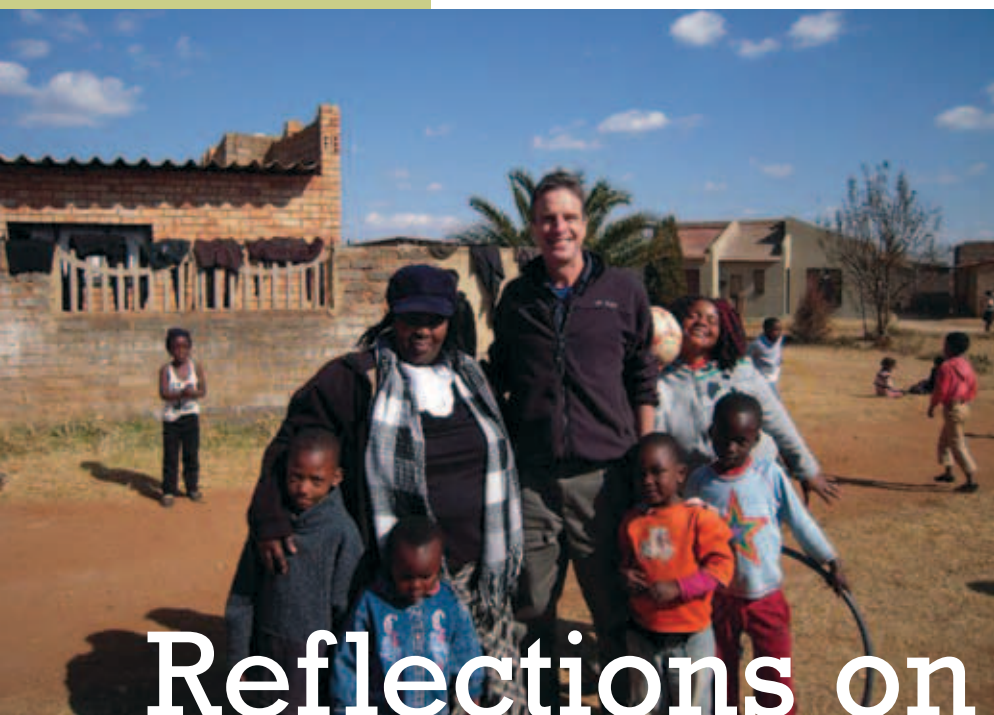
"Imagine there's no countries," as posited by John Lennon, is a difficult concept to swallow for someone who's watched good friends die defending their country. But walk that one back to "Imagine countries cooperating in fair, environmentally-sustainable trade with one another to their mutual benefit" and we might have a few more takers. Some would argue that adding up all of our resources and dividing by the number of people in the name of planetary sustainability is anathema to proud human nations. Others claim it's essential to the survival of our species.

We don't have to lose our national identities or cultures to get along with each other, although it can be a real fear for some international students. One remarked his senior year, "I don't feel very Japanese anymore." That's certainly not the goal of global citizenship, but would it be such a bad thing if words such as "infidel" and "alien" eventually dropped from the lexicon? How about even "foreign"? If there's a middle ground, why not actively seek it?

Thomas Paine, in a pamphlet entitled "Rights of Man," said, "My country is the world, and my religion is to do good." We say, "Don't get all of your information about the world from the news." "Stereotype" is another word that could go the way of the dinosaur. How many prejudices do even the most open-minded of us still harbor?

These are not new concepts to graduates of The Putney School and anything more in this vein is mere preaching to the choir. That said, here are two stories from American and international alumni about their efforts to walk the walk of this global citizenship talk.





# Reflections on South Africa

DAVID CRARY '69



DAVID, IN SOUTH AFRICA  
FOR THE 2010 WORLD CUP

Yet during that period—bit by bit—I found myself becoming captivated by the country, and its drama, in unexpected ways. So many of the people I met—of all races—impressed me with their friendliness, their eagerness to share their personal stories, and their palpable love of their country even as it was riven by conflict. I recall eliciting skepticism from family and friends when, on my occasional visits back to the United States, I would express optimism that somehow South Africans were going to find their way to genuine democracy without a bloodbath en route.

By 1989, momentum for change was powerful. More and more prominent figures in the Afrikaner community, which controlled the white-minority government, began signaling their willingness to negotiate apartheid's end. The ban on the African National Congress was lifted. And speculation intensified that the release of long-imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela was imminent.

