

IMPACTFUL EMERGING LEADERS OF THE WIDER ATLANTIC

30 PORTRAITS OF ATLANTIC DIALOGUES
EMERGING LEADERS ALUMNI





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About Policy Center for the New South

The Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) is a Moroccan think tank aspiring to contribute to economic and social policies that provide answers to the collective challenges facing Morocco and the African continent, as integral parts of the global South. The PCNS advocates for an open, accountable, and enterprising "new South" that defines its own narratives and mental maps around the Mediterranean and the South Atlantic basins, embodied by a forward-looking relationship with the rest of the world. Through its analytical work and focus on dialogue and partnerships from different perspectives and disciplines, the think tank aims to cultivate African expertise and excellence.

About Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders Program

The ADEL program is for young leaders from around the Atlantic basin who have demonstrated leadership and initiative in their fields, who want to contribute to shaping the regional and global agenda in politics, finance, business, civil society and many other areas, who are eager to network with their peers and older, and who seek to foster and strengthen ties across the Atlantic Basin. Every year, this program brings together 30 to 50 young leaders between 25 to 35 years of age, from around the Atlantic basin and Africa for a three-day, tailor made policy immersion program that consists of structured group conversations with decision and opinion makers on key Atlantic development and cooperation issues, as well as informal meetings with innovative community leaders and think tank representatives.

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Summary

Introduction.....	06
Jessica Berlin, A Free Agent Filling the Gaps.....	08
Hamza Rkha, African Fields at Heart.....	12
Chidiogo Akunyili-Parr, Empowered and Empowering.....	16
Leonardo Párraga, Peace, Art & Reconciliation in Columbia	20
Bushra Ebadi, Multitasking for the Marginalized.....	24
Kheston Walkins, a Neuro-Innovator Serving People in Trinidad & Tobago	28
Ana Paula Barreto, Against All (Social and Racial) Odds	32
Prince Boadu, A Supply Chain Manager with an African Dream	36
Jessica Gottsleben, the Urge to Serve.....	40
Yassine Moustanjidi, "Out of the Eurocentric Box" Architect and Urbanist.....	44
Idia Irele, a US-Nigerian citizen training young leaders in Medellin.....	48
Hanae Beza, Impact Tech in Morocco.....	52
Eric Ntumba, Congolese Youth in Search of an Alternative.....	56
Carolina Zuheill Rosales, A Mexican Doctor with a Cause.....	60
Richard Seshie, Less Talk and More Action.....	64
Daniela Varela, A Passion for International Affairs.....	68
Emmanuel Lubanzadio, Working for Twitter	72
Joana Ama Osei-Tutu, Gender Without Borders.....	76
Jordan Kronen, Busy with Climate Change	80
Vicky Ngari, Where Fashion Meets Skills	84
Julian Colombo, A Political Ambition in Argentina	88
Scarlett Varga, Fundraising for evidence-based policy making in Brussels	92
Juan Diego Mujica Filippi, a Legal Mind behind Purpose-Driven Companies	96
Fatim Zahra Biaz, Rethinking "Work"	100
Blair Glencorse, Enhancing Accountability	104
Patricia Ahanda, Coaching for Leadership.....	108
Youssef Kobo, A Proud "Seat at the Table"	112
Edna Valencia Murillo, A Black Colombian Influencer.....	116
Seleman Kitenge, Speech Writer for AUDA-NEPAD.....	120
Clarissa Rios Rojas, Studying Existential Risk in Cambridge.....	124

Introduction

Empowering young leaders, promoting intergenerational dialogue, and bridging the North-South divide through more balanced conversations. Such are the cornerstones of the Moroccan think tank Policy Center for the New South's mission, and of its flagship young professionals program, the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) program. This book explores the journeys, aspirations and personal accounts of 30 ADEL alumni - young and ambitious individuals from across the Atlantic - Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, North America and Europe.

Who are these Emerging Leaders? Many are entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs driven by impact in their respective fields, ranging from agriculture to tech, public policies to coaching and fashion. They include engineers, architects, researchers, journalists, government officials, and members of civil society. All were selected to attend the carefully curated ADEL program leading up to the Atlantic Dialogues Conference, held by the Policy Center for the New South each December in Marrakech.¹

A cohort of 30 to 50 emerging leaders is gathered annually, three days prior to the conference, to discuss key strategic Atlantic development and cooperation issues and attend workshops with high-level experts before fully taking part in the Atlantic Dialogues conference. The alumni community, now 350-members strong from 67 countries, is diverse, inclusive and interconnected, as its members build strong ties that stand the test of time. They engage with each other and the PCNS both spontaneously and at the instigation of the Policy Center, which invites ADELS to speak at its conferences and contribute to its analytical production in the spirit of intergenerational dialogue. These young leaders are often multi-national, rooted in two or more continents by way of education and early experience, and deeply invested in filling in perception gaps and shaping narratives and the world around them. Idia Irele, for instance, both American and Nigerian by nationality, spent some time training young leaders in Latin America from Medellin, Colombia. Bushra Ebadi, raised in Mississauga, Canada, by Afghan refugee parents, advocates for a shift in approach in addressing migrant and marginalized communities' issues in a comprehensive way. Clarissa Rios Rojas (Peru), studies existential risks to humankind at Cambridge. Another young Ghanaian woman studied in Seoul, while an American with Korean and German roots found her calling in Afghanistan...

ADELS are part of a generation of leaders who are focused on delivering change, with "more action and less talk", as pointed out by Richard Seshie in Abidjan. Whether it is Anna Paula Barretto (Brazil), who combats racial and social inequality and determinisms from New York, Carolina Zuheill Rosales who brings healthcare to the disadvantaged and neglected communities in Mexico, or Kheston Walkins, who puts neuroscience to work for patients in Trinidad & Tobago, they all seek strong, positive, and long-lasting impact.

1. Original portrait publication dates are specified on account of the Covid-19 pandemic, which erupted while the series was in progress, becoming a major focus in the lives of ADELS in 2020.

This new generation is also driven by a strong and vocal commitment to Africa, to which many have returned to implement impactful projects after obtaining their university degrees, like Hamza Rkha Chaham and Hanae Bezaad in Morocco. Others having settled elsewhere, continue to actively impact the continent.

Some have found the ADEL program to be a genuine career stepping stone. Colombian journalist Edna Valencia Murillo, for example, built an extensive network, while Argentinean Julian Colombo made friends and role models of his peers. Others have manifested great political ambitions like Eric Ntumba who has clearly expressed his hope to someday hold the presidency in his country. In the United States, Jessica Gottsleben aspires to a seat in Congress.

They all share strong values and passions, as does the Policy Center for the New South: the improvement of public policies, gender equality and equity, so dear to the hearts of Joana Osei-Tutu (Ghana), Chidiogo Akunyili (Nigeria) and Patricia Ahanda (France), the importance of empowering young people and meritocracy as expressed by Youssef Kobo, the Belgian-Moroccan head of the A Seat at the Table organization, and a quest for transparency in public affairs and constant pursuit of innovative solutions as carried by Blair Glencorse. Last but not least, all these ADEL alumni are proponents of critical thinking and “out of the box” achievement. They grant themselves the freedom to chart their own destiny, like Leonardo Parraga in Colombia, or Jessica Berlin and Yassine Moustanjidi in Germany. In short, these leaders are an inspiration to both the North and South as they seek to have impact in their respective fields and also build strong ties across the Wider-Atlantic with their peers. In doing so, they are contributing to the PCNS’s mission of enhancing dialogue and partnership, building bridges of understanding, and changing narratives and mental maps around the Atlantic basin for a more equal and inclusive future.

The PCNS is glad to present this book of 30 portraits of ADEL Alumni from across cohorts, regions, fields, and backgrounds, ten years after the inception of the ADEL program in 2012. Since then, this program has continued to bring young professionals together on an annual basis, and is leveraging the power of community for greater positive impact.

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JESSICA BERLIN

A Free Agent Filling the Gaps

- December 13th, 2021 -

This political analyst, expert in security issues and international development, describes her personality as “*down to earth, curious*”, and not taking herself “*very seriously*”. Born in Seattle, half German and half Korean-American, she was raised “*between three cultures*”. After a decade living and working abroad in Rwanda, China, Afghanistan, the UK, and Myanmar, she is now based in Berlin. She’s fond of cooking and a “beer nerd” – her German side, definitely.

This 36 years old political analyst for DW News, the global news channel of German public broadcaster Deutsche Welle, and founder of CoStruct, a consulting firm, has an impressive record. Not of the least is her TEDx Talk about the transatlantic democracy crisis. “*My career and life have been quite global, she says. I work with organizations from across the world and across the public and private sectors.*”

A strong drive to be her own boss

Her firm, CoStruct, has supported nonprofits, foundations, investment funds, and government agencies with strategy and program design. Jessica is also supporting partnership development in Europe, Asia and the Middle East and serves as Vice Chairman of the Board for a pan-African fintech company.

She has a strong drive to be her own boss and have firm belief in what she does. When friends ask her if she’s ever going to go back to a good job in some big institution, she laughs. “*I became my own boss because I saw the need for people who can think and act outside of silos, who work between institutions to fill the gaps and connect the dots.*”

As a member of the advisory board of Europa Nova, a think tank based in Paris, she’s analyzing the security policy of Europe and the Transatlantic alliance, an organization “at a turning point”, she says. “*We struggle to redefine ourselves in the 21st century because our systems and thinking are still based on 20th-century assumptions. Now that I’m back in Europe, it’s important for me to contribute to challenging those assumptions, strengthen collaboration between my home countries, and bring a global perspective to our internal debates. Germany and the US need each other, and the world needs us to evolve faster.*”

“A masterclass in how not to do things”

It takes a little while for Jessica Berlin to open up and tell her story. It’s only when asked which travels made the biggest impression on her that she speaks of Afghanistan, the root cause of her free positioning in life. “*A country so beautiful and with such wonderful people, but failed and betrayed for so long by its own leaders, neighbors and the international community*”. She describes as a “*turning point*” her stay in Mazar-e Sharif and Pul-e Khumri from 2011-12, where she was working for an international development agency.

“What I saw was truly a masterclass in how not to do things. The most concerning in my view was the readiness, even when issues were flagged, to continue with bad strategies and decisions that we knew did not work.” To stay in this sector seemed comfortable but unconscionable: *“You’re paid very well and seen by some like a combination of James Bond and Mother Teresa, she laughs. But if I know I am part of the problem I am supposed to solve, then I can’t stay in good conscience”*. Her gut feeling was to leave, not really knowing what would come next.

Another trip that left a strong impression on her, for the opposite reasons, was in Cape Town, South Africa. *“I spent a winter seminar at the University of Cape Town as an undergrad and fell in love with this city constantly recreating itself, so diverse, with so many cultures coming together.”*

Some deep knowledge

Jessica Berlin applied to the ADEL program in 2017, after somebody in the German Marshall Fund sent her some information. *“It was transformative: the people, the network, brilliant and diverse minds. They have been part of my life since 2017. My ADEL friends and colleagues around the world are doing incredible work.”*

She loves nature, feels happy anywhere with mountains and the sea, and speaks highly of one of her latest reads – *A Fistful of Shells : West Africa from the Rise of the Slave Trade to the Age of Revolution*, by Tony Green. *“This history book has been written by a professor who gathered primary sources about West African pre-colonial global trade and political relations that had been dispersed in archives around the world, as well as oral histories that had been excluded or overlooked in past research.”*

She also mentions *The Dawn of Everything, a New History of Humanity*, by David Graeber and David Wengrow, a book on prehistory ripping apart all kinds of stereotypes about our ancestors living in caves and hunter-gathering, through the latest research about how societies were structured before agriculture. *“This book tells how diverse and sophisticated prehistoric social models already were, how civilization grew out of what came before. This research is very interesting, I learned things I didn’t even know I didn’t know. In the policy space, we need to question our assumptions more. We too often view history and causality through lenses that limit our visions for the future. We think we know where we come from and where we’re going, but we don’t. We’ve just started scratching the surface.”*





HAMZA RKHA

African Fields at Heart

- June 30th, 2021 -

After completing his studies abroad, Hamza Rkha co-launched a start-up in 2018 with an associate, at 27 years of age. Their company, named SOWIT, is based in Casablanca, Dakar and Paris. It provides data-based decision support tools to African farmers. Through an App and processed satellite images, it helps optimize irrigation, fertilization and phyto-sanitary situations.

“We work exclusively in Africa, says Hamza Rkha, with products designed for the weak connectivity of old generation telephones, situations of water stress in North Africa and much-needed fertilizers in West and East Africa”. Access is also key. The basic subscription costs 10 euros yearly per hectare, and more if a farmer expresses several needs. In 2020, SOWIT’s growth continued despite the pandemic and covered 45 000 hectares, mainly in Morocco, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Senegal. Its aim is to keep expanding in Côte d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Kenya, with solutions crafted for local needs.

A special love for the countryside

As a child, Hamza Rkha dreamt of becoming a farmer with some livestock, to be able to offer his family a sheep for the Eid Al-Adha feast. Some of his relatives live from agriculture, but his parents are city people. “I spent maybe 10 % of my time in the fields, but it was always the most intense time for me”, he recalls.

This young man, now aged 30, has worked for Danone in New York, Roland Berger Strategy Consultants in Paris and Parrot, the leading European civil and professional drones manufacturer. He served as an international business developer, developing the company activities in Africa, the Middle East and South-East Asia His experience spans across 15 countries on the continent. Instead of boasting about it, he humbly shares that he “was always surprised with the ability of farmers to absorb information, even when they are not so specialized, like a civil servant in Accra who has a field of mango trees or a small pineapple plantation”.

Back to Africa

Why did he pick HEC Paris to finish his studies, after a year in Austin, Texas? *“It was the only school allowing me to train partly in Africa – and I spent 2016 at Wits University in Johannesburg to enjoy the culture”.* He also found “very interesting” subjects in his prep class, such as geopolitics, geography and history. *“My aim in France was to travel as much as possible, discover things and be on the ground”.*

On the ground is exactly where he came across the ADEL program. Seyi, a young Nigerian farmer he met and trained in Zambia, an ADEL Alumnus himself, advised him to apply. *"I was also interested in getting back in touch with geopolitics and international relations, a world I had left with SOWIT"*. As a member of the 2018 cohort, he remembers fondly the *"beautiful encounters with researchers and good times with fellow young leaders, to simply understand people from different African, European and American backgrounds"*. Another side of the program he enjoys: the lasting links and contacts it offers, long after the Atlantic Dialogues conference.

Hamza's role models are *"simple and unknown people who live detached from the material world, like an old man you may come across on the other side of the street, who has devoted his life to a specific craft for 50 years with patience and respect, and who gets his strength and charisma from understanding that we are nothing"*. He finds it difficult to find such character traits among the mighty and the famous, but mentions Nelson Mandela and Alexandre Soljenitsyne, *"because they have seen the world and stayed the same for decades"*.

Besides Balzac, Maupassant and other novelists who describe the *"mechanic of human relations"*, Hamza reads history books such as Abdellah Laroui's History of the Maghreb and is inspired by autobiographies of *"people like Gandhi, who did good around them, with greatness and humility"*.





CHIDIOGO AKUNYILI-PARR

Empowered and Empowering

- January 21th, 2021 -

This young woman comes across as a striking beauty, body and soul. Born and raised in Enugu, Nigeria, she shines. She's not only a voice for others, but first and foremost her own person. She founded She ROARs in 2016, a platform dedicated to unleash the potential of young female leaders in Africa and the diaspora. It really took off after an important gathering of more than 300 African women in August 2017 in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania. The "Women Advancing Africa" conference was organized by the Graça Machel Trust, named after the former First Lady of Mozambique and widow of Nelson Mandela.

"I was invited as one of the core moderators to anchor the event, Chidiogo Akunyili remembers. I thought it was a shame to come all this way and not take advantage of the capacity of so many women gathered in the same place, besides the regular talks. I thought: what if we did something different, something bolder? We had a moment of 300 women sobbing after sharing some very personal stories, opening up to different types of violence they had endured. The need to connect, take time to breathe and realize that you are not alone was overwhelming."

Self-development for young professionals

She was so inspired by the gap between that need and what a few organizations can do to support entrepreneurial women that she decided to take further her action. *"There is no organization promoting wellness and the acknowledgement of pain – from sexual atrocities to pressures at work, from sexual abuses to struggling with a husband, or struggling to have a husband."*

The association works through coaching, workshops, seminars and conferences. With a light team of 5, three women in different areas in the world and two technicians in Casablanca, Morocco, helping with the online side of the activity, it has already reached 2000 women, mostly young professionals aged 27-37. The seminars and one-to-one coaching sessions address the impact one can have, the relation between personal and professional life, vision and goal setting methods and work on leadership qualities.

Her dream is to reach out to millions of women in Africa, North America and the Caribbean. The mission is not focused on therapy, but self-development. *"You can't give what you don't have, she says: your own strength, peace of mind, trust to your intuition and discernment. Young women are constantly shutting themselves down because they are told they're not good enough."*

After all, Chidiogo knows her subject inside out. Her late mother, the multi-awarded pharmacist Dora Akuniyili (1954-2014), is an icon in Nigeria. She was the uncompromising head of the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) between 2001 and 2008. As the Director-General of this regulatory

agency, *“she wouldn’t take bribes and did what no man could ever do: she changed the rules of the game for operators in the food and drugs industry in Nigeria”*. Recipient of the Integrity Award of Transparency International in 2003 and named *“One of the 18 heroes of our times”* by Time Magazine in 2006, she was the Minister of Information and Communications from 2008 to 2010 in Nigeria. Chidiogo, who has five siblings, is currently writing a book about her, to inspire others.