Early in 1990, I was informed by my boss, AP's foreign editor in New York City, that I was

**When I first arrived in South Africa in 1986, as a reporter for The Associated Press, it was a pariah state—deservedly reviled worldwide for the draconian web of racist laws and practices that constituted apartheid.**

Over the next four years, living and working there amid uprisings and state-of-emergency crackdowns, I learned in dismaying detail about the sufferings and injustices inflicted on so many South Africans.

going to be transferred from South Africa to become news editor for the Paris bureau. It was meant to be a promotion, but I told him I didn't want to move until Mandela was freed from prison.

My boss let me stay, and on February 11, 1990, I had the privilege of coordinating AP's coverage as Mandela walked to freedom. It remains the most exhilarating news event I've covered in three decades of journalism.

Within weeks, I was off to Paris, for what turned out to be a five-year stint. I found it wrenching to leave South Africa, particularly at such a pivotal phase of its history. But I had the good fortune to be sent back there in 1994 to help, cover the country's first all-race election, the vote that installed Mandela as president.

That was an amazing experience for me—witnessing the changes that had unfolded. Here's what I wrote at the time: "The word 'miracle' is used freely in South Africa these days. To someone returning after four years away, it borders on understatement."

A black priest, once tortured by white soldiers, was preparing to serve in Parliament, eager to work with his former enemies. White civil servants, mostly Afrikaners, worked overtime to help would-be black voters get ID cards that would enable them to elect a black-led government. A police force notorious for repressing blacks was now guarding them as they voted.

And I got goose bumps, late one night at my hotel, at sign-off time on the state-run television network.

During the state of emergency, the hymn “Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika” (God Bless Africa) was the anthem of the anti-apartheid movement, sung defiantly at illegal opposition gatherings. Now it was part of the national anthem, played majestically on TV over scenes of the breathtaking landscape, of blacks and whites at work and play.

I returned again to South Africa in 1999 to help with coverage of the second post-apartheid election, this time to choose Mandela’s presidential successor.

Then last summer—after an 11-year hiatus—I was able to continue my time-lapse acquaintance with South Africa during a five-week assignment as part of AP’s contingent covering the soccer World Cup. It was a dream assignment, getting an opportunity to witness South Africa reveling in the world’s embrace—and to see it through the prism of my memories of the apartheid age.

The pre-tournament skeptics abroad—who had predicted crime and chaos—had to swallow their words. Black and white South Africans joined together as never before, sharing pride in their formerly fractured country while serving as warm hosts to the biggest global gathering ever in their once-isolated country.

“We have bedazzled ourselves, and the world,” said retired Archbishop Desmond Tutu as the tournament ended.

Fortunately, I was granted ample time to get out of the AP office and the press centers, and to revisit people and places I’d encountered in years past. What I found was more nuanced than the multiracial euphoria in the stadiums and fan parks.

In Vosloorus, a dusty township of 150,000 blacks near Johannesburg, the World Cup seemed remote to residents like Caroline Motholo, who was busy running a day-care center catering mostly to AIDS orphans. The township has a jobless rate above 40 percent; few whites ever set foot in it.

The images of racial good will conveyed via the World Cup to global TV viewers weren’t false. They embodied the profound changes that have transformed race relations in South Africa in the two decades since apartheid began to dissolve.

But to declare South Africa a unified rainbow nation, as President Jacob Zuma did, was premature. The progress has been striking, but so too are the yawning divides that remain, the fears and resentments, the lingering scars of the bad old days.

Looking ahead, there’s reason for hope in the post-apartheid generation of young South Africans—notably those at universities where racial barriers have toppled. Yet further advances could be impeded by rampant HIV-AIDS, corruption, ineffective government, and the glaring economic gap between rich and poor.

If I were based there now, those would be the topics on my journalistic plate. Instead, from my home base in New York City, all I can do is wish South Africa well. Twenty-five years after I arrived there, it is very much a work in progress. And yet—given the problems here at home—so is the USA.

In that context, I recall an interview last year in Johannesburg last year with Sibongile Mkhabela, who as a high school student was jailed for her role as a leader of the 1976 Soweto uprising and is now CEO of the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund. Her words could apply here.