French-speaking, against all odds

As for her own trajectory, it is already telling. She decided to study International Relations & Economics at SAIS, John Hopkins, and French. These two subjects were *“broad enough to figure out later”* what her options could be. She was eager to understand the world and human interactions, and get the skills she felt insecure about not having. That’s why she chose International Relations instead of Law, recommended by her parents. But why French? A big revenge on life: she had a negative experience with a French teacher who slapped her in class when she was 11.

“I internalized the story I was not smart enough for French and put up a wall, thinking this is not for me. When I was 17, my sister had this crazy idea for me: spend the summer learning French in Vichy. I was excited, and two months later I came back speaking French, because the teacher focused on me when I was crying in class, and I was living in a family whose children didn’t speak English.” She spent a year in Germany and learned the language, and then moved to China, where she worked on her undergraduate piece on China and Africa. She came back speaking Chinese, which she believes is an *“important language to understand, so that colonization doesn’t happen again”*. Now aware of her gift at learning languages, she went for a year to Bologna, Italy, for her Masters, and then to Mexico for six weeks, adding Italian and Spanish to her skills.

She has already been named among the 100 most inspiring women in Nigeria by The Guardian, an acknowledgment of her commitment towards the African woman’s cause. She is also a World Economic Forum Global Leadership Fellow, and an Associate Fellow of the Nigerian Leadership Initiative.

Now based in Canada, she travels a lot and keeps going to Nigeria. When asked about her hometown, Enugu, located in a region formerly known as Biafra, she immediately answers: *“We never talk about the impact of the Biafra war, that killed 2 million people between 1967 and 1970. A lot of the challenges in Nigeria have their roots in this unaddressed aftermath of the civil war”*. One more good reason to work on the rise of strong women is *“not allowing anyone to tell them who they are”*. Chidiogo Akunyili is convinced that female leaders have the ability to change the world.





LEONARDO PÁRRAGA

*Peace, Art & Reconciliation
in Columbia*

- May 20th, 2020 -

He is a young man like no other. One can spot him easily in a crowd by the way he dresses and addresses the issues with which he is concerned. Leonardo Párraga, an award-winning social entrepreneur and alternative education activist, was born in Colombia with the soul of an artist. He writes poetry, engages with photography, and finds inspiration in the writings of Walt Whitman, whom he describes as the poet of “interconnectedness”.

At 25, he left Bogotá for Harvard University, for a Master’s program in International Education Policy. At the time, he had already spent five years working on “*how to create community engagement through non formal education*”, he explains. He wanted to complement his experience with the arts and creative thinking, and “*explore how education can foster peace in the Colombian context*”. He also felt like being part of an international network of practitioners in his field, to help him “*get other insights on how to foster social change and activism in a more effective way*”.

Since his year spent in Harvard, he has been traveling a lot, but has been fully back in Bogota since 2019. He launched the BogotArt Foundation in 2013, to conduct work at the intersection of art and community development in vulnerable neighborhoods. In 2016, his team started to expand through partnerships, working on transformation in a neighborhood “*through creativity, diverging thinking and self-knowledge*”. That was the year Leonardo Párraga became an Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leader (ADEL), and traveled across the Atlantic to Marrakech to take part in the Policy Center for the New South’s young professionals’ program and flagship conference, the Atlantic Dialogues. There, he found a unique “*kind of network*” with young professionals from all horizons. “*Usually, networks are really specialized, but this was different, something magical and enlightening. I learned about South-South cooperation, something I had not seen before with direct connection between Africa and Latin America.*”

Towards peace and reconciliation

The BogotArt Foundation has now reached a third stage, looking for ways of achieving peace and reconciliation. It launched a campaign called Cartas por la Reconciliación (Letters for Reconciliation), with two other organizations, the Junior Chamber International and Youth for Youth Foundation. “*We realized we could bridge the gap between citizens and the FARC ex-combatants, to connect them and help to dismantle stereotypes and labels about the other, that generate hatred and negative feelings*”, Leonardo Párraga recalls. More than 5,000 people participated, in the broader context of the implementation of a peace agreement. Four field visits were also organized for 500 people into FARC strongholds, in order to have “*face to face conversations*”.

This campaign, thanks to its large visibility in the media, allowed the Colombian people to *"notice the importance of reconciliation and of generating spaces to interact with one another"*, he says. It nurtured the global policy paper *We are here*, a United Nations study on the role of youth in peace processes, where the willingness of society at large to welcome back ex-combatants of armed groups such as FARC was highlighted. He received the Youth Carnegie Peace Prize in 2018 and was named the Youth Ambassador of the Peace Palace in the Netherlands. In 2019, he was awarded the 1 Billion Acts Hero Award during the Nobel Peace Laureates Summit in Mexico, and was part of the ADEL alumni delegation to the Paris Peace Forum. In December 2019, he also came back to Marrakech to address the 2019 ADEL Cohort about the importance of collective memory in the reconciliation process.

A new campaign: Letters for Healing

The COVID-19 crisis has brought about an opportunity for further engagement, and has led Leonardo towards a new campaign, Letters for Healing, to help others cope with the crisis. With two international partners, he intends to connect people suffering from the crisis with messages of support and understanding, sent by people from all over the world. The recipients, spread across Colombia, Mexico and Spain, will be health practitioners, essential workers in supermarkets, delivery and cleaning services, but also infected people and their family members. Formally launched on May 22nd, 2020, the campaign seeks to improve mental health in this tough period and aims at sending 20,000 letters by the end of the year.

Inspired by the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu for their work on peace and reconciliation, he also mentions Martin Luther King and his letter from the Birmingham jail, as a *"powerful way to transform and give perspective on a new kind of society"*. The singer Nessi Gomes catches his attention with the song *All Related*, about how much human beings are interconnected and can only thrive together. *"If we were more mindful of the consequences that our actions have in our environment, we would reduce the harm we do to the world."*





BUSHRA EBADI

Multitasking for the Marginalized

- September 20th, 2021 -

Bushra Ebadi speaks fast, in an even tone and a very articulate way. This social innovator, a strong personality raised in Mississauga (Canada) by parents who fled their country, Afghanistan, has a lot to say and even more to do. Since July 2021, she is a Network Coordinator for Amnesty International, based in Canada. Her mission: *“Establish through a collaborative process a global civil society network on data-surveillance technologies to promote the rights of displaced persons and migrants in the digital age”*.

This is far from being her only activity. In March 2020, she co-founded the Health and Information Literacy Access (HILA) Alliance. Her organization is in contact with key groups around the world including the WHO and UNESCO, developing strategies and programs to address infodemics, including disinformation on COVID-19.

“We apply decolonial, intersectional, and intergenerational approaches to improve access to credible and timely information on COVID-19 for systematically marginalized individuals and communities, including Indigenous and racialized people. Many communities lack meaningful and timely access to credible information and are hindered from making informed decisions on issues that impact their wellbeing. Young people have been especially mischaracterized throughout the pandemic and are wrongly seen as apathetic.” Besides conducting research and developing accessible information guides, HILA has organized webinars with diverse experts around the world on issues related to the pandemic, including mental health and empathy.

Transforming systems

Focused on *“transforming systems and promoting human rights, peace, equity, justice, and sustainability through strategic foresight, interdisciplinary research, design and systems thinking, policy analysis, and storytelling”*, Bushra Ebadi is a specialist in yet another list: *“gender and youth mainstreaming, refugee rights, media and information literacy, technology ethics and futures”*.

She is also, since October 2019 a Youth Ambassador for the UNESCO Media and Information Literacy (MIL) Alliance. Her experience includes being a Global Advisor in 2020-21 to the 33-year-old Tunisian activist and diplomat Aya Chebbi, member of The Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, once again engaging with youth, refugees, and marginalized communities.

As a Research Associate at the UNICEF Office of Global Insight and Policy (OGIP), she worked on *“ensuring insights from youth leaders, activists, and experts were mainstreamed into UNICEF’s report on Prospects for children: a global outlook through 2025”*. She was also a consultant with Algora Lab and Mila Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, in 2020, co-leading deliberative consultations (Global Youth, Global Indigenous Peoples, and Subregional African) to ensure diverse communities were engaged in the development and review of UNESCO’s draft principles on Artificial Intelligence Ethics.

Human rights at heart

But who is Bushra Ebadi, beyond all the multitasking? She describes herself as a *“dedicated, empathic, and creative”* soul. An analytic mind finding in poetry *“a joy that is rooted in my own Persian culture”*. She was always interested in peacebuilding. *“Growing up as a first-generation Afghan Canadian, I was exposed to and learned about global affairs from a young age. Politics, Bollywood movies, and religion were all discussed at the dinner table. I grew up with an understanding that injustice and gender inequity exist in many different contexts. These issues transcend borders and are not relegated to one part of the world or a select group of people. They are systemic and represent a global challenge that we must address collectively.”*

As a child, she wanted to become a human rights lawyer. She studied Political Science and Philosophy at McGill University, then Global Affairs at the University of Toronto. She is critical of *“the tendency to romanticize refugees’ journeys after they have been resettled and not create the conditions to support and protect displaced people from the outset.”*

When asked about the current situation in Afghanistan, she goes straight to the point. This is *“complex and frustrating, with history repeating itself and so many groups providing opinions on topics they don’t have expertise on – creating false perceptions”*. She worries that in the face of converging crises, *“politicians around the world will increasingly scapegoat marginalized communities, to draw attention away from corruption and ineffective governance systems and policies”*.

“Co-learning and creating, instead of competition”

Bushra Ebadi found out about the ADEL program through another alum. Leonado Parraga, one of her friends who she met at the 2017 UNESCO Youth Forum, recommended that she apply in order to mobilize people for collective action. It immediately interested her, as she is convinced that *“solutions are rooted in communities and shifting and reimagining power so that it does not stay concentrated in the hands of a select group of people or industries”*.

In the field of peacebuilding, she adds, *“competition is not useful, whereas co-learning and creating are core values that ought to be nurtured and promoted. I loved meeting people in Marrakech and having interesting conversations with them on the bus or at dinners. This wider dialogue across the Atlantic is raising critical questions on whose existence, presence, knowledge, and experiences we value. It is really important to be supported and honored in meaningful ways, and not tokenized.”*

She sees the Policy Center’s initiative as *“the beginning, as more needs to be done to create a space that is conducive to dialogue. It should be a priority on the African continent that discussions be led and addressed by people from the continent. Similar to my experiences with Afghanistan; many people talk but lack a nuanced understanding and don’t have to live with the consequences of misguided ideas and policies!”*





KHESTON WALKINS

*A Neuro-Innovator Serving People
in Trinidad & Tobago*

- September 16th, 2020 -

His warmth comes as naturally as his strong sense of empathy, obvious from the first encounter. No coincidence there: since his childhood, Kheston Walkins, CEO and Chief of Neuroinnovation Officer of Allegori, based in Trinidad & Tobago, has a “fascination for the human brain” and its infinite possibilities. He spent time reading Encyclopedias and dictionaries when he was a child, rather than novels and history books. His mother, a teacher, “*exchanged her sleep for our survival*”, he says about his family, which has no scientific background.

His passion led him straight to study medical neuroscience at the University of Sussex in Brighton, without going for the classic path of medicine studies. He is now a PhD candidate in Molecular Genetics at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad & Tobago.

Sleep, focus and anxiety problems

Kheston Walkins was born on the 29th February 1988 in this twin-island country, a small and oil-rich Caribbean state facing Venezuela. “*I can only celebrate my birthday every four years*”, he says with a smile. But he’s clearly too busy to care about that. In a small notebook, he writes all his innovative ideas and works on executing them. “*That’s how it is supposed to be, he told the radio program Caribbean Power Lunch. As human beings, we are supposed to fathom the incredible, create the crazy. Developing countries have the power to create the impossible, like Kenya or Colombia are doing with technology.*”

After launching an award-winning app called Communicare, focused on helping communication between stroke patients and health professionals, he co-founded the company Allegori in 2018, first with pilot projects, then offering services to the public. Since January 2019, his company has helped 430 people with sleep, focus and anxiety problems. “*Using the knowledge in neuroscience adds so much value to people*”, he says.

Problems worsened by the COVID-19 crisis

How does it work? “*We start from the end, explains the neuroscientist. We collect data with EEG (electro-encephalogram), and if our client has a sleeping problem, we look at the brain when someone is sleeping, then teach how to get as close to that as possible. For instance, the brain can ignore that your clothes are touching your skin... Or if you just cut your finger, it can ignore the pain if something else is happening at the same time. It’s possible to help the body out of will, to regulate the brain activity in order to move quickly asleep. All we do is give people power and control.*” The results are more than convincing, with a 100% rate of success. “*One patient decidedly slept for 11 hours, even though she could hardly sleep for 4 hours before, and another could get an extra night of sleep per week.*”

The main innovation Kheston Walkins has introduced is to analyze and use EEG data to drive the change expected by the clients. All the problems he is addressing, lack of focus, sleeplessness and anxiety became worse with the COVID-19 crisis. *“Children who stayed at home during the lockdown are back at school, and have focus issues because they are playing on their phones until midnight, instead of going to bed at 9 pm. I’ve noticed that lots of executives in companies have encountered sleeping problems, because of new levels of stress in the way business is done. Working from home has also brought confusion, with no proper turn off in the evening.”*

Other fields of work Kheston Walkins has developed include pain management. *“Resolving chronic pain is also possible, as we have noticed with helping people with sleep challenges. One patient couldn’t walk or wear shoes, and ran for 5 kilometers after training with us. It’s very moving for us, and powerful to see how beautiful and interesting the brain is. When given the right instructions it can do a lot more for us than we would expect.”*

Export in countries with little access to mental health

COVID-19 has also changed the way Allegori conducts its business, accepting one patient at a time and offering its services fully online. The aim is now to grow regionally and internationally. The first steps have been taken, through partnerships with Caiman Islands and two agencies in Trinidad & Tobago.

Kheston’s dream is as simple as it is consistent with his own journey: *“Keep on doing what I’m meant to be on the planet doing, reaching out to the Caribbean and West Africa, in countries where mental health services are not developed.”*

This is partly what drove him to attend the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) program in December 2019 in Marrakech. There, he found exactly what he was expecting: *“to meet young and interesting people from different parts of the world and exchange”*. He was also impressed with *“the passion of the African political elite present at Atlantic Dialogues for their countries. Trinidad & Tobago has a population of 1.3 million, while some cities in Africa are ten times bigger. The challenges are so massive, but I could see core values such as passion, interest in progress and care for the future of Africa.”*

A keen listener of audiobooks, he mentions Brainfluence and The 7 habits of highly effective people as mind-blowing, as well as the business book Blue Ocean Strategy. Filled with optimism, this bright young scientist is determined to make his scientific knowledge useful for everyone, every day.





ANA PAULA BARRETO

Against All (Social and Racial) Odds

- September 22nd, 2020 -

Ana Paula Barreto talks about serious matters with great calm, taking time to reflect before answering questions, from New York. Born in Jardim Angela, a poor area of São Paulo, considered as the most dangerous neighborhood in the world by the United Nations in 1996, she remembers the violence of the favelas. She doesn't want to reduce her childhood *"in a joyful family" to "the ugly"*, but one of her strongest memories is seeing the bodies of people murdered during the weekend, on her way to school on Monday mornings. At a young age, Ana Paula Barreto realized that her *"community was lacking the conditions and opportunities to have a dignified life"*. She decided that she would be an *"agent of change, promoting social and racial justice"*. In one of the most unequal societies in the world, she reminds that *"54 % of the population is of African descent, but we are very invisible in decision-making circles, universities and politics"*.

Promoting equality and equity, *"meaning that the people with less access to education, health and resources will achieve the same"*, soon became her *raison d'être*. After school, she was able to attend University. A *"historical accident"*, as she calls it. It was still impossible for Black students coming from a poor background to study in the early 2000's, because of a historical systemic racist and elitist selection process. *"Some of the best universities in Brazil are public, thus free, but the middle-class and rich people send their children to private schools. For people like me who went to public schools, the exam to enter University was impossible to pass. Its level was too high for the quality of my education"*.

"Racial and Social quotas" at University

Fortunately, the Lula administration, with the historical support of Black movements, created affirmative action programs in the mid-2000's, at the time she was finishing High school. Thanks to a Law of Racial and Social Quotas passed in 2012, no less than half of the admission spots benefit pupils who attended public schools, most of them being indigenous and Black. *"If I was born 20 years before, my possibilities would have been very low. President Lula showed how public policies can change a country. Today, there is a whole generation of Black Brazilian professionals and this is changing Brazilian society"*. A system of scholarships was also introduced to give more access to private universities. That is how Ana Barreto could study International Affairs with a full bursary at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica of São Paulo. *"We were 30 in my class, and two of us were coming from a black and poor background"*.

After college, she applied to the United Nations and went to Brasília, a 90 minutes' flight from São Paulo, for a six month internship. This was the last *"critical investment"* she asked her family to make for her, as her internship would be unpaid and she would have no time to work alongside her office hours. Her parents took a loan, to cover all her expenses for six months. When she moved back to São Paulo, she worked for UNICEF, while participating in human rights projects in her community with local organizations, and volunteering as a popular educator.

New York, Addis Ababa, Marrakesh

She then was selected by the Atlas Corps for a one-year fellowship in New York in 2015 with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), a global

NGO launched in Mumbai (India) in 1952 and headquartered in London. *“They bring professionals from the global South to get experience contributing in U.S. organizations”*, she explains. In New York, she assisted staff by managing the portfolio of sexual and reproductive health programs related to youth, gender-based violence, and HIV/STIs. It went so well that she stayed for six more months, before moving back to Brazil and prepare her next step: a Master’s degree in International Affairs, which she started in 2017 at the New School University of New York, with a focus on racial justice and global health.

With a group of students, she went to Addis Abeba, Ethiopia, for a research project on Women Economic Empowerment through loans. There, she worked with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on internally displaced communities, doing advocacy with the African Union. Also in touch with the Brazilian Embassy, she organized a Film Festival in 2018 in Addis Abeba, on Black Brazilians in cinema. Her experience in Ethiopia was *“powerful”*, she says, as she was able to *“see the similarities with people of African descent, not only physically but with food and dances that have not been lost throughout the centuries, the transatlantic slave trade and colonization”*.

The same year, she was selected as a Fellow of the OHCHR in Geneva for the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024), and by the Policy Center for the New South, for the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program in Morocco. *“The Atlantic Dialogues were an amazing experience in that very special year for me. I was on the last panel of the conference representing my cohort and talking about youth, transformation and creating a more just society. It was an honor, and I was able to connect to so many people doing great work!”*

Racial justice and global health

She has now completed her master’s about health outcomes of Black Brazilian women, *“in the only country in the world having a public health policy focused on the African descent community”*. Currently working as the Director of Programs with Afro Resistance, a small NGO launched in 2010 in New York, she deals with racial justice, human rights and democracy in the Americas, with a focus on Black women, notably from the Caribbean and Latin America. The NGO provides online conversations, research projects and conversations bringing local community voices to international decision-making spaces.

Her dream is *“to make a difference in the Americas by uniting global health, racial justice and ancestral knowledge of our people”*. She hopes to make innovative and impactful work, as well as becoming a reference in this unique approach. *“I also hope to work in government, a critical strategic space if we want to really promote systematic change through public policies”*. Her role models are an exact reflection of the way she describes herself: *“Passionate, Black, visionary”*... Among them, the US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar, 38, born in Somalia, and Vilma Reis, 51, sociologist and activist from Salvador de Bahia, whom she describes as a *“historical figure that did a lot on the intersection of civil society, government and human rights for the most marginalized people”*. One of her favorite readings is Lelia Gonzalez (1935-1994), a Brazilian anthropologist, professor, politician and activist, *“for her complex analysis of the world we live in”*.





PRINCE BOADU

*A Supply Chain Manager with an
African Dream*

- May 17th, 2021 -

Born and raised in Accra, Prince Boadu thrives on love and self-confidence. His role models are no other than his wife and two pastors in Ghana, Prophet Edem Julius-Cudjoe and Pastor Isaac Oti Boateng, founder of “*Love Economy*”, a mix of management and Christian spirituality. Prince Boadu’s own selfless dream is to “*create pathways for others to succeed*”.

Since 2016, he has settled in Darmstadt, a city close to Frankfurt. He works as a distribution requirements manager for P&G Health Germany GmbH. “*I have no background in pharmacy, he explains, but it’s a matter of mindset, of always learning and adapting*”.

How did he land in Germany? It’s a lifelong story. Prince Boadu grew up in police barracks in Accra. His mother was a police officer and his father a small entrepreneur, operating a few buses to feed his family. He first studied Building Technology at the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), thinking this was “*not pure science*” and could be useful. He then developed a strong interest in supply chain management, and got an MBA in that field (2011-13).

For one year, in 2010-11, he was a teaching and research assistant at KNUST School of Business (KSB). There, he worked on the implementation of the Agricultural Skill Development Program, a partnership between KNUST, the World Cocoa Foundation, the US chocolate producer Archer Daniels Midland (ADM Cocoa, subsidiary of Olam International) and Safmarine, a South African shipping company. He also assisted the Department in proposals leading to the establishment of the West Africa Institute for Supply Chain Leadership (WAISCL), to help businesses grow their markets and find competitive solutions.

Helping others with The Kumasi Hive

After his MBA, he joined for a few months in 2014 the social enterprise Clean Team Ghana Ltd, providing affordable toilets facilities for the urban poor. He then became a fellow of Africa kommt!, a German program that brings together the “*most visionary young leaders from Africa and leading German companies*”. He was among the 30 selected from a pool of 3,900 candidates to do a nine months internship, and was chosen by Merck KGaA. He worked in the consumer health division called Merck Selbstmedikation GmbH (MSM). His performance led him to get hired and promoted. After MSM got acquired by P&G, Prince took on the role as Manager for Distribution Requirements Planning and currently the distribution of pharmaceutical products to central, eastern and southern Europe, Latin America, Asia, Middle-East and Africa, leading a team of five distribution planners.

His feet may be in Germany, but his heart still beats for the continent. His dream of “*creating pathways for others to succeed*” has everything to do with solidarity and a sense of sharing. Somewhat overrated qualities of African societies? He finds a need to go against “*a general attitude of not making sure our fellow-citizens succeed*”.

He co-founded in 2016 the Kumasi Hive, a coworking multipurpose innovation space based in the second biggest city in Ghana. He is still a director of this structure, proposing working spaces for entrepreneurs who cannot afford to pay rent, and

organizing incubator programs to identify young entrepreneurs and lead them to potential funding. *“The aim is to focus on hardware innovation, such as 3D printing and additive manufacturing, a radical shift from the traditional focus on software across the continent. We want to help a lot of the young innovators to really do their prototyping in a cost-effective way.”* The Hive has gathered the impressive support of 58 partners, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the MasterCard Foundation and Merck KGaA.

“We started putting our own money in Kumasi Hive, because in Ghana, you have to pay two years of rent in advance when you want a contract. My co-founder and I do not get paid yet, but we gave employment to 47 people, our current staff.” Over 3,000 entrepreneurs have been helped since 2016, 200 events organized around skills with 4,200 attendees, and about 6,000 women trained for longer than six months.

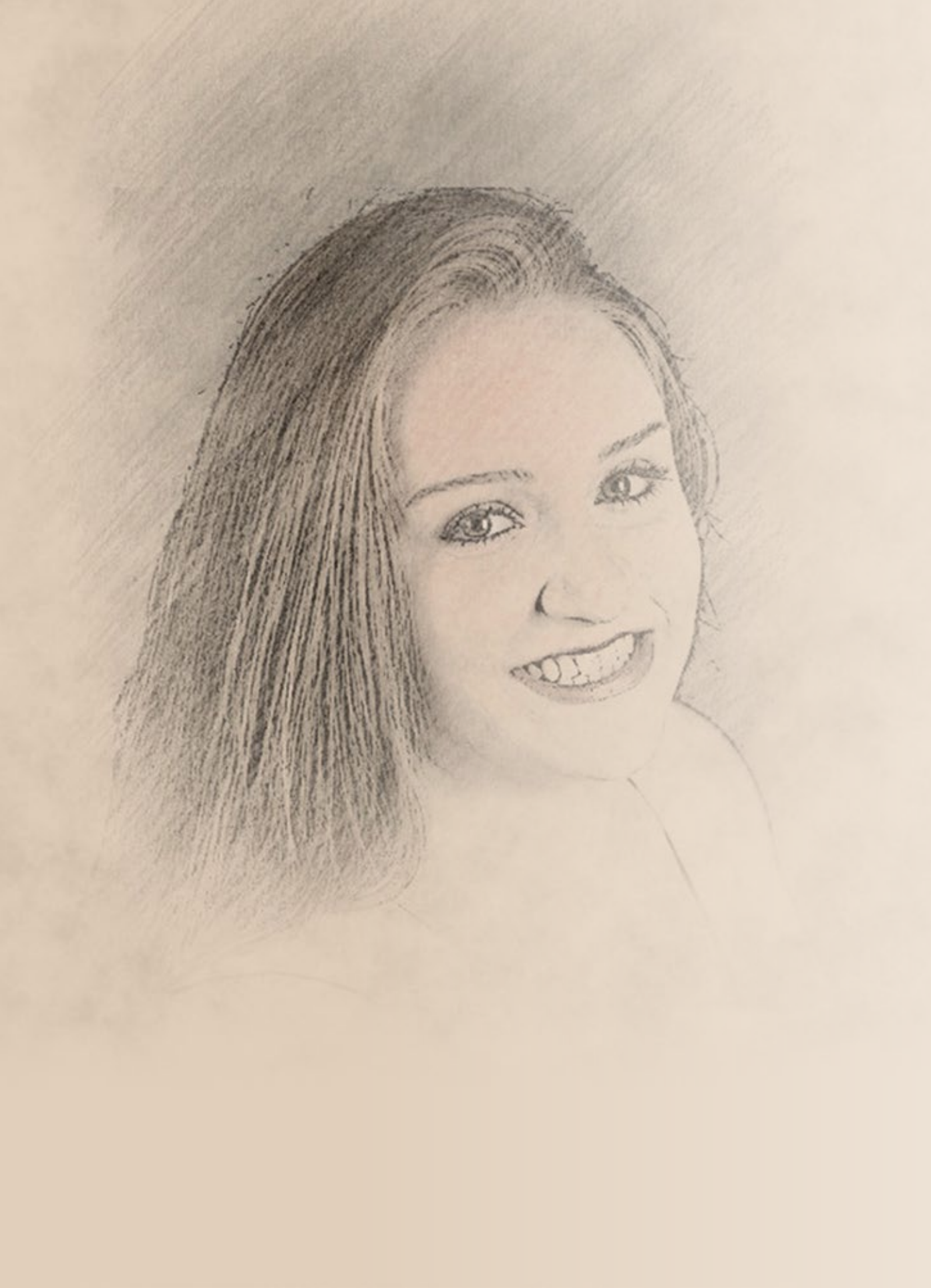
The future: producing cheaper devices in Africa

Selected by the American magazine Forbes among the *“Africa 30 under 30”* in 2016, Prince Boadu is a World Economic Forum Global Shaper, and a TEDx organizer. He was also selected to be part of the fourth cohort of Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) in 2015. Applying was a *“no brainer”* for him, but he was surprised to be selected.

“A fascinating program. If we are able to convene people of similar mindset and generate conversations, new solutions are born which inevitably spark innovation.” Impressed by the “Red City” architecture, he kept strong connections with the people he met in Marrakesh, through a WhatsApp group. In Marrakesh, he was not only invited to speak on stage and build a new narrative. Prince was also a beneficiary of the support of the Policy Center for the New South, for a project named *“Girls in Biotech”*.

The question is not if he will ever go back to Africa, but when: *“If you pay attention to the global trends, the focus is now on the continent”*, he says. In the meantime, he is reading books about innovation (he mentions *The Prosperity Paradox* by Clayton Christensen, Efosa Ojomo and Karen Dillon), and broadening his network in order to get *“huge leverage”* when he goes back home.

His *“repat”* move is linked to MapTech, a company based in Ghana he created in 2015 to elaborate mapped-based solutions for its clients, using location data. *“We want to build a network of base stations instruments to collect data for agriculture, map areas with deforestation or air pollution, in collaboration with the Technology University of Delft in the Netherlands.”* The next stage is to manufacture devices in Ghana that would be more affordable than their current market price (10,000 dollars) and work with governments to build national geodetic reference framework via base stations across the countries, to collect more data and map out geographical assets. Considering the lack of data still hindering decision-makers in Africa, this business is on a promising pathway to succeed. As Prince Boadu puts it, *“wherever huge problems exist, huge opportunities also lie”*.





JESSICA GOTTSLEBEN

The Urge to Serve

- January 24th, 2022 -

This energetic and straightforward young American leader has made a crucial choice in life: to accomplish her mission the way she sees it, and embrace it. It may sound like the plot of a Paolo Coelho novel, but it is not, as her story is unfolding in real life.

Jessica Gottsleben (a surname that means “*God-life*” in German) brings to the fore a large array of different skills and interests. She is an American policy advisor and strategist, security scholar and researcher, human and civil rights advocate, consultant, and “*survivor expert*”. The latter expression may be unclear to some, but represents a pillar in her professional journey, as she will explain later.

Her areas of expertise include climate security, cybersecurity, intelligence, transformative and restorative justice, violence, exploitation, human trafficking and slavery, terrorism, sustainable development, peacebuilding, and security. Behind all of these areas and sectors, there is a soul determined to heal and give her life maximum purpose. Her next step is running for Congress, for greater impact. She warns in her CV: “*I have a limited time on this planet, and I will save as many lives as I possibly can with the time I’m granted. Here for transformational, not transactional.*”

She advised on The Paris Agreement on climate, provides counsel in cases of abuse and cyber abuse, recently secured legislation for a rape kit tracking system in Florida, and is actively working to end qualified immunity and coercive control in the United States. Qualified immunity refers to a series of legal precedents that protect government officials, including police officers, accused of violating constitutional rights, whereas coercive control is an oppressive behavior grounded in gender-based privilege, that invades all arenas of women’s activity by limiting access to money and other basic resources.

A survivor of sexual violence

Jessica serves on FreeFrom’s Survivor Wealth Policy Group, the Union of Concerned Scientists, and the international NGO Open Web Application Security (OWASP). She is a founding member of the Centre for Feminist Foreign Policy (CFFP), an Advocate for Hacking is NOT a Crime (an organization defending hackers’ rights) and a Security Fellow with the Truman National Security Project, aimed at rethinking US security. She’s also an Ambassador of Secure Diversity and has been serving on the Millennial Action Project’s Young Leaders Council for the last four years.

When asked about her main role currently, Jessica Gottsleben answers: “*Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) for organizations caring for the most vulnerable, domestic violence and terrorist attacks victims, women in danger, refugees, migrant children*”. Her work is to protect data and information, in order to “*keep people alive, because a security breach at any time could put them in danger*”.

As a CEO, she runs an organization for victims and survivors of violence and sexual violence, providing free assistance and training in cybersecurity. She serves “*people like myself who have been attacked on Gender based violence*”. She experienced trauma, through a criminal network. “*That’s why I got into what I do, I’ve witnessed*

women and girls die. After seeing that much violence, I have a responsibility to help. My guiding forces are that I have a responsibility to serve, as I'm very grateful to be alive. Victims of violence matter, they should be given not something to make them feel smaller but more important."

A multi-specialized professional with a mission

Her home State is Florida, where she is currently busy working on amendments to a law protecting the rights of nature, species and access to clean water. As a child, she dreamt of becoming a competitive dancer and an artist. *"I fell in love with the Everglades National Park and had a lot of interest in animals, conservation, justice and the arts"*. Later, she thought of associating the skills of a physicist and psychologist, to *"help provide, through science, an access to individuals from poor communities that are systematically excluded"*.

She studied Radio and TV journalism, as well as political science, and obtained a Master's degree in Justice and Security, specializing in cybersecurity and intelligence. She likes the idea of *"creating the space"*, as James Baldwin had put it in his writing, and is not afraid to explore *"a path less travelled. I'd rather be innovative and change the world than go with the status quo"*.

What does changing the world entail for her? Certainly not being in the limelight, as she is very clear about *"not being here for awards or magazines"*, but rather for *"influence on major policy decisions, such as the Paris Call for Trust on Cyberspace"*. She helped organize the Global Day of Action for Climate Justice, a day of demonstrations on November 6 held by the COP26 Coalition, gathering a team of leaders across the world. *"We keep making noise because we don't get the results we want, at a time of multiple overlapping crises, from human trafficking to climate change and environmental terrorism."*

While she was very focused on her work, some *"big leaders, international diplomats"* told her to apply to the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program. She applied in 2016, and was voted by her peers to represent the group as a panelist in the final plenary session of the Atlantic Dialogues. *"That was very exciting, and today, some of my favorite people to work with are from the ADEL community"*, she says. She takes part in the Policy Center for the New South activities, spoke during the last Atlantic Dialogues online conference, and is a member of a *"Global South network, something meaningful I don't often see in other think tanks and conferences"*.

Today, she is *"very intentional about healthy relationships, self-care and holistic care"*. She loves to sing, draw, dance and read, and was saddened by the passing on December 16, 2021 of the African-American writer Bell Hooks, an anti-racism and feminist icon. Gardening, animal rescue and yoga are also among her hobbies. While preparing to run for Congress, she stays humble. Her conviction is that *"many unknown leaders have greater impact"*.





YASSINE MOUSTANJIDI

*“Out of the Eurocentric Box”
Architect and Urbanist*

- October 28th, 2020 -

This young planner and lecturer at the Department of International Urbanism of the University of Stuttgart (Germany) spontaneously describes himself as a “*Marrakchi, ambitious and curious*” person. His birthplace and family’s influence matter a lot in his professional journey. Not only because the Red City is “*an inspiring place for its history, architecture and culture*”, but also because his grandfather was a well-established tile maker, who participated in the edification of many historical palaces in Marrakech.

“*I was just lucky enough to be able to listen to myself when I had to make a decision*”, he recalls. His choice was to study at the only public architectural school in Rabat, l’École nationale d’architecture (ENA). Getting admitted there was like “*winning the jackpot*”, he remembers, since only 60 students are selected each year among 3,000 applications. “*It was the right place, and it turned out to be great*”.

On his fourth year of a six years’ cursus, he got a scholarship for an exchange program at the University of Technology in Berlin, where he started what was going to be his new life in Germany. There, he took part in the large research project called “*Future Megacities – Energy- and Climate-Efficient Structures in Urban Growth Centres*”, and funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research. The project aimed at developing sustainable urban strategies in nine cities around the world, mainly located in the global South, each having a specific topic, such as water in Lima, mobility in Shanghai or urban agriculture in Casablanca.