“At the human level, everybody wants to make it work—we’re all a part of this fantastic, beautiful country,” she told me. “Where the will falls off is when the self-interest comes in. What’s needed is for all of us to keep our eyes on the bigger picture, to understand we might be inconvenienced, we might feel discriminated against, but in the long term it’s in the best interest of the country.”



# Global Citizenship One Man's Journey

By Ngoima wa Mwaura '64



This academic year, Ngoima has been living in Hinton House, teaching cross-country skiing, doing outdoor work activities, teaching Swahili, and being an academic resource for issues on Africa and developing regions of the globe.

I think I was the first African to attend Putney. I did so as a ward of Mrs. Carmelita Hinton, Putney's founder. She brought me to America and personally sponsored my living and schooling throughout my teenage years. During that time, my home was wherever she happened to be, together with her grandchildren.

Since leaving Putney, I have been a news producer in the U.S., a journalist in Kenya, and have worked for the Kenya Tea Development Authority, which is currently the largest source for internationally-traded black tea. I also worked throughout the 1980s on U.N. diplomatic assignment for global tea promotion in the Netherlands. On returning to Kenya at the close of the '80s, I involved myself in the fight for the second liberation; a protracted struggle that mobilized and organized the country and sought democratization of national institutions and representative, elective parliamentary governance. This was a ten-year odyssey, a dangerous exercise that all but drained my energies to a point of exhaustion. Yet, even after ridding Kenya of the dictatorship, the powers of the corrupted continued; corruption fights back, and with vengeance. While the struggle continues, my personal situation has become quite hairy, and I have it found it necessary to take refuge for awhile, on this side of the globe.

But this story is about Mrs. Hinton and me, and Putney. The world has been reconfigured since the time of Mrs. Hinton's Kenya visit. To put it into perspective and make sense, I find it imperative to revisit the era in which it all began.

## Mrs. Hinton's Odyssey

After she retired from Putney in 1955, Carmelita Hinton, together with her younger sister, Helena Johnson, her lifelong friend and colleague Dorothy Douglas, and two other friends, took an unbelievable overland world expedition through Western Asia and Africa. She was in her late 60s. The others were a bit younger.

They went to Germany, bought a Volkswagen Kombi, breached the iron curtain, crossed into Yugoslavia, then traveled through Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The journey was an odyssey in itself, and would not be possible today. Their travel in India ended in Mumbai (then Bombay), where they caught a boat to Mombasa, Kenya, the chief seaport on the East African seaboard. From there, they drove overland four thousand miles to Cairo, Egypt. The road from Nairobi to Cairo is still an impossible, impassable automobile trek into some of the most remote, untamed, inhospitably wild parts of Africa—if not the entire planet. The trip wasn't then, and still isn't, for the faint-hearted.

It was while she was on this expedition that I was introduced to her in Kenya. The meeting seemed perfunctory, lasting fifteen minutes at most. I didn't speak any English. It was to be almost another two years before we met again. That brief encounter became life-changing for me. Certainly, without her intervention, my life would have been radically different.

In 1956, Kenya was a British colony and in height of turmoil of the Mau Mau war against colonialism. Four years earlier the colonial authorities had declared a state of emergency over the territory, under which the British had been carrying out secret pogroms on three closely-related tribes, the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru. In the four years since the imposition of emergency regulations, the entire populations of these tribes—nearly two million people—had been forcefully uprooted, systematically removed from their traditional homesteads into highly regimented concentration camps replete with watchtowers and curfews. For very large groups

of peoples who had never experienced a way of life other than small compounds and homesteads of few houses, it was a traumatic, disorienting change.

Through sets of traditional ancient rituals, rites, and oaths, the entire peoples of Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru wove themselves into a secret organization, a fabric for total resistance to continued British occupation: the Mau Mau. Its objective was to kick out the whites (who had declared Kenya a “whiteman's country”) and regain lost lands and sovereignty by any means necessary. Organizing and galvanizing the entire population into Mau Mau took years and took place in unbelievable secrecy; the colonial authorities refused even to acknowledge it as a possibility. By the time the colonial authorities became fully aware of the extent and depth of Mau Mau's imperial implications, it was a fully developed conspiracy. It was too late. Interestingly enough, their first appreciable and discernable notice came from the Catholic Church, through confessions.