Megacities of the Global South

He focused on Casablanca, “*a vibrant and dense city of 4 million inhabitants with scarce green spaces, where urban agriculture could be introduced as a productive green infrastructure, offering a new nexus between energy, food security, and sustainable urban development*”.

Vacant plots had to be spotted, among which some 20 hectares along train tracks. A discussion was engaged with the authorities and several pilot projects were implemented. The sustainable management of the scarce water resources was at the center of these projects. One of the solutions was to introduce on-site water treatment plants in informal settlements to recycle the used water of Hammams (public baths) for urban farming and the irrigation of green spaces.

After a year in Berlin, he spent 2012 in Shanghai, a megalopolis of 25 million dwellers, where everything takes place at another scale. “*I was very excited to go to China, a vibrant place, transforming very fast, with very bold ideas and daring experiments in architecture and urbanism you might not find anywhere else in the world.*” There, he learned the “*do’s and don’ts*” of the Chinese model.

Back in Berlin, he became a staff member of the project on megacities, as a coordinator until 2014. He worked on the implementation phase, testing new ideas, such as developing organic food production in a small field in Casablanca, with a corporation of 25 farmers who were trained. *“We organized the food baskets to connect the farmers to the inhabitants and markets, which led to a 200% to 300% increase of the farmers’ income.”*

Out of the Eurocentric Box

He remembers the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program fondly, being selected in 2015 to what he describes as one of the *“less Eurocentric”* leadership programs he has ever attended. *“It brings you tremendous energy, space for inspiration, networking and learning. You meet all these brilliant minds and energetic people from the Global South, from all sectors, who take you out of your bubble.”* The ADEL program was short in his view, *“but the network was way stronger afterwards”*.

Among his favorite readings, he mentions *Sapiens*, by Yuval Noah Harari, *“a brief history of human kind with interesting perspectives, on digitalization and how human beings are using their transformative power to change nature”*. He reflects on the impact of digitalization on urbanity, a big topic under the COVID-19 pandemic. The latter has uncovered huge spatial inequalities in cities, and calls for the rethinking of urbanity, public space, and above all encourages us to establish a more inclusive and environment-friendly urban model.

Besides these new lines of reflection, his dream is *“to be able to make a difference in terms of highlighting or recontextualizing urban planning in the Global South, putting the spotlight on culture of planning. City planning has unfortunately been a strong vehicle to impose a Eurocentric model and a one-sided understanding of modernity. However, there is a lot that can be learnt from the flexibility and the resilience of cities in the Global South, and the way they cope with urban issues.”*

Dubai, in his view, is the perfect example of how one should deconstruct the impact of the Eurocentric perspective on how a *“modern city should look like”*. *“This view is rooted in New York, Tokyo, Singapur, but we have to redefine what sustainable progress is... It’s a bit superficial to think about the tallest skyscraper or the most transparent facade as sign of progress. The city is a space where culture matters, and I’m not sure that with replicating Dubai in Ghana, for instance, you don’t widen this gap between who we are and the kind of image that is forced on us. Every place has its context, its history and has to develop its own image and imagination. That model is not universal.”*





IDIA IRELE

*A US-Nigerian citizen training
young leaders in Medellin*

- December 4th, 2020 -

Fluent in English, Yoruba, Portuguese, and Spanish, this US and Nigerian citizen, holding both passports, now lives in Medellin, Colombia. A perfect candidate for the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program, she was selected in 2017 to follow the program...

Born in the USA 27 years ago, Idia Irele grew up between Nigeria and the United States and moved to Boston when she was 10. Her family followed her father, Professor Francis Abiola Irele, a Nigerian academic who taught African and French literature at Harvard University. When asked about her studies, she states very factually that she was an undergraduate in Government and International Relations (Smith College), and has a Masters in International Education Policy (Harvard University). She works with social and emotional learning, and has experience in human rights education in the USA and Africa, with Boston Mobilization and UPLift Liberia.

Training young leaders in Latin America

Since 2017, she has worked as Director of Curriculum and Manager of Strategic Relations at the Latin American Leadership Academy (LALA). This is the South American version of the African Leadership Academy, she explains. So far, approximately 620 young leaders have taken part in intensive leadership boot camps in different Latin American cities, with around 30 young leaders in each program at a growing rhythm of eight boot camps per year and one residential program in Colombia

“We focus on the potential of the continent and help build compassionate leadership to find solutions to persisting problems. The students are amazing young leaders. We support them in coming into their roles as community leaders and leveraging their stories and wisdom to gain access to wider platforms, both locally and globally.” For instance, one student from Rio who created a nonprofit organization to work with incarcerated women in Brazil mastered the art of fundraising through participating in LALA. After raising 3,000 USD to come to LALA, she harnessed her newfound skill to launch a global campaign for her cause and raised 7,000 USD in only two weeks during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 has been a tough year, with the toll of COVID-19, a coup in Peru, a massacre in Lagos at the height of the #EndSARS movement against police brutality, as well as the death of Miguel da Silva in Brazil and Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless other Black Americans in the United States.

“A five-year-old, Black Brazilian was killed shortly after George Floyd. During the pandemic, we have seen interconnectivity between all these events and transnational dialogue like never before. Women everywhere used their social media accounts to raise awareness about violence against women in Mexico and Turkey. Friends from around the world have used the EndSARS hashtag without ever having gone to Nigeria. This new, COVID-era globalization rests on true shared humanity.”

Idia is not just an observer. She is focused on action. *“I started to explore the parallel between racial narratives across regions. The history of violence and enslavement in the US finds nearly identical parallels in Latin America. Just like in the U.S., the same racialized populations that were previously enslaved still lack opportunities to fully participate in society today. This is especially present in Colombia and Brazil, where despite narratives of ‘racial paradise,’ regions populated by Afro-descended and Indigenous communities face widespread poverty and barriers to fully representative leadership. I hope to continue advancing cross-continental dialogue through teaching history from the vantage point of multiple communities and organizing for social change. I teach young people to become closer to both themselves and the world, situating themselves in the issues around them and developing creative solutions to solve them.”*

Africa on her mind

Idia’s vision is very clear: she plans to eventually become a U.S. diplomat in order to achieve *“a more direct, impactful leadership in the future, working in international development, human rights, and responsible governance more broadly.”*

Africa is on her mind. She hopes that the continent will play a more *“prominent role globally, not only exporting raw materials, but also more products and services. As a producer of cocoa, coffee, rubber and coltan in addition to music, art, and other cultural influences, African countries play an important role in the global market, but this essential role is not widely recognized in the international community.”* She believes in South-South relations and the collective development of the Global South. *“There are more Afro-descended individuals in Brazil than anywhere else in the diaspora, this legacy provides an enormous opportunity for stronger connections between the two regions.”*

Among her role models, she mentions her mother, who grew up through decades-long political strife in Calabar, a coastal town that played a pivotal role in the conflict between Nigeria and what was once the secessionist Republic of Biafra. She also admires Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *“a woman who has paved her way in literature, writing stories about everyday Nigerian people not to explain, but to seamlessly immerse people in her characters’ worlds, whose universally human struggles and considerations are ones that everybody can identify with.”* The Nigerian writer is the author of one of Idia’s favorite books, *Half of a Yellow Sun*, a story that enabled her to discover more about her own family’s history.





HANAE BEZAD

Impact Tech in Morocco

- April 26th, 2021 -

At 31, this Moroccan “impact tech” entrepreneur already has an impressive track record. She is not only the founder of Douar Tech, an inclusive tech hub that helps empowering young people and women with digital skills in rural and peri-urban areas in Morocco, but also spent 2020 in Kigali, working as a Project Manager on startups and ICT ecosystems for Smart Africa.

This pan-African initiative of Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, has 30 member countries working on a common digital market. Hanae Bezaad helped define the strategy to create favorable conditions for startups on the continent, talking to governments, development agencies and the private sector. She left after a final Blueprint came out with the state of play in each of the 30 member countries, an ecosystem mapping for all countries, a final draft for Rwanda and Benin Startup Acts, a strategy outline for updating and enacting the Ivory Coast Startup Act, and last but not least, the launch of the pan-African Startup Act initiative, endorsed by Heads of States in December 2020.

The digital revolution in Africa

Hanae Bezaad learned a lot in Rwanda, a “*fascinating country with a strong will, a clear direction and strong potential*”, she says. She found similarities with her country in “*the mobilization of the diaspora and the hard work on infrastructures*”, but also differences in the fact that growth is “*still driven by the State and foreign aid, while a more vibrant private sector would help accelerate the development*”.

When asked if there is a real digital revolution in Africa, considering the limited access to Internet (22% in Subsaharan Africa and 55% in North Africa according to the World Bank), she replies: “*We can still talk of revolution in many aspects. People have access to resources, knowledge and networks that impact their lives, and perceptions in a more obvious way than TV. With some 650 hubs on the continent, I do see a digital revolution, not only in terms of skills transfers but also with many attempts to reshape the narrative. Fintech is working towards mobile banking and digital inclusion... It’s fair to say there is a revolution, as the continent is boiling with ideas.*”

Getting more skills

Born and raised in Rabat, Hanae Bezaad speaks almost as fast as she thinks. She comes from a family where education means everything. Her father was a medical doctor, her mother a teacher and one of her grandmothers a school principal. “Both my parents have launched social projects to play their part, as citizens. The context of my childhood was a transforming Morocco, still carrying a post-independence dream of autonomy and excellency, yet already altered by the slowness of progress and the privatization of the health and education sectors. I was raised being told that my life would not be simple as a woman, and that I would have to fight. In short, I grew up with contradictory paradigms: belief in the values of socio-liberal progress inspired by the West, and appreciation of the complexity of my multi-layered conservative society.” Her excellent results at the Lycée Descartes in Rabat and her Scientific “*Baccalauréat*” (A Levels) led to the French government granting her a Scholarship for Excellence, covering five years of studies in France. Besides a Dual Master’s degree in Corporate and Public Management (Sciences Po Paris & HEC Paris) obtained in 2014, she has three Bachelor’s degrees, one in Law (Paris I – Panthéon Sorbonne), the other on Social Science (Sciences

Po Paris, 2010) and the third on Mathematics and Physics (Université Pierre et Marie Curie). Her idea was to “*explore as many fields as possible, in the pluridisciplinary spirit of the American way of educating*”. Something she experienced herself during a year of exchange at the University of Pennsylvania in 2009-10. With no precise idea of her future, she just knew she didn’t want to “*embrace the fragilized jobs*” of her parents, and that she wanted “*as many skills as possible to work in the development field*”.

Back to Morocco

She could easily have had an interesting career in France, where she worked for two years and a half for Eleven, a consultancy group specialized in digital transformation for big companies. “*This universe, remote from my studies, added value for me, she recalls. Eleven was my day job as I was also writing a tribune for the think tank Fondapol (Fondation pour l’innovation politique), was interested by the MENA region, and also became a member of the board of directors of Led by HER, a social incubator for women entrepreneurs who are victims of violence*”. All of this nurtured her reflection on development, technology, inclusion and what she could do in Morocco, where she felt like going back in 2016 – the right time for her. “*I was always questioned about the terrorist attacks of 2015 in Paris, something tiring, as I was also appalled by this violence that roots itself in systems of exclusion. I decided to go get more skills, learn how to code and launch Douar Tech.*”

Empowering women

This tech hub is targeting youth and especially women, in order to train them to skills that will help them professionally. Among its partners, Douar Tech counts Unicef and the American Embassy. In 2019 and 2020, Douar Tech reached out to 70 beneficiaries, with 43 mentors and 10 staff members. In the first quarter of 2021, it has trained 275 women already, out of which 200 Afropreneurs in partnership with Afrilabs.

Hanae Bezaad applied successfully to the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) program in 2019, motivated by the quality of the program and community. She is still an active member of the ADEL community, writing pieces on building an Atlantic community for the Policy Center for the New South and inviting her peers to hold sessions for the Douar Tech programs.

The extra-ordinary Hanae Bezaad, spotted by Voice of America, The Arab Weekly and Femmes du Maroc, is still busy getting more and more skills. She is currently getting trained to become an aero yoga teacher – one of her hobbies. As we spoke, she was reading *You Belong: A Call for Connection* (2020) by the Ethiopian author Sebene Selassie, around spirituality and anti-racism and *My Sweet Orange Tree* (1968), the bestseller by the Brazilian novelist José Mauro de Vasconcelos. She also belongs to the House of Beautiful Business, and launched the Kigali Chapter of this global platform with an event focused on Gukira, “*healing and abundance*”. Her writing project, *Un abécédaire d’une vie moderne*, has been published online with the help of a young professional trained by Douar Tech.

Hanae Bezaad won’t say what is her next move, but here’s a clue: “*The idea of coming back home has nothing final. Mobility is important for me, in order to thrive in more fluid identities.*”





ERIC NTUMBA

*Congolese Youth in Search
of an Alternative*

- October 25th, 2019 -

Eric Ntumba, a young Congolese banker, came from Kinshasa in December 2017 to participate in the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders Program of the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) in Marrakech. At that time, when asked what his dream was, he immediately said he would like: *“to become President of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and bring about inclusive development, so that the country’s enormous potential can be finally transformed into power. My dream is that each Congolese child be able to fulfill his or her own dream!”*

Eric Ntumba is one of those who think big and do not easily admit defeat. In Marrakech, he met several people from diverse backgrounds at the Atlantic Dialogues Conference who *“enriched”* his vision of the world and offered him new opportunities. He further explains that *“if I had not met the Brazilian economist Otaviano Canuto, a Senior Fellow of the PCNS, I would not have signed a chapter with him on the risks of an international financial crisis in 2018 in the Atlantic Currents Report”*.

In search of an alternative

He also wrote a paper on the geopolitics of Central Africa at the African Peace and Security Annual Conference (APSACO) 2019, organized in Rabat by the PCNS. His thoughts focused on the trend towards *“elections without democracy”* that affects his region. *“In Central Africa, development indicators are the worst in Africa, he went on. It is also the region where presidents exercise power much longer than anywhere else, where young people are brutally repressed, where the electoral exercise amounts to a parody and where democracy is constantly denied, as it is reflected in this famous saying of Gabon’s former President, Omar Bongo: “One does not organize elections to end up on the losing side...””*

While noting with interest the wave of citizen movements that has emerged across Africa, including the DRC, Eric Ntumba points out however that it is *“not backed by an alternative political offer that would make it possible to have MPs, mayors, ministers”*. It is this alternative that he constantly thinks about, like others from his generation.

Eric Ntumba happened to be in good hands. He grew up in a family which was in direct touch with the world of politics. His father, Alphonse Ntumba Luaba, a law professor, a former deputy minister of justice, and a former human rights minister, was one of the negotiators of the 2002 Sun City Peace Agreement, which put an end to the second war of Congo. Then, as the Secretary General of the Transitional Government (2003–07), he chaired the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) from 2011 to 2016.

Returning to the native country

Eric Ntumba attended primary school in Nancy, France, where his father obtained his Ph.D. in law, and went to secondary school in Kinshasa. After a master’s degree in computer science from North–West University, South Africa, he joined the National School of Administration (ENA) in Paris at the end of 2006. Two years later, he returned directly to Kinshasa – an “obvious” choice for him. “I had been told that the doors were open in France and Europe, but I was convinced that it was in the RDC, in Africa, that what I had learnt would be most useful”, he explains.

Because he was determined to contribute to the construction of a notoriously vulnerable state, he first sought to join the public service at the Ministry of Planning. *“I was faced with a conservative environment in which I had to claim a political affiliation on which I had not made a decision at the age of 27 years”*, he remembered. He finally turned to the private sector, first in the position of Advisor to the General Directorate of the Banque congolaise (BC), then as Corporate Manager at the Banque commerciale du Congo (BCC), as well as Relationship Manager at City Bank Congo (CBC), and lastly at his current position as Head of the Corporate Banking Division at Equity Bank Congo (EBC).

Once again, he notes without complacency: *“The private sector in the DRC is limited to extractive industries under the control of foreign operators, without any Congolese capital properly speaking, and that is a real problem for startups, which cannot rely on business angels for guidance and funding. Yet, Kinshasa is demonstrating a powerful creative energy. The DRC lacks a real incubation ecosystem that has demonstrated its value in Kenya and Côte d’Ivoire.”* Until venture capital companies take an interest in the entrepreneurial dynamism of Congolese youth, he will continue to provide mentoring and participate in various forums on the African economy abroad.

“Realizing you are not alone”

Two years after his ADEL Program, Eric Ntumba remains committed to the PCNS, which he considers to be an *“incubator of ideas”*. *“A conference like Atlantic Dialogues helps you readjust your ambitions, he says, and realize that you are not alone. Others think Africa is on the move, in a project of shared prosperity.”*

Eric Ntumba, who is a keen reader, mentions among his references *Une brève histoire de l’avenir* (Fayard, 2006) an essay by Jacques Attali that offers a forward-looking perspective of a polycentric world structured around nine nations, including Egypt and Nigeria. In the world of fiction, he has a penchant for one of the great classics of African literature, *Une si longue lettre* (Nouvelles éditions africaines du Sénégal, 1979), by the Senegalese novelist Mariama Bâ. He has now joined her among other writers, having himself published his first novel, *Une vie après le Styx* (L’Harmattan, 2019). He considers that he *“has taken his responsibilities”* by taking up his pen. His objective is to participate in the construction of a collective memory linked to the atrocities of the Congo war, by narrating the journey of a traumatized young girl who will however find the strength to start her life over.

Eric Ntumba has much admiration for Patrice Emery Lumumba, the father of Congo’s independence, as he has for Martin Luther King, for his fight at the forefront of the civil rights movement in the United States. *“His journey tells us that it only takes a handful of fully committed people to trigger a movement. I also like his formula: “In every mountain of despair, there is a stone of hope”. This stone can be any one of us.”* A leader’s words ...





CAROLINA ZUHEILL ROSALES

A Mexican Doctor with a Cause

- February 23rd, 2021 -

The COVID-19 pandemic has induced a major shift in Carolina Zuheill Rosales' career. This internal medicine doctor founded Guimedic in 2011, when she was 25. Through its mobile clinics, this NGO provides medical consultations in remote and poor areas throughout Mexico. The main focus is to treat indigenous communities.

Because of a structural lack of medical access to these populations, she has launched in March 2020 Promesa, a social business that is using artificial intelligence. Algorithms were created to look for COVID-19 patients, in order to reach them before they present potential complications.

Promesa is on the front-line of defense of indigenous communities in Mexico, which do not have the infrastructure, so the measures established by the WHO cannot be applied. Between March and December 2020, Promesa and its team of 53 volunteers have helped 13,000 patients with no access to health services. Among them, 83 have passed away. *"The protocol consists of notifying us by cellphone with satellite service to follow up on the patient remotely. If the patient has all the symptoms and the data issued by the AI system gives a risk factor above 85%, we send them to a hospital, in line with the policy of the National Institute of Indigenous Peoples. Treatments are also provided at home, such as Vitamin C, D, and acetaminophen"*, she explains. Mexico is one of the hardest hit Latin American countries, with nearly 2 million COVID-19 cases and 170,000 deaths by mid-February 2021, on a total population of 126 million (against 9 million cases and 235,000 deaths in Brazil, for a population of 209 million).

The "doctor of the poor"

Born in the city of Guadalajara in 1986, Carolina Zuheill Rosales describes herself as *"curious person by nature"*. This natural curiosity led to *"out of the box"* problem solving skills. At 17, she went to Canada to study computer animation for one year, but she already knew she was meant to become a doctor. *"Science has always held savvy over me and as serving others is my passion, it was only natural that both would come together"*. She also thinks that *"being a doctor is a difficult path. It means to sacrifice yourself with sleepless nights and sometimes being bullied by patients, doctors and fellow students, but at the end never to give up."*

To get her degree, she successfully completed a mandatory year of social service, and was assigned by the Health Secretary to a remote area in the State of Jalisco, eight hours away by car to the nearest hospital. *"On my way there, I thought I would have a clinic with equipment, but there was nothing. After a few days, I met Maria, an indigenous woman. She walked more than 20 hours to ask me for help, but her baby was already lifeless. I could feel her pain"*.

This shock led her to investigate the access to health care in Mexico. *"The number of people deprived should decrease, but instead, it is increasing. We now have 56 million Mexicans living in extreme poverty, with no access to health and dying from preventable diseases"*. She then decided to start Guimedic, a humanitarian medical association, with the help of medical students from different parts of the world and Mexican doctors. Since 2011, her non-profit has treated 13,800,000 patients, with a

team that had a peak of 1,200 volunteers and financial help coming mainly through donations from families, friends, volunteers, private companies and local government.

This hard work on the ground means a presence throughout the year – and not four times per year with rotations like in other programs. Carolina keeps on coming back to remote places, even if that means a lot of hiking and sleeping under a tent. Patients have nicknamed her *“The doctor of the poor”*, because she never forgets them and is the only doctor taking care of them. But this is hardly enough for her, given the scope of the challenges. Acting on several fronts, she has served the federal government in 2012 as a State delegate on violence and crime prevention. In 2014, she became the national president of that task force and formed alliances on the Mexican borders to address migration issues. *“We developed safe community routes, in areas that have in common the presence of drug cartels”*, she says.

Getting involved in public policies

In 2013, Carolina obtained a certificate in entrepreneurial development at Harvard, and went on to study health management in 2015 at Universidad del Valle Mexico (UVM). *“I want to create a positive change in people’s lives”, she explains. I did not have enough knowledge to grow my venture, and needed more information to work with other countries”*. She traveled to Spain to study International Cooperation Development and Directive Skills, and obtained a Master’s degree, before publishing a book on How to Prevent Zika with Mayan Medicine (2016).

She joined the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program in 2018 in Marrakesh, applying in a spirit of advocacy: *“We need to open doors and make sure that everyone understands that health is a human right we need to invest in”*. With the Policy Center for the New South, she was in touch with one of her passions – social policy. *“Being able to connect with Presidents, Prime ministers and ambassadors gave me another perspective. We have to get involved in politics to create social policies to protect all people and see the change we want”*.

Carolina, who likes to work behind the scenes, is about to finish a Ph.D. in Public Health. Her next step is to study public policies and become an actor of change. Nothing can stop her, not even a brain tumor. She underwent surgery in 2019 and spent three weeks in a coma. *“A life-changing experience that made me a human doctor, understanding the fears and doubts of the patient about the treatment”*, she says. More determined than ever to *“make a difference”*, she thinks big and is still giving. Besides her NGO and her social business, she is a mentor for Voices of Social Change where more than 5 000 students around the world are learning from her experiences. She is also part of the Kuongoza Initiative, helping young people in Africa creating social businesses based on STEMI (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Innovation).

Awarded many times, Carolina has been named in 2020 Citizen of the year by Grupo Salinas, a Mexican conglomerate operating in television, electronics and Internet. In 2021, she was selected as social entrepreneur by the biggest TV company in Mexico, where she will launch a campaign to motivate people to create social businesses.





RICHARD SESHIE

Less Talk and More Action

- September 10th, 2021 -

This young Ivorian entrepreneur, after seven years abroad, has moved back home in 2015 to head the local NGO 35.35. Since July 2021, he has been in charge of Africa for Dunia Payment, a startup operating in fintech through a mobile app, aiming at democratizing banking services. Richard Seshie was born and raised in Abidjan, the capital city of Ivory Coast. His childhood dream was all about strategy. *“I wanted to enroll in the army, but this was just a dream and I don’t really have the physical abilities. Later on, I discovered that many of my projects imply strategic thinking.”*

After high school, he was asked – as is the rule in the public system – to study Geography at the University of Cocody, also named after the late president Félix Houphouët-Boigny. There, he nurtured what he calls a *“natural interest in volunteering and social impact activities”*. He traveled in 2008 to India, for a two-year training with the notorious NGO Ashoka, supporting *“change leaders”* and social entrepreneurs, and also with an enterprise dealing with socially responsible investments. From there, he went to Morocco to work on *“Community affairs”* for Microsoft, for one year. He then moved to Ghana, where he was involved for three years in a program dedicated to startups. His learning route took him further to the United States of America, following programs around entrepreneurship in the Silicon Valley and living for a few months in New York.

Back in Ivory Coast to support young leaders

One year after his return in Abidjan in 2015, the Association 35.35 was born, organizing the yearly Africa 35.35 Awards for cohorts of 35 young leaders from different African countries, with an age limit of 35. *“We wanted to show that beautiful things happen in Africa, and take our leaders as role models to get more youth inspired.”*

Since 2016, a total of 182 young leaders from 30 countries have been rewarded, during a yearly event of three to four days set in a big African city (Abidjan and Accra). *“There, they can connect, meet senior leaders and build their capacities.”* In 2020, the COVID-19 crisis led 35.35 to organize a virtual event, and since 2019, the Association has launched a *“social innovation studio”*.

How does it work? *“We are identifying social issues in Ivory Coast and we propose projects, innovating initiatives done in collaboration among our pool of young awarded leaders”*, explains Richard Seshie. For instance, Kevin Sesse, head of the online platform Mon Artisan (*“My Craftsman”*), linking plumbers, painters, builders or carpenters to their clients. *“We have worked on cool roofing with a reflecting paint useful against climate change. We participated in the Coolroof Million Challenge to cool African cities, and we received 125 000 USD to work on a demonstration project with a school in the town of Pacobo, located in the southern part of the country.”*

Promoting social innovation

Another project launched by 35.35 dealt with demands of public domain occupation, in order to make them much easier for small street vendors. *“Entrepreneurs in the informal sector usually settle in the public domain to launch a little shop or sell on the street. It requires a permit, but the process is not very transparent and takes time at the City Hall. The Cities Alliance has given us a 50,000 USD grant, to help the municipality of Cocody, in Abidjan, manage the process with an open source called eServices Techniques. Online submissions can be followed until the final authorization, reducing delays from 8 to 2 weeks.”*

Richard Seshie came to the Atlantic Dialogues conference in Marrakesh in 2017, after being selected by the Policy Center for the New South (PCNS) for its ADEL program, along 49 other young leaders from the wider Atlantic. *“I found out about the program online, and once in Marrakesh, I enjoyed meeting with policy makers. Discovering the role of a think tank as a force of proposition with an African vision was also very interesting, besides interacting with my peers. I felt other voices could be heard on many issues, with broader perspectives for a young entrepreneur like me, invited not to stay in my “silo” but see how bigger things work.”*

Today, this keen reader of The Harvard Business Review, also a music lover, has a clear aspiration: *“We are trying to become a hub of social innovation in French-speaking Africa. Our aim is to make innovating projects work and take them to a bigger scale”*. In 2020, the Association 35.35 has helped raise 400,000 euros (EUR) of funds, and wishes to grow to 10 million EUR of funds raised by 2025, for the concrete execution of projects. Richard’s attitude could be emblematic of his generation: less talk and more action.





DANIELA VARELA

A Passion for International Affairs

- July 19th, 2021 -

With no hesitation, Daniela Varela describes herself as a *“good-listener, and a perseverant person with a positive attitude”*. Born and raised in Posadas, Misiones, a province of North-East Argentina bordering Paraguay and Brazil, she knew from a young age she wanted to work in international relations.

Today, she is an International affairs advisor in the Ministry of Education of Argentina. She also holds the position of Secretary for International Affairs of the Latin American Association for Energy Economics (ALADEE), the regional chapter of the International Association for Energy Economics (IAEE).

“My job at the ministry of Education is about international cooperation, she explains. I am a delegate in the G20 Education Working Group, and the main issue is to bring forward the position of Argentina: how to deepen the educational agenda at the G20, fight against educational poverty during the COVID-19 pandemic, promote a more inclusive blended education for all and share experiences among countries on the transitions from school to work.”

Last but not least, she is co-coordinator of the Global Scenarios Working Group of the prestigious Argentinian Council for International Relations (CARI), one of the main Latin American think tanks, based in Buenos Aires. After her participation in the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) program in 2018 in Marrakesh, she was instrumental in developing cooperation between the Policy Center for the New South and CARI. *“Think tanks have a unique role today in bringing up issues that are not on the agenda of many other actors, she explains. One of the panels of the last Atlantic Dialogues Talks was about “the geography of discontent in the Global South”. The discussion happened before the demonstrations that are shaking the Atlantic, in South Africa, Nigeria, Colombia, Cuba and so many other countries.”*

From energy to education

In her province Misiones, *“the national capital of biodiversity”*, she grew up in what she calls a *“very Mercosur environment”* and a strong mix of cultures. *“Misiones is a green and beautiful place with indigenous population roots, cultural heritage, and the spectacular Iguazú waterfalls.”* She developed a passion for Guaraní, one of the languages of the Amerindian people, which she is currently learning.

As a child, her dream was to become a clown in a circus, but when she was 17, an exchange program during her high school years led her to Newport Beach, California, and gave her a taste for travel and an international perspective. She went for a BA in Government and International Relations (Universidad Argentina de la Empresa) and a Masters in Energy from the Center for the Study of Energy Regulatory Activity (Universidad de Buenos Aires). She then gained experience at the Secretariat of Energy for seven years, working in the field of international cooperation, before switching to education.

How did it happen? *“In 2018, Argentina held de G20 Presidency, and the government of Argentina decided to create for the first time in history the G20 Education Working Group. The Chair of this group knew I carried this agenda in energy and offered me the opportunity to join and create this group from scratch.”*

A convinced member of the Atlantic community

In 2018, the ADEL program attracted her because of its Atlantic approach. *“In my studies and career, I worked on the Question of the Malvinas Islands (Falkland Islands) particularly in energy issues, where there is a dispute sovereignty between Argentina and United Kingdom. I was interested in learning how to develop strategies for Argentina regarding the Atlantic basin, with a Latin American and African perspective.”* What she brought back from Marrakesh to Buenos Aires was *“even more than expected”*, she says. *“I could interact and find consensus with people from very diverse backgrounds, but also get a cultural experience in Morocco, where I never went before.”*

A keen reader of history books about her region, she mentions her parents as her main roles models. Both are forest engineers, her mother being also engaged in real estate and her father in teaching. She is interested in the paths of *“great women in history such as Marie Skłodowska-Curie, a brilliant scientist and a strong personality, and other known and unknown women in Argentina”*. For now, her personal longings are to keep working in the domain of international affairs, in order to *“put Argentina in the highest position possible in many organizations, and move towards a more sustainable and inclusive world”*, an ambition strongly linked to the general interest and a brighter global future.





EMMANUEL LUBANZADIO

Working for Twitter

- October 25th, 2021 -

This young German man with Congolese origins, educated in Germany, the United States and the Netherlands, has roots on three continents. He's not only the epitome of an Atlantic young leader – the way the Policy Center for the New South defines them – but now also a member of the 2019 ADEL cohort Alumni.

In January 2020 he transitioned as Head of Public Policy for Sub-Saharan Africa at Twitter. At this strategic position, he works for one of the most influential social media networks globally, but keeps a cool head and stays low key.

When asked about his personal impressions of Africa, he reminds quietly: *“Every country is different, although sometimes people outside of the continent perceive Africa as one country simply because the majority of its citizens happen to be black. Africa is so rich in its beauty and diversity, in its culture, languages, ethnicities and religions”*. He describes his personality as a *“mixture of realism and optimism”*. So when it comes to Africa as the world's last growth frontier, he states simply: *“Some parts of Africa may see deficiencies in infrastructure or healthcare, for example. While it may seem discouraging, things are absolutely progressing in that region because of the creative, strong, resilient people who reside on the continent. The people who make Africa great are its youth and civil society in general”*.

Fulfilled dreams

Emmanuel grew up in Germany in a modest Congolese family of five children. During his childhood, his trips to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were few and far between, but he heard a lot about African politics, a recurrent topic at home. His first acquaintance with an African country other than the DRC happened in 2014 in Ghana, where he lived and worked for the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) on a project with the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center.

Emmanuel Lubanzadio has already fulfilled many of his wishes. When he graduated from high school in Germany, he longed for a life abroad. First dream: check! He moved to the USA in 2007, where he spent 6 years. There, he obtained a B.A. in International Relations from the Oral Roberts University (Oklahoma, USA) and a Graduate Certificate in Applied Politics from The George Washington University (USA). Then, he started to think of working in politics and applied for the Emerging Leaders Program of the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, and was selected to spend ten months in Washington D.C. to work in the United States Congress and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). Second dream: check! He then moved back to Europe, obtained a M.A. in Development Studies from Maastricht University (Netherlands) and sought to learn about government relations in the private sector. This led him to join a multinational pharmaceutical company back in Germany.

African youth at heart

His last position was in the healthcare industry for the last two and a half years, working in the field of government relations. He wanted to get more insights on how to engage with policy makers, after his experiences in the US Congress and GIZ. The topics that move him most are freedom of expression, digital rights, youth unemployment and lack of perspectives for many young people. *“The African continent has 200 million young people, the largest youth population in the world, he explains. This is where my heart lies, in terms of their implication in the decision making process within the realm of politics and access to ways of making a living.”*

That’s partly why he applied to the ADEL program, believing that Atlantic relations do not confine to the USA and Europe alone. *“There are many more countries, and the Policy Center does an amazing job in capturing that as well. The participants coming from Africa and South America gave a different perspective... ADEL does not only focus on the global self, but moreover on including people who will make decisions and influence their own societies one day. The program also gives a chance to get people who have been historically excluded and marginalized from the decision-making process a seat at the table and the ability to discuss policy issues. I haven’t seen anything else like this!”*

A global citizen

Now, he would like to inspire people with his trajectory, showing that for a second generation immigrant who may not have had much, it’s still possible to *“make it”*. When asked about his own role models, Emmanuel Lubanzadio has to admit he *“did not have any”* while growing up. He enjoys reading biographies and the last one he read was the Autobiography of Malcom X, written by Alex Haley. When reflecting on role models, he points at his own parents: *“I have the ultimate respect for them. They have been in a pursuit of a better life and have laid the ground work, for my siblings and I to get inspired and have opportunities.”*

About identity, a hot subject in Europe in a context of rising populism, he has clear thoughts: *“I am a German with roots in Africa who was educated in the United States and Europe. People like myself will often wrestle with the question of identity. I’ve known many clashes of cultures, but I am proud of my roots. I have a passion for Africa and I’m also European, combined with the optimism I took from the USA, thanks to this idea that you can be whomever you want. I find it beautiful. I’ve had this privilege that certainly defines who I am, a global citizen with roots in regions where I take the best of everything.”* This young man of his time is certainly a name to remember.





JOANA AMA OSEI-TUTU

Gender Without Borders

- December 1st, 2021 -

This young and outspoken Ghanaian citizen, a peace and security expert with a focus on gender, describes herself as *“engaging, accommodating and seeking”*. Born and raised in Ghana, Joana has a deep knowledge of her country, as her father was transferred a lot throughout his career. Her family has also spent some time in Louisville, Kentucky. As a teenager, her dreams were definitely altruist, as she wanted to become a photojournalist or a human rights lawyer.