Kenya was thus in the throes of these conflicts when Mrs. Hinton passed through, and my family was in the Mau Mau epicenter. Highly conversant with the issues of policy and governance of the day, she had followed reports on the Mau Mau conflict, and was more curious and intrigued than most. What was generally known in the outside world were highly doctored reports, and a net view that the natives had drunk some ancient primitive concoction and gone mad, and therefore had to be destroyed. Prevalent and pervasive as these views were, she didn't buy them, and once in Kenya, she wanted know more and was determined to get genuine explanations. Her network of friends put her in touch with the recently returned Dr. Julius Gikonyo Kiano, the first East African to hold a Ph.D., which he earned in the U.S.



Dr. Kiano, who had known my father as a nationalist in Nairobi before he left for America, determined that my father was well placed to answer Mrs. Hinton's questions. He brought Mrs. Hinton and her fellow travelers to meet my father in our village-camp. The village was much like others throughout the tribal homeland, where our entire tribes had been cordoned off, their movement highly restricted under the "state of emergency."

To travel outside of a mile radius required a "visa pass." Foreigners also required authorization to enter. Mrs. Hinton's party, undaunted, went through the time-consuming procedure and acquired the requisite document before coming to the village.

Together with Dr. Kiano, Mrs. Hinton spent the good part of the day together with my father and other village elders. They also visited my village school at the end of the day's visit.

I was eleven years old. I was sent for, and on learning that my father was with a group of whites, I was sure "they had come for him," and that he had sent for me to say his last goodbye. The group was unusual, with three white women, a rare sight, and a young, thin African I assumed to be their hired driver. They were with my father. Prepared for the worst, I was surprised to find him in very high spirits, and shocked to learn that that the not-so-impressive looking African was none other than Dr. Kiano. Our teacher had recently brought us a copy of *Drum*, a South African magazine with Dr. Kiano on the cover, billing him as the first East African to have completely finished his education.

This was the one and only time Mrs. Hinton met my father and me in Kenya. I shall never know just what transpired but, by the end of the day, she had decided that she would sponsor me to study at The Putney School. On returning to the U.S., she arranged for me to attend the North Country School in upstate New York for two years before enrolling at Putney. That was the beginning of my saga, with her and with

The Putney School—its community and network of similar temperaments and minds. It still befuddles me when looking back to realize how utterly committed, focused, and unflinching Mrs. Hinton was.

## Ngoima's Odyssey

When I was at Putney I was able to keep on top of what was happening at home through the newspapers. I was bothered by what I had left behind, but I had reconciled myself to the dual world. When my father realized that I was coming to the U.S., he gave me the third degree in preparation for going to America. He told me "you have to be brave, there is nobody we know there that you can turn to. The best defense is to make friends and be strong."

My sophomore year, I was alone in the dorm after everyone had left for spring break (Mrs. Hinton was in China, so I could not stay with her). Barbara Rockwell, on inspection, came in and found me smoking. I thought it was the end of me, but she said "go ahead and smoke, and I would do the same too!" Thereafter we went home to her place, and there began another lifelong relationship with all the Rockwells.