Since 2017, she is the Head of Women Peace and Security Institute at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Center (KAIPTC) in Accra. The West African institution has trained since 2004 thousands of civilians, police and military staff from all over Africa and beyond. Its goal: *“sustain a peaceful atmosphere in Africa”*, as Joana sums it up.

African women in peace negotiations and peacekeeping activities

There, she has climbed the ladder quickly. At first, she was a Research Associate in a Regional Partnership for Peace & Security Program (2010-15), and then was appointed Deputy Head of the Peace and Security Studies Program (2015-17). In her current position, she is responsible for African women’s effective participation in peace negotiations and peacekeeping activities, and the integration of a gender perspective in research, policy and training activities.

This important task is done through many channels: advocacy, lobbying, high level conversations, but also on the ground. *“At the community level, for example, we deliver a course on how to prevent and respond to gender based violence. We engage with traditional and religious leaders, civil society and media actors. We put all the actors in the same room and have a conversation so that they can learn from each other. This is powerful. We turn these exchanges into teachable moments and solutions”*.

As a Project Lead in preventing and responding to Gender Based Violence in Africa, Joana is also supervising courses for local actors in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Central African Republic and South Sudan. Her trips show her that *“certain components are the same across the continent, in terms of patriarchal systems, but also in the will or call for resilience to change the status quo”*.

A student in Seoul

To support her journey, Ama went as far as South Korea to gain more skills. In a bid for wider exposure, she applied to schools in Australia and the UK, but finally spent more than a year in Seoul, for a Master's degree in International Development. *"From my time at Ewha, I took away their work ethics, drive, and sense of getting the job done"*, she says.

Her thesis on piracy in Somalia led her to be invited as a panelist at the Atlantic Dialogues in Marrakesh in the early 2013. She later on applied to the Atlantic Dialogue Emerging Leaders (ADEL) program, which she found more attractive and original than others, and came back to Marrakesh in 2018. As an ADEL, she felt *"enlightened to know more about a very IT and entrepreneurial field"*, and went back home *"with good tips about leadership"*.

A huge music lover and a keen reader of African historic literature, Joana has learned to see the *"beauty and the joy in spite of the pain and suffering"*. On the banks of the Kivu Lake, in DRC, where she was delivering a Protection of Civilian training for MONUSCO staff, she remembers watching a group of children playing and being struck by their happiness and contentment.

Her next move at work is to *"get more impact at a community level and find more allies, bringing men onboard"*. Among her last reads, she mentions *Becoming*, by Michelle Obama and *We're Going to Need More Wine*, by Gabrielle Union. When asked if she's a feminist, this mother of two, a daughter and a son, replies immediately: *"I am a humanist, and maybe a 'genderist'! I want both my children to have equal opportunities"*.





JORDAN KRONEN

Busy with Climate Change

- January 13th, 2021 -

Bright and open-minded, this young American has already achieved a lot at just 28 years of age. Since February 2019, he has been serving as Legislative Assistant to Democratic Senator Liz Lovelett in Olympia, Washington. *“Working for a senator whose values I share is really a dream come true,”* he says. He sees Liz Lovelett as a role model, since *“she leads with her heart and great values, always thinking on how we can infuse equity into everything we do.”*

Jordan Kronen calls Washington home, as he moved there from a suburb outside Miami, Florida when he was 12. His father is a small business owner, recruiting for technology companies, and his mother a paralegal working in a law firm. But his main influence comes from his grandfather, *“Poppie.”* *“He served in World War II in Germany and in the Pacific theater and even has a patent from his work as a member of a military commission that designed a suit to withstand both high and low temperatures for combat pilots and space travel,”* explains Jordan Kronen, with beaming pride.

His idols : a Democrat grandfather and John Lewis

“Poppie” was also the founder of the Democratic Party chapter in Sunny Isles Beach, Florida. He conveyed to his grandson a strong sense of public service: *“Vocation in government means serving the people; it is both honorable work and gives meaning and a sense of purpose that is much bigger than any one person.”* Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Jordan also co-founded the College Democrats of Oregon, while studying Politics and Government at Pacific University.

His absolute idol, however, is no other than the late John Lewis, the famous African American civil rights activist and congressman from the state of Georgia who passed away last July. Lewis was one of the *“Big Six”* leaders of groups who organized the 1963 March on Washington against legalized segregation, voting disenfranchisement, and racial discrimination. Jordan met the non-violent freedom rider twice in 2012, when he was an intern with the Democratic National Committee in Washington, D.C, and later that year while working at the DNC National Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina. *“I’ll never forget his demeanor and grace. There are no words to express just how instrumental John Lewis was in changing the country in the face of overwhelming hatred, violence, and bigotry.”*

Asian experiences, interest for Africa

A thirst for exploring and learning more about the world was also mostly inspired by his grandfather’s travels throughout East Asia after World War II. Jordan made bold moves after graduating from college to gain experiences abroad. First, in 2015, he spent three months in Chiang Mai, Thailand, interning for Bridges Across Borders Southeast Asia Community Legal Education Initiative. Working for this *“non-profit with a long title,”* Jordan aided their mission of advocating for legal ethics, strengthening the rule of law, and increasing access to justice and pro bono legal services. As a Fulbright Scholar, the following year in 2016, he taught English to schoolchildren in Bachok, a rural town in the state of Kelantan in Malaysia’s northwest peninsula. *“It was the best experience of my life. Despite being forced to conceal my Jewish identity in a very conservative Islamic town, it felt most rewarding to start integrating myself in another culture and engaging in mutual understanding between our two countries.”*

Then, he decided to pursue an accelerated master’s course in 2017-18 to get an M.A. in Global Affairs as a Schwarzman Scholar at Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. *“It’s*

a very new program as I was a part of the second cohort, but it is modeled after the Rhodes Scholarship at Oxford. The mission of the program is to strengthen U.S-China relations, and to ensure greater collaboration and prosperity for the world as China becomes a more prominent player on the international stage.”

After discussing the opportunity with a Schwarzman Scholar from Nigeria, he applied for the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) Program, and came to Marrakech, Morocco in December 2019. *“I applied because I became increasingly interested in the Global South and Africa, where various external actors are applying pressure on this mostly developing continent. I wrote my thesis on the China Belt and Road Initiative and how China flexes its muscles on countries in Africa, Southeast Asia, and other regions within its orbit, often leading to ‘debt diplomacy’ and other undesirable outcomes. I was curious to see how African countries are responding to these pressures, and how best we can work with leaders on the African continent to be independent rather than relying on China or the U.S. With its growing young population and innovative, nascent industries, it’s really an exciting time for Africa. I met young African leaders in Marrakech, learned a great deal from them, and felt truly inspired by their example and drive.”*

Focusing on climate change

His current battle, now, is climate change, and how to mitigate its effects in an equitable way. He’s working on a proposal authored by Senator Liz Lovelett that is making the headlines in the United States. The Washington Sustainable, Transformative Recovery Opportunities for the Next Generation (STRONG) Act establishes an economy-wide price on carbon pollution to generate the bondable revenue needed to finance a resilient recovery and clean economy transition. The revenue generated would be invested in projects that deliver positive returns in the form of economic activity, greenhouse gas reduction, community resilience, and healthy, productive natural resource lands. The beneficiaries would be the communities most affected in Washington State, on the basis of a health disparities mapping tool created by the state’s Environmental Justice Task Force. This map shows, based on science and data, where these investments are needed the most to alleviate the burden on these frontline communities already experiencing the harmful effects of a changing climate. *“This is a bold proposal that would provide a blueprint for other states and the Federal government to potentially implement,”* he says.

Some of his favorite books are *The Green Collar Economy*, by Van Jones, and the philosophical tale *Ishmael* by Daniel Quinn, which also embeds thematic threads of sustainability and climate change. An indelible memory of the book for Jordan is the describing of the world as a plane having run off a cliff and going downward toward its demise. Even though the vessel has all the inherent capabilities to fly and avert disaster, it continues descending on a rapidly expedient trajectory. Jordan hopes to wake up the pilot (humankind), start the engine (ingenuity and our problem-solving spirit) and begin to change course. *“The sky, after all, is our only limit.”* His next step? Pursuing a concurrent degree (a law degree and a master’s degree in public policy) to better equip himself with both a solid legal foundation and policy chops to continue pursuing his climate agenda. *“My goal is to play a prominent role in fighting climate change in an equitable way. People representing diverse voices from various backgrounds, industries, and perspectives must be at an inclusive table when these decisions are being made to put forth the best solutions so we can ultimately succeed together.”*





VICKY NGARI

Where Fashion Meets Skills

- October 20th, 2020 -

Born in Kenya, Vicky Ngari reluctantly followed her mother in the United Kingdom when she was 10. She didn't want to leave Nairobi, where she nurtured as a child a fascination for clothes, garments and dancing. As the years passed, she never severed ties with Kenya, nor Africa.

In Brighton and London, she studied Film and TV, then creative writing, majoring in sociology and journalism. She realized during her first year at University that she could learn a lot out of experience, besides theoretical knowledge in the classroom. *"On the ground, I taught myself how to network"*, she says. At the time, she had two part-time jobs, working as a receptionist and at a gym. There, she discussed so much about styling with a fashion designer who came to exercise, that she got invited on a shoot.

While at University, she became a beauty queen, first as Miss Kenya in 2008 and then as Miss East Africa in 2009, insisting on wearing African inspired dresses she designed herself. She became an assistant stylist with Claire Watson, a freelance in demand, and kept on learning on the ground. *"One time, Claire was overbooked and had to throw me to a deep end, a shooting for a tabloid magazine. I had an idea of a set reminding ancient Greece, but the editor walked in and said: "No, we don't do Greek gods here, take this out ". I learned that you have to listen to what the editors say and to think about the target audience."*

African style, education, opportunities

She was already convinced that the African style was not seen in fashion the way it should. During a Fashion week in London, she was looked upon as an UFO, because of her flashy African prints. But she wasn't distracted. *"People in Africa wear prints all the time! I still think we are not penetrating further the industry, in terms of what African fashion means, culturally and socially. It has a lot do to with heritage and spirituality. Our ancestors wore certain colors to communicate their intentions. When I design my bag, for instance, I go back to traditional messages of baskets, hand woven and naturally dyed with tree bark"*.

Her beauty queen status got her invited to many talks and platforms, such as the One Goal Campaign before the soccer World Cup in South Africa in 2010, or the Unleash Innovation Lab in Denmark in 2017, initiated by the United Nations to gather 1,000 change-makers Millennials. She fell in love with the concept of social entrepreneurship and the topic of education. *"I was sitting in rooms full of white men in suits, discussing the future of African youth. And I'm sorry, but Africa doesn't need just aid or money, but opportunities. The African youth must be included and be part of the solution"*.

To work from the ground in rural communities

She took action. In 2016, she launched the educational program Good Ambition, the basis of an App she is working on, named “*Skilledit*”. *“The idea is to tackle opportunity for young people and women in all the areas who lack financial and social advance, to be able to see their own environment as a place to skill themselves”*. She went to rural communities in Kenya, gathering them as sustainable manufacturers. The “*Rural Retail*” platform has gathered 350 young people so far, helping her produce bags for her brand, “*Vicky Ngari*”.

As a young leader, she came to Marrakesh in 2017 to attend the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program, and was proud to *“fit in an arena where you can actually bring your contribution in terms of creative thinking, and get support. Creative thinking, in my view, comes naturally and serves as lateral thinking to solution, like the little boy who says “deflate the tyres”, when a truck is stuck in a tunnel and experts struggle to get it out.”*

This young lady, who loves nature, herbs and plants, is also a keen reader of mythology. Her dream? *“To work in cultural diplomacy to help build more aligned education systems for creative industries with Indigenous sustainable practices. Growing a successful fashion brand and technology tool as my demonstration, ultimately starting my own schools in nature.”* As she defines it, it just looks like the intertwined leads of her personal basket.





JULIAN COLOMBO

A Political Ambition in Argentina

- March 17th, 2020 -

Aged 24 in 2011, he was already Chief of staff for Daniel Scioli, the Governor of Buenos Aires – the most populated province of Argentina, counting for 40% of the total population with 16 million inhabitants. His main challenge then was *“to be young in a relevant position”*. He had to fight to get recognized and accepted by his elder peers, and succeeded with *“the support of the Governor, through hard work and careful analysis”*, he recalls.

He also remembers fondly one of his main achievements of his beginnings. He was part of a team that elaborated and implemented a reform, making free the fertility treatments for couples in his province. *“Before the law passed in 2010, it was very difficult for couples to have access to these expensive treatments. Some families sold their cars and put a mortgage on their houses. My governor put up a team and we negotiated with the stakeholders in the insurance sector and the health system, to make sure the fertility treatments became free in the province.”*

The launch of a new consultancy firm

Born in Buenos Aires in a middle-class family, he was supposed, as the eldest and only son, to take over his parents’ business, a small manufacture of oil and products for cars. He chose another path. After studying Political Science in Argentina and obtaining a Master’s Degree in Public Policy at Georgetown University (Washington D.C.), he worked as a civil servant and a political advisor for congressmen in Argentina for 10 years.

Now, his father holds no grudge or disappointment whatsoever. In December 2019, this 33 year-old young professional launched TANT, his own consultancy firm. *“I was working for several people at once, he explains, so I decided to set up my own firm, so that there would be no conflict of interest.”*

One of his main areas of expertise is the relationship between Argentina and Brazil, alongside with legislative and political affairs. *“Brazil is our main trade partner. Brazil and Argentina are twin countries both in trade and politics, and we need to strengthen the ties in the productive sectors between politicians in both countries. We advise on how to overcome the political differences between the two current presidents.”*

Another important side of his specialization is the Fintech sector. His firm is advising government officials in Argentina on how to deal with companies willing to develop digital wallets and online banks, in order to adapt the current regulations to the market trends in that sector.

A passion for politics

How did he fall in love with politics? *“Both of my parents are not involved, he says, but my geography professor in high school made us take part in Model United Nations (Model UN or MUN). That’s how I started to get interested in international relations and politics.”*

Julian Colombo can get “very upset”, when he sees “*how some politicians from all parties manipulate the most disenfranchised people in order to get their votes, providing food and medicine during electoral campaigns*”. But his head stays cool when it comes to the crucial topic of the rise of populism in Latin America. He makes his point clear: “*I do not agree fully with the way Western professors talk about populism. Being in a country that has had many populist governments, I know the word might have a negative meaning, but some of these administrations have applied some of the most progressive social policies. There is a swing across Latin America between the left and the right: in the years before 2013 the trend was left, and between 2013 and 2018, it was going to the right. The region can swing again to the left, and I am not sure that the populist phenomenon is that simple.*”

His fellow ADEls as role models

When asked about his role models, this keen reader of political biographies has only one name in mind: John F. Kennedy, for his approach to politics, youth and fresh ideas. Otherwise, he quotes his peers, “*the African guys I’ve met in the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program (ADEL), because of their fight to provide basic needs, such as access to water, for instance. They are more prominent in my view than people with an actual seat at the table.*”

When he joined the ADEL community in Marrakech in 2018, he was mostly interested in starting a network with Emerging Leaders from a broader horizon than his contacts, with people from Europe, North America and Africa. “*I enjoyed the possibility of travelling to Africa and broaden my vision of public policies applied on the continent.*”

He came to Marrakech with his two dreams, strongly intertwined. “*One is personal and one is national: I would like to achieve being president of Argentina, in order to overcome the inequalities, especially for the youth. The current state of affairs affects educational opportunities, and I hope I will be able, one day, to solve this problem in my country*”. In his opinion, and in his own candid words, he notes that what is really missing across Latin America is a “*bigger commitment from the political and business elite to solve our issues. We have lots of people working on different matters, the same guys for 30 or 40 years, with no real political will*”. Julian Colombo, a strong personality, is a name to remember.





SCARLETT VARGA

*Fundraising for evidence-based
policy making in Brussels*

- April 15th, 2020 -

Born and raised in Romania, but of Hungarian ethnicity, Scarlett Varga is since January 2020 the head of development at Bruegel. In other words, she is in charge of the fundraising strategy of this leading European economic think tank, launched in 2005 in Brussels. Her position is highly strategic: as a member of the organizations' management, she contributes to a 6 million Euros yearly budget, safeguarding Bruegel's core values of independence and transparency.

Leading a team of six talented young professionals, her mission is to tap into private and public sources, targeting multinational corporations (the likes of the GAFAM – namely Google, Amazon, Facebook, Microsoft and Apple – Morgan Stanley or Shell), central banks and governments, and grants from European Union institutions. Through dynamic relationships with policymakers at every level, Bruegel has also established itself as a vibrant laboratory of ideas.

The Coronavirus crisis is putting her and her team to the test. *“I just stepped in the labor market during the international financial crisis of 2008, and this is the second crisis my generation is facing in its productive life. At Bruegel, we are bringing data and potential solutions on what leaders of today have to act fast on, and not lose so much time as in 2008”.*

Proposing a position she could fill

Scarlett Varga, who is also a passionate dancer, landed her first contract with Bruegel in 2014 with a broken toe and a lot of luck. During her interview with Bruegel's director she was asked to propose a position she could fill, to search for new ways of fundraising. *“I could see the potential of working more with private foundations, such as the Wellcome Trust or the Companhia de Sao Paulo, to address social issues, to see where our common objective lies and how we can grow together”.* In 2018, she became the Deputy Head of Development. She is passionate about the impact of the research published by Bruegel, dealing with real and immediate issues such as the Greek crisis and Brexit, but also long term challenges of climate policies or digitalization in the workplace.

She has come a long way, though, having begun her studies in the IT sector. *“In Romania, it was seen as the job of the future when I started studying. After 4 years of IT, I realized this was not for me: I can't sit next to a computer seven days a week. I need a team and constant movement”.* She started Economics in 2006 in Romania, and got a scholarship to follow a double degree of Economics and Business and Marketing studies in the UK. When she arrived in Canterbury in 2009 with 500 pounds in her pocket, she was already attracted to EU economics, and was later dreaming of establishing herself in Brussels, the capital of Europe.

Which she did, in 2010. She ended her higher education with an International Master of European Studies at the Université Catholique de Louvain. After more than two years of work in Brussels, as a Junior Project Officer and Project Officer at the European Photovoltaic Industry Association (SolarPower Europe), she decided to travel alone for nine months in Latin America in 2013.

A nine-month tour of Latin America

Against all the friendly advice she was getting on how she might “ruin” her career, she listened to her inner voice. She stayed in almost every country, except Venezuela, reaching out for immersion in local life and culture through volunteer activities in the non-profit sector. In Colombia, she worked for a charity taking care of disadvantaged children, and in Chile, in the renewable energy sector. This long trip was a “life school” for her: *“In Western Europe people lose track of how to be happy with what they have. I met so many nice people in Latin America, with so much compassion and kindness despite their hardships. I felt our societies are sometimes getting lost in constant status anxiety and self-pity”*.

Co-founder of the Brussels Binder database in 2016, she has co-created a platform where female experts can be more visible and get more chances to participate in public debates. *“In my job, which is all about partnerships, I enjoy conversations and understanding how different cultures are working”*, she explains. That’s why she applied to the Atlantic Dialogue Emerging Leaders (ADEL) Program in 2018, and was selected. Besides making *“great friends in Marrakech”*, she thinks *“the length of the ADEL program really gives you the time to understand each other and have a genuine curiosity payoff”*. She was also interested to see how the youth is invested in and invited to “deliver”, sharing thoughts, projects and advice.

Attracted to the Spanish culture and dancing world, Scarlett thinks of Spain as a possible home someday, to open a rustic hacienda, welcome people in a warm environment and host a colorful variety of cultural events from book presentations, to dance seratas and musical stunts. While acknowledging her generation is *“lacking the dreams, since Internet made our life buzzing with short-term challenges”*, she explains that her *“dream goes with no search of impact or income, but something just very peaceful”*.





JUAN DIEGO MUJICA FILIPPI

*A Legal Mind behind
Purpose-Driven Companies*

- December 7th, 2021 -

This impact-driven young Peruvian legal scholar studies and advocates for the redesign of Corporate Law internationally through innovation for sustainable development. What does that mean exactly? After graduating from Harvard Law School (LL.M.'19), Juan Diego Mujica Filippi has been working as academic coordinator of an international research project on purpose-driven companies and the regulation of the fourth sector sponsored by the Ibero-American General Secretariat (SEGIB, based in Spain), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

He contributes to the study of public policy frameworks for purpose-driven companies, to understand *“how these businesses can thrive, having a solid economic return and positive social and environmental impact, in line with the SDGs”*. The project covers 12 Ibero-American countries, 5 international jurisdictions and key topics such as model legislation, impact measurement, tax incentives, sustainable public procurement, and gender equality.

Author of a draft bill at 24

Alongside his international role, Juan Diego leads the corporate responsibility area at Universidad de Lima's Sustainability Center, where he also teaches Corporate Law. At this stage, the main difficulty for him, is that the *“purpose-driven business ecosystem is mostly unknown by the general population, and is studied only by a part of academia and public policy research, with not much data and many, many definitions”*.

But he is determined. After all, at the age of 24, he authored a draft bill for a Peruvian benefit corporation legislation, which was passed as law three years later by the Peruvian Congress in October 2020. *“This is one of the most important achievements for me so far, as I drafted the bill at law school” he explains. “Today through my role at the Sustainability Center, Universidad de Lima is still advising the Peruvian government on that matter and working so students and faculty know about purpose-driven companies as an option to do business and entrepreneurship.”*

Propose change in a positive way

Born in Lima, he is a dual citizen both from Peru and Argentina, his mother's country. His aspiration has always been to *"find the tools to propose change in a positive way"*. This way, for him, happens to be academia: *"It is really a powerful thing to delve into a topic and do something about it, become an actor in it."*

Juan Diego insists on *"believing deeply"* in what he does, and is building a community of friends around his passion for SDG's and sustainability. His sense of debate and taste for contrasting opinions is what led him to the ADEL program. *"I loved the idea of the Policy Center for the New South build bridges between, Latin America and Africa, our two beautiful continents, as the decisive actors for the future."*

He says the ADEL Program in 2019 has been a life-changing experience, as he discovered *"people from all over the Atlantic with so much in common, in terms of challenges and opportunities, willing to work for a better future and move forward. Every time I find myself in a deep conversation with friends I made in Marrakesh, it feels like I am back in Morocco!"*

The future, in his perspective, is all about *"changing the rules of the game for the better. The rules I studied, corporate law, deal with the private sector, and within it there is an immense power to solve social and environmental problems in an efficient way"*.

Besides his work, Juan Diego loves to travel, something he has done extensively throughout his studies, going from the Czech Republic to Canada for law exchange programs, then to Harvard in the USA. His favorite thing is to *"connect with people, get tea or coffee - always with a pastry - with my friends, as this really lifts my spirit"*. During the spare time the COVID-19 crisis has offered, he has read again one of his favorite writers, the Peruvian Nobel Prize for Literature Mario Vargas Llosa. *"A way to connect to my country and culture"*, he concludes, with a broad smile.

WORK
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FATIM ZAHRA BIAZ

Rethinking “Work”

- December 24th, 2019 -

She was 31 years old and had just set up the New Work Lab, a coworking and start-up accelerator space in Morocco in 2013 when she was selected as one of the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders. Fatim Zahra Biaz already had an extensive professional background, which reflected her quest for meaning in work: a graduate of Edec, a business school in Lille, she had worked in Paris in change management consulting.

“I couldn’t sense the impact I was looking for in my work, be it economic, social or educational. I resigned and went around the world for nine months”. She traveled throughout Latin America, from Australia to Asia, learning to overcome her fears and meeting “*digital nomads*”, young people who set up their businesses on the Internet.

“When I came back, I wanted to start a business, but I didn’t really know what it would be. I trained myself in the digital world of start-ups, which has a different state of mind from what is taught in school.” She set up a business selling designer shoes between Paris and Casablanca but changed course quite quickly. She noted that the co-working spaces she used in Paris were sorely lacking in Casablanca – as was all the support dedicated to start-ups, incubators and training programs. *“I told myself that I had to provide entrepreneurs in Morocco with everything I couldn’t find for myself, and that anyone who wanted to start up a business could come, to train and upgrade their skills, to be put in touch with companies, the press, clients, public authorities, etc.”*

The need to rethink the world of work

She keeps a special memory of the 2013 ADEL program: *“It was the first time that an organization in Morocco trusted me with my project. It was a very nice form of support, training and learning”.* Since then, she has been invited as an Alumni to the Atlantic Dialogues conferences and lists among the most memorable encounters of her life a lunch with a former President of Nigeria, Olusegun Obasanjo, who introduced himself as the former *“CEO of Nigeria”*.

The New Work Lab, located on Anfa Boulevard, a main thoroughfare in downtown Casablanca, has since grown and matured, remaining true to its original philosophy. Its founder is adamant: *“We need to rethink the world of work, in which employees feel disconnected and often underuse their potential”.* The Pitch Lab has become a benchmark competition for start-ups in Morocco, which has distinguished 150 entrepreneurs since 2013. Fatim Zahra Biaz has launched another laboratory called *“Future of Work”* to rethink innovation products in large companies, corporate culture, propose events, boot camps, trainings, give practical toolboxes to learn how to change and do work that matters. It offers customized services, tailored to demand, as part of a change-driven program.

An ecosystem for startups

In seven years, the New Work Labs have welcomed 20,000 people and hosted nearly 400 entrepreneurs for training, events and acceleration programs. Among the success stories she likes to highlight is that of Anou, which allows craftspeople to sell their products directly to consumers in the United States. *“This company has developed a solution enabling people who can’t read or write to use the Internet... It’s great!”*

The New Work Lab, supported by the Office chérifien des phosphates (OCP) Foundation, contributes to the creation of an ecosystem conducive to startups, *“in a market that is not easy to create, by inventing models with the means at hand”*. She dreams of scaling up and seeing the impact of her work grow, moving from the micro-economic sphere to a more *“macro”* impact in the world of start-ups, with increasingly ambitious projects.

Fatim Zahra Biaz continues to travel, hike and enjoy the sea, while nurturing a spirit of excellence far from mediocrity – the thing she hates the most in life. Her dream? She takes time to reflect, before explaining, with calm enthusiasm radiating from her words and her person: *“That work in Morocco should no longer be seen as an obligation, a livelihood, but as our best way of participating in the development of our country, with a collective and civic impact. For me, work is a way of expressing values, a contribution that we can leave behind, a way of writing a story together. How to make people want to work differently and to see their work as a tool for collective progress, this is the very reason for New Work Lab’s existence, whether you are a salaried employee, a student or a civil servant.”*





BLAIR GLENCORSE

Enhancing Accountability

- February 16th, 2022 -

Based in Washington DC, where he launched the Accountability Lab in 2012, this British citizen describes himself as “*inquisitive, energetic and values-driven*”. He heads a global “*trans local network*” which is expanding rapidly and about to open new local labs in Uganda and Somalia. The Lab, a non-profit organization, currently employs 104 people in 14 countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The aim is to make governments more transparent and accountable, through positive change. The Lab supports active citizens, responsible leaders and accountable institutions. Why this particular topic? “*Ten years ago, I realized that without accountability, it was difficult to deal with all the problems that many countries are facing*”, says Blair Glencorse. “*Unless we can build trusted relationships between people in power and citizens, it will be impossible to address our collective challenges*” he adds.

Blair’s career started at the World Bank in the Fragile States Unit (2005-07). Later, he helped set up the Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE), an American think tank focused on governance and institutional reforms in countries affected by conflict. Between 2007 and 2012, he was an associate with the Institute, generating integrated approaches to state-building and providing practical policy advice in countries such as Afghanistan, India, Sierra Leone and Haiti. It was through these experiences that Blair came to understand the centrality of accountability to the process of development.

During a trip to Nepal in 2010, he expected the young people he was meeting to be pushing for better education or access to healthcare and other basic services. Instead, they explained that what they needed was the rule of law and less corruption. “*They had incredible ideas to solve these problems but because of the Western oriented international aid system, could not tap into the support they needed*”. That was the beginning of the Lab for Blair, who realized that accountability begins with decolonizing existing institutional architectures and reorienting decision-making to make it as inclusive as possible.

“ Naming and faming instead of naming and shaming ”

Accountability Lab has raised more than 20 million dollars since then to support its efforts to drive bottom-up accountability. It now works across three key pillars to ensure impact and foster change. The first pillar is about building positive narratives and shifting norms, to create hope and change the way people engage around the issues.

Rather than “*naming and shaming*” the Lab supports “*naming and faming*”, Blair points out. “*This is essential because it lifts up people doing the right things and begins to build a sense that systems can change. Our Integrity Icon campaign is a great example of this.*” Through this campaign, honest government officials across 14 countries are nominated by citizens, filmed and celebrated through a media-savvy outreach effort on TV, radio and social media.

The second pillar is knowledge building through incubators for civic activists and training for civil servants within government. The Lab also works to build “*unlikely networks*” among diverse constituencies, like musicians, film-makers, creatives,

technologists and others. The idea is to ensure that diverse voices are heard and mainstream accountability ideas are translated into policy changes.

The third pillar relates to community-building, through the creation of feedback loops through which citizens can influence local governance processes. Through the Civic Action Teams (CivActs) for example, Blair and his team have done everything from supporting coordination of the massive earthquake relief effort in Nepal, to countering mis-information about COVID-19 in Pakistan, to improving the contracts signed between mining companies and communities in Liberia. “ *All of this begins with active listening* ”, Glencorse points out: “ *Communities have all the answers to local challenges* ”.

A passion for Africa and International Politics

Blair grew up in central England but always knew his interest in international politics would take him elsewhere, which led initially to a stint in Zimbabwe, where he was a student teacher. “ *My experience in Zimbabwe was transformational* ”, Blair says: “ *There is a straight line from my work at that point to my current work at Accountability Lab* ”.

After graduating with an MA in Modern History from the University of Edinburgh in 2002, Blair settled in Washington, DC where he studied for an MA in American Foreign Policy and International Economics at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Blair came across the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders Program through the German Marshall Fund, a partner of the Policy Center for the New South. “ *ADEL is a great space to discuss ideas relevant to Africa and the Southern Atlantic, with a change of perspective and tons of interesting people as part community* ”, he explains. Collaborations that Blair has engaged with as a member of the ADEL network include work to train local journalists and activists in Nigeria with the French journalist Sophie Bouillon, invited to the Atlantic Dialogues in 2017, and the virtual Atlantic Dialogues through which he has facilitated sessions, including with Bushra Ebadi.

Fond of running, biking and walking his dog, Blair reads and travels as much as he can. Among his favorite books, he mentions *Seeing like a State* by James Scott (Yale University Press, 1998), which examines how state-building can go wrong; and *Lean Startup* (Pierson, 2012), a best-seller by Eric Ries, about constant innovation and “ *how to fail and learn quickly to grow your organization* ”. Both he says, have been helpful as he has worked to grow Accountability Lab into the leading network of local organizations pushing for better governance around the world.

In 2021, Blair was diagnosed with kidney cancer and with treatment, has made a full recovery, which he has spoken about eloquently elsewhere. “ *We all know that time is precious, but a near death experience certainly brings that home* ” Blair says. “ *My experience reminded me not to waste any time and to do those things that give us meaning. In the end, that is a life well lived* ”.





PATRICIA AHANDA

Coaching for Leadership

- June 1st, 2021 -

This young French entrepreneur cannot be reduced to a single side of herself. To describe her as the founder of Lydexperience, a training platform focused on leadership coaching, is certainly not enough. She is also into politics and has held an electoral mandate, with expertise on equality, training and female entrepreneurship.

In her case, the same applies to geography. Born in France, Patricia Ahanda partly grew up in Cameroon, her parent's country. When her father was posted in Yaoundé, his family followed. Between the age of 6 and 10, Patricia observed and absorbed her new environment. She dreamt of becoming a school headmistress. *"I realized the importance of education in Cameroon. My father was helping a lot of children in need, to finance their studies. He thought it was unacceptable to let kids work on the fields or walk for kilometers to attend class. He told me to always help somebody to go to school, as much as I could".*

Cameroon has taught her life lessons: *"People always fight in difficult circumstances, finding strength and inspiration",* she says. In France, *"things are not easy either but this is a Revolution country with important values such as freedom and equality, and that also grants its citizens the right to protest. One can always criticize the French society, but the struggle against inequalities is deeply rooted. I find this reassuring, because it is not the case in other countries".*

Double culture, double curriculae

Her double curriculae in Politics and Communication is another facet of her personality. She has a Master's Degree in Modern Literature and Communication and another one in Geopolitics (Université Paris III). At first, she wanted to be a diplomat like her father. But she changed her mind after a traineeship at the French Embassy in Niamey (Niger) in 2010. *"A troubled time, with French nationals being held hostages and a general context of financial restrictions in diplomatic institutions",* she explains.

She decided to study further at La Sorbonne (Paris I), with a Master's Degree mixing Law, Political Science and preparation to the well-known National School of Administration (ENA). She never made it to this elitist school, now doomed to disappear under a decision of the President Emmanuel Macron. She nonetheless managed to get the needed skills to pursue her political career.

At 16, she started fighting for youth participation in politics with the Socialist Party (PS). In 2011, she joined the direction of the campaign team of François Hollande, elected in 2012. She became a member of the press relations' team in the cabinet of the Minister of Economy and Finance.

Crying out for change

Between 2014 and 2020, she held an electoral mandate as a Deputy Mayor of Champigny-sur-Marne, a suburb of Paris with 76,000 inhabitants. She was in charge of the *“digital development, training and professional insertion”* for the youth and the unemployed.

Patricia Ahanda has a smooth voice, but everything about her is crying out for change. Her coaching firm, called Lydexperience, was launched in 2017 to fill a gap. *“Everybody’s talking about governance and leadership, but nobody is teaching those subjects. My work experience has shown me that leadership is a skill you can acquire. It’s all about certain codes and customs that some people are not raised with. When knowledge and tools are shared, it becomes possible to democratize leadership, without thinking it belongs to the elite”*.

She organizes trainings in the public sector, and gives advice to SMEs or people looking for leadership skills. What is the best asset to become a true leader? *“Quality, the desire to do and share something, serve a cause, solve a problem, respond to questions or expectations of a group.”*

Self-assertive young woman

Her customers are mostly women, looking for a self-assertive outlook that is often lacking. *“There isn’t one model of leadership, and it does not necessarily look like a man in a suit. Leadership is also represented by strong women like Mother Teresa or Wangari Maathai. More and more women want to get trained after reading positive pieces about female success stories in the press”*. She operates in France and Africa, offering a Women Leadership Workshop and a Brunch Women Leadership Business. Both initiatives were given in 2020 a label by UN Women and the Ministry of Gender Equality, during the forum called *“Génération égalité”*.

She is still working on the political front, and has launched in 2021 a new NGO called POLEADHER, focusing on the participation of young women in politics. Patricia Ahanda, a leader in her own right, has been a member of many programs - Globsec Young Leaders, the Most Influential People of African Descent (MIPAD), the Forbes Under 30 Summit and the World Bank Youth Summit, to name a few.