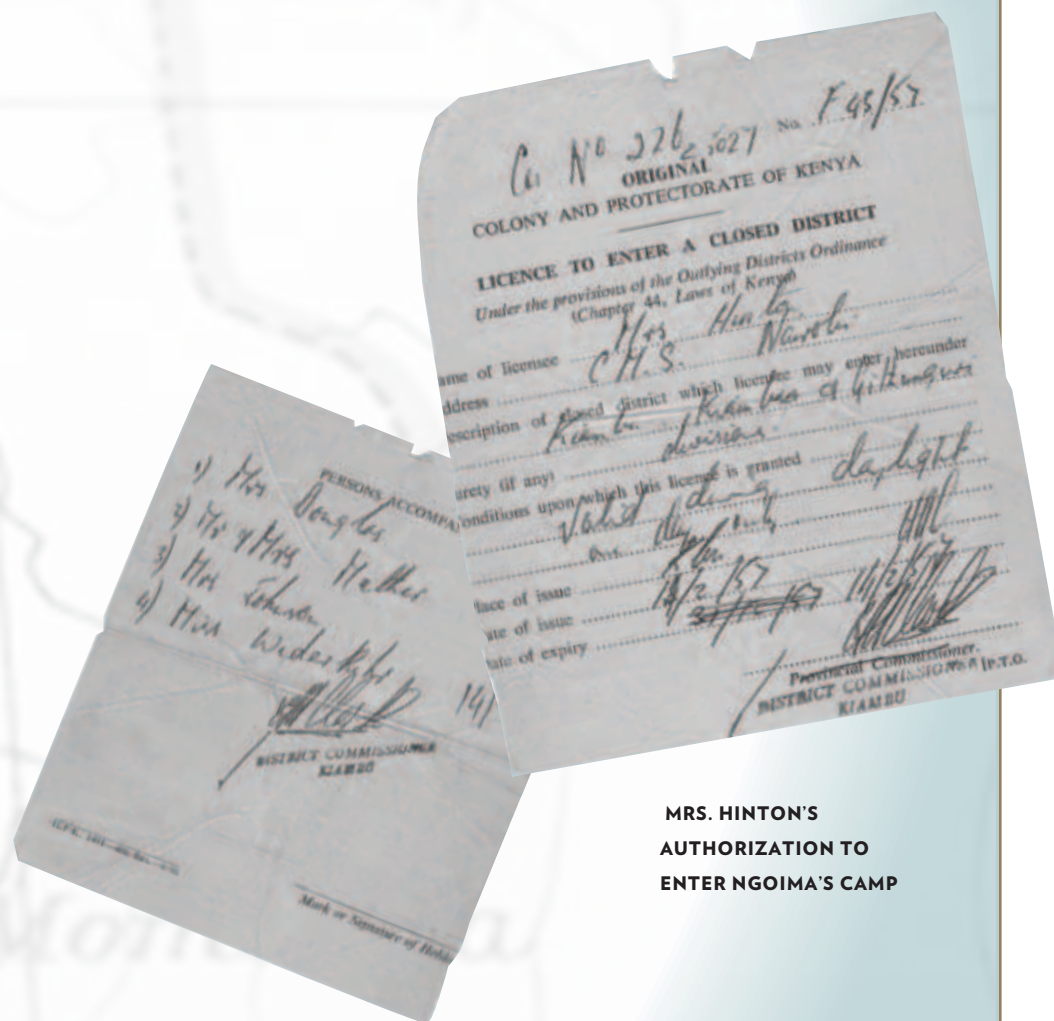
At that point, I had not been home to Kenya in four years, and Barbara decided I should go home for the summer. When I got there in the summer of 1962, I felt a bit out of place—I spoke Kikuyu with a funny accent and my friends laughed at me. But they all wanted to talk to me to learn English and hear about the far-off place I'd been. I initially felt like a curiosity and an exotic, much like I was in America, and I resented it. I had certainly been widely exposed and grown up faster than the friends I had left behind, most of whom had never gone farther than twenty miles away.

Kenya became an independent country while I was still at Putney. The imperial structure in Africa collapsed with the speed of the Berlin wall and the iron curtain. The entire edifice crumbled faster than even the freedom fighters anticipated, but there were no indicators, when Mrs. Hinton was in Kenya in 1957, that African and Kenyan independence was imminent. She saw her contribution to African liberation being in education, and for her, this was a long-term investment. Perhaps she would not have brought me to Putney if she had known how fast things would change.

Nevertheless, I am forever thankful for coming to the U.S., and to Putney and the very many friends I have made. A classmate, Steve Flanders, has kept me on the tether of these roots and has often “yanked” on it to find out whether there was still life at my end. I have hosted more than forty Putney people at the home village on last count, without the least regret.

I have been highly impressed this past year at the high level of The Putney School students’ involvement in their learning process, and even more so with the prevalent high energy. I am most pleased to note their focus on international issues. The curriculum, especially in history and current affairs, certainly shows their wide interest in issues international, much different from the days of yore when so much was Eurocentric. The discernable international percentage of the student body may play a role, but this generation of teachers must also take their share of credit.

The international outlook gained here at Putney, the out-of-doors, and the need for resilience amidst adversity have helped me go into the world without fear. The encouragement advocated at Putney on social justice issues became part of me without my knowing it. At the height of my involvement in the second liberation movement in Kenya, with its inherent dangers, many would ask what was in it for me. My only reply was that it’s right to fight for social justice and for community development if we want and expect change.



**MRS. HINTON'S  
AUTHORIZATION TO  
ENTER NGOIMA'S CAMP**