She was also an Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leader (ADEL) in 2018, a program she thinks is *“different, because I am still in touch with fellow young leaders from across the Atlantic.”* She applied because she was longing to meet people *“like me, living in other countries but sharing my aspirations and a will to have a positive impact on the world, with more exchange and cooperation”*. In Marrakesh, she shared experiences with *“people eager to learn and other young women finding it sometimes difficult to impose themselves.”* Patricia’s future seems bright, rooted in questions of equality, education and development that won’t go away.





YOUSSEF KOBO

A Proud “Seat at the Table”

- January 14th, 2022 -

“Entrepreneurial, curious, energetic”. This is how Youssef Kobo, a Belgian citizen coming from a Moroccan family, would describe himself in three words. Always on the road, this busy traveler is taking part in conferences and workshops all over the world. His line of work? He is an individual consultant on strategic innovation.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, he has launched his own enterprise, called New Blueprints, end of 2020. The demand is high for his talents of keynote speaker, coming from a variety of customers. *“I am a generalist and my missions vary from advising on projects for European institutions to giving keynotes for multinationals or workshops to international think tanks”*, Youssef Kobo explains.

He is also the founding director of A Seat at the table, a non-profit organization he created in 2018 after participating to the Atlantic Dialogues conference in Marrakesh, to connect disadvantaged youth with opportunities and business. For this project, he consulted a number of Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) from different cohorts, who all chipped in with ideas, feedback and so on. Youssef Kobo is also a columnist for De Tijd, and writes op-eds on geopolitics, innovation and youth for De Standaard and De Morgen. Dutch is his language, as he was born and raised in Mechelen, a city located between Brussel and Antwerp in the Dutch-speaking region of Flanders.

He is not interested in negativity in his writings. When asked about his feelings on the ongoing debates around the Moroccan and Muslim community in Belgium, he replies: *“This is very tiring and frustrating. Every single day, even before the 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels and the Syrian refugee crisis, there is a national issue on Islam, Muslims, Moroccans, headscarves or what not. For some reason, we constantly talk about identity – an obsession in the public debate, but fortunately not in the everyday life and interactions in Belgium. There are some serious issues with minorities when it comes to employment, but nothing of the scale of an apocalyptic disaster, as depicted by the media and the political elite”*.

The Atlantic Dialogues, a life changing experience

This young leader has always kept a *“strong and emotional connection with Morocco”*, where he spent summers every year with his family, in the region of his parents, near Tetouan. This partly explains why the high-level conference Atlantic Dialogues, organized by the Policy Center for the New South, has been such a life changing experience for him. In early 2016, he met a Program Officer of the Policy Center at the Brussels Forum, a conference organized by the German Marshall Fund (GMF). *“We got talking, because of our Moroccan roots, and this Program Officer told me I you should apply to the ADEL program”*.

His main incentive was that he's *"always felt like a big piece was missing"* in his life – as big as Africa. *"I was adamant to dive into Morocco, reconnect with my roots, and amazed by the opportunities and ventures that the Atlantic Dialogues made me discover in Africa"*.

The Policy Center for the New South, *"leading as an example, gave me the drive to come back more in Africa"*, he further explains. Youssef Kobo was *"so triggered, as a young Moroccan living in Belgium, to hear the vision of the Policy Center about how Africa should take charge of its own future and destiny"*, that he launched A Seat at the Table soon after.

Shirley Chisholm as an inspiration

His nonprofit organization was inspired by a quote from Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected at the US House of representatives, in 1968: *"If they don't give you a seat at the table, bring your own folding chair"*. Mentioned during a closing panel of the Atlantic Dialogues in 2016, this sentence lighted a spark that soon became a fire. *"I believe in this mindset of reaching out to young people from a disadvantaged background"* like himself, who comes from the lower part of the social ladder.

The self-made man, who has left university after two years of law studies, once understood that what sounded like *"the most prestigious thing was too boring, and not for me"*. When he left Marrakech in December 2016, his wish was to make sure he would stay in touch with ADEL Alumni, and create a local impact to give back to his community. In his mentoring programs for the youth, he often says: *"If you want to be a leader, create your own opportunities"*. Every week, A Seat at the Table organizes events with young professionals and students visiting international institutions, meeting CEO's or taking part in workshops on soft skills.

His aspirations for the future are quite simple: making his current activities grow bigger. *"I like being constantly on the move, in a rapidly changing environment, generating social impact"*. In his Brussels office, he is sitting in front of an impressive wall, made of over 2000 books he likes, from the ground to the ceiling. Among his latest reads, he mentions Niall Ferguson, author of *Doom, the Politics of Catastrophe* (2021), the autobiography of the US actor Will Smith, and *The Laws of Human Nature* (2018) by Robert Greene.

Youssef Kobo has returned to the Atlantic Dialogues as a speaker, and is grateful that the Policy Center is *"investing in its Alumni, something you don't often see in other conferences and leadership programs"*.





EDNA VALENCIA MURILLO

A Black Colombian Influencer

- November 22nd, 2021 -

In her very energetic way and a waterfall of words, Edna Valencia Murillo explains how the Atlantic Dialogues 2019 have been a life changer. At the time of her participation in the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program in 2019, she was a Colombian news anchor for France 24 in Spanish, working from Bogota, a job she left in September 2021 to follow a more independent route. During the pandemic, she has written a book, built her platform *“to connect black people in Colombia with African leaders”*, and prepared the opening of her cultural center/hair salon, Belleza Negra – *“Black Beauty”* in Spanish. In addition to these noteworthy achievements, she has been consulting for Disney Animation Studios since July 2021 on black representation in a movie called Encanto, shot in Colombia.

In December 2019 in Marrakesh, Edna was already explaining how she was looking to raise the visibility of Africa in Latin America, *“two continents that are related but don’t know each other”*. At the same time, she was working to raise awareness and change the narrative and perceptions on the aesthetics of Black women: *“Because they are beautiful too, even if it’s not according to the European standards”*.

Connecting Black Colombian women with their heritage

Being herself a reference on black identity for her generation, she explains that 13 million people, on a total population of 51 million, are of African descent in Colombia. *“I want to connect black women with their heritage, their natural hair and skin, and stop using chemicals that are dangerous for their health and their self-esteem.”*

How did the Atlantic Dialogues change her life in 2019, as a young Emerging leader? Marrakesh was her first trip ever in Africa. She transformed the ADEL program into an opportunity to go further and know more. From Morocco, she went to Senegal, where visits in Gorée inspired her poetry. In March 2021, she went back to Africa, this time to the MASA (Marché des Arts et du Spéctacle Africain) Festival in Ivory Coast, where she met a lot of people in the cultural field.

She has also kept in touch with some of the Atlantic Dialogues guests she met during the conference in Marrakesh. In February 2020, she has for instance helped William, from the NBA Basketball Team, do a tour and meet Afro-Colombian leaders in sports and journalism. She took him to her community in Quibdó, the capital city of the region of Chocó (82 % of Afro-Colombians), where the lack of opportunities is *“the same as in rural areas in Africa”*. They attended the Black History Month at the US Embassy in Bogota, and conducted a workshop with a young basketball team.

A cultural center in Cali

Edna leads a busy and enriching life. After one month in Cuba, then two weeks in Spain for a festival, she came back to Bogota in November 2021 to meet another AD guest: Thione Niang, the Senegalese former campaign advisor of Barack Obama, who did a lot for the election of the first US Black president with the Democrats Youth. Back in Senegal since 2018, as the head of an agricultural enterprise, Thione Niang had toured Colombia with Edna, through Medellin for the NegroFest festival and Cartagena de Indias and San Basilio de Palenque – a fortified town founded in 1603 by African slaves who freed themselves, belonging since 2005 to the World Patrimony of Unesco.

Edna and Thione are planning to work on a documentary to show the connection between Colombia and Senegal, a subject Edna is very passionate about: *“We have our own balafon in marimba music in Colombia, but we don’t know it’s an African instrument!”*

Belleza Negra, the cultural center she will open in February 2022 in Cali, *“a town with more Black people”* – 27 % of the population, vs 10 % in Bogota – will be an *“identity and aesthetic center”*. A lot more than a beauty and hair salon. *“There will be a library to sell African writers, a cine-forum space, fashion events, workshops and more”*. Edna will launch her own book, *La sombra del Baobab*, *“The Baobab’s Shadow”*, a mix between poetry writings and an essay on Black issues and her personal experience of racism in Latin America.

In 2022, she plans on going back to Africa and get her citizenship in Sierra Leone, as her DNA test shows she is from this West African country. She will also launch her podcast as an independent journalist, freer than ever.





SELEMAN KITENGE

Speech Writer for AUDA-NEPAD

- April 9th, 2021 -

As a Project Assistant responsible for Speech Writing in the Office of Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki, CEO of the African Union Development Agency–NEPAD, Seleman Kitenge, born in 1989 in Tanzania, is now based in Johannesburg. He was first a volunteer for the African Union (AU) in the same role for one year, before being hired in August 2020 by the AU Development Agency.

“I’m enjoying it, he says, some of my mentors are really good”. Among them, Togolani Mavura, Private Secretary and Speech Writer for the former President of Tanzania H.E Dr. Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, and Dr. Ibrahim Mayaki himself, who has been taking time to mentor him personally. *“Since I joined AUDA–NEPAD, my mentors have been like my guardian angels and makes it a growing journey for me”*, he says.

Born in Dar es Salaam, raised by a father who is still a prominent tailor, Seleman Kitenge’s family comes from the Kigoma region, close to the Tanganyika Lake in the western part of Tanzania. His love for his country and Africa is intertwined with his personal longings. *“My dreams have never changed, he says, I’ve always wanted to be a leader in either politics or diplomacy, in order to foster the development of our continent”.*

Where does it come from? *“This is part of my personality, and my father kept on encouraging me to read newspapers, books, and follow Tanzanian politics”.* He wanted his son to understand the vision of one of the most admired African leader, Julius Nyerere (1922–1999), the father of Tanzania’s Independence. Called *“Mwalimu”* – *“school teacher”* in Kiswahili – Nyerere had a socialist vision for his country’s development and left a strong legacy.

A first life-changing trip to Russia

Seleman Kitenge could have been a singer, as he was into rap and singing in his teenage years, or a soccer player – soccer being one of his hobbies. But his parents kept pushing him into politics and diplomacy. So much so that they decided to sell a piece of land to finance his first trip abroad in July 2013. He went to Russia to follow a training program in Tver Oblast known as International Youth Forum Seliger. *“This trip will help you to get more trips for free and make many friends from different parts of the world”*, his father told him, foreseeing exactly what would happen next.

The young man studied Public Sector Financial Management at Tanzania Public Service College, and is a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from the Open University of Tanzania. He holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Management for Foreign Relations from the Center for Foreign Relations, and has also made his way through many international programs, in Azerbaijan, Japan, Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Costa Rica, Morocco, France, Crimea, and Australia to name a few. Three were outstanding in his view. He was awarded in June 2016 an Honorary Diploma of New Leaders for Tomorrow by the Crans Montana Forum in Vienna, Austria. *“One of my best experiences, as I was one of the 3 African citizens in a group of 11 young leaders selected and the first Tanzanian to receive the honor”*, he recalls.

In 2018, he became one of the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders (ADEL) and came to Marrakech for a tailor-made networking and empowerment program before attending the high level international conference Atlantic Dialogues, organized

by the Policy Center for the New South. There, he enjoyed the “*unique blend*” of the conference, “*African with a taste of Europe and the Americas*”, and the specific touch of the ADEL program: “*We were trained as young leaders and also allowed to interact with senior leaders from AU, NATO, the UN, former Presidents and Prime ministers from all over the world*”. One of the things he liked most: “*Interacting with Harvard and Cambridge students confidently, to engage and contribute as an equal expert on geopolitics, although my academic journey is just from local institutions.*”

His third favorite program is the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), launched in 2010 by the State Department under the presidency of Barack Obama. A member of the first cohort of YALI’s East Africa Chapter in 2015, Seleman has listened to President Barack Obama in Nairobi (Kenya). He met “*prestigious trainers coming from US Universities, former officials at the White House, the Department of State and even NASA*”.

Dedicated to Africa’s future

Among many other things, he has been certified by the Commonwealth Secretariat as a Trainer of Trainers on issues around Hate Speech, Human Rights, and Countering Violent Extremism as well as being named by the European Union Commission as a One Young World Peace Ambassador. As much as he may have traveled abroad, he never thought of leaving Tanzania or Africa. “*There were tempting opportunities out there, but I always came back to serve my country and continent*”.

His vision is the one of a whole generation: “*To see Africa prosper and have an equal share at the table of global affairs. Most importantly, see Africa become fully integrated economically to create more opportunities for the youth who are the most marginalized by economic systems across the continent*”. Moreover, he hopes to see extreme poverty eradicated, in order to facilitate the continent’s economic transformation. He envisions seeing youth given more opportunities at the front leadership row on social, political, and economic issues. “*I believe the energy, vibrancy, and innovative nature of youth will significantly help to fast-track Africa’s development if properly utilized at the national and continental levels.*”

Before AUDA-NEPAD, he worked as an Administrator and Spokesperson at the Honorary Consulate of Sierra Leone in Dar es Salaam, and as a Program Officer with the United Nations Association of Tanzania. This non-profit umbrella organization is working closely with the UN in Tanzania but is not a part of the UN system. There, Seleman Kitenge took part in a project to accelerate youth political and economic participation across the country. “*We reached over 20 000 young people in the mainland and Zanzibar, to encourage them to participate in local governments and get to know and use the grants our government is allocating to the youth, to start businesses*”.

A keen reader of political essays and biographies, he mentions *The World as It Is* among his favorite books, written by Ben Rhodes, the former Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting under President Barack Obama (2009-17). A man he met twice, in Kenya and France, and who gave him his book as a present. Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General, is one of his role models. Seleman Kitenge, an ambitious young man, would certainly like to walk in this path of greatness, “*whether at the front stage or behind the scenes*”.





CLARISSA RIOS ROJAS

*Studying Existential Risk
in Cambridge*

- June 22, 2020 -

Born in 1984 in Peru and trained as a scientist, Clarissa Rios Rojas has a PhD in molecular biology, but also a clear taste for exploring beyond her field to see the bigger picture. She is since March 2020 a Research Associate at the Center for the Study of Existential Risk, launched by the Cambridge University in the United Kingdom. *“The Center is very multi-disciplinary, with philosophers, astronomers, lawyers, economists, and educators, working on the management of global catastrophe risks such as a human-engineered pandemic, she explains. It could be a nuclear war, the impact of an asteroid hitting Earth, bio-threats or climate change. Anything that could decimate humanity with little chance to recover.”*

Her team is working on ways to prevent such risks or mitigate them. Her specific role is to *“be the bridge between research and policy makers, finding innovative policy solutions and an international framework for governments to manage extreme natural, technological or biological risks.”* She participates in workshops organized with different inter-regional stakeholders, such as the United Nations or the International Network for Government Science Advice, among others, and policymakers around the world.

She has started in her new position in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, a perfect example of why it is so important to think about the future and start to change policies now. The pandemic still has a *“snowball effect”* of shutting many systems one by one in many countries: the health system, food security, trade, tourism, airlines.

Expansion of knowledge

Very early on in her life, she has looked for opportunities to grow. Firstly, she decided to leave Peru for Finland, where she would study with a scholarship. *“I did not even know where Finland was at that point”, she recalls with a smile, “people would think I was going to the Philippines or Philadelphia, none of my friends heard about Finland before.”* She studied for one year in Turku and ended up being hired for another year to work in a laboratory.

Then, through what she describes as a *“chain of events”*, she went to Sweden to get a Master in Biomedicine, worked in Germany for Evotec, a pharmaceutical company searching for a drug in neurodegenerative diseases. There, she developed a passion for XX and XY (male and female) chromosomes and looked for a leading laboratory to uplift her skills. She found it in Brisbane, Australia, where she got her PhD in Development Molecular Biology in June 2017. What would be the next step? *“Going to the Moon”, she laughs. She loved her Australian experience, “being so far away and surrounded by nature and amazing landscapes.”*

At the same time, she launched Ekpa'palek, an NGO helping Latin American students develop professionally, through a digital platform that offers free professional mentorship opportunities, taking on a mentor role there and convincing her friends to join her. She kept on expanding her knowledge, this time on international development and politics. That's why she applied to the Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders

(ADEL) program in 2016. *“Coming to Marrakesh was my first step out of science, encouraging me to attend later different conferences on science diplomacy and make presentations on international development. At the same time, I realized that some topics related to emerging technologies were a threat, like the edition of genes and the first genetically edited babies, born in China in October 2018, raising huge ethical questions. This called my attention to finding a place that would encompass science and policy advice.”*

Clarissa Rios Rojas has already achieved a lot in her life. She describes her profile in her Curriculum Vitae as *“a scientist with experience working at an agency from the Ministry of Environment in Peru, the European Commission and the Geneva Centre for Security Policy, providing science-based evidence and advice for policymaking. She also has experience as an Eisenhower Fellow, a UN Women champion for women’s economic empowerment, a UNESCO delegate, an Emerging Leader at the Atlantic Dialogues, a Fellow at the Asian Forum for Global Governance/Raising Dialogues, a newspaper collaborator, an advisor at Women Economic Forum and as a co-lead of the Science Advice working group at the Global Young Academy.”*

Empathy, a personal engine

She has also written many scientific articles and received awards (Exceptional Women of Excellence at the Women Economic Forum in the Netherlands, 2018). She has followed policy-making training in Japan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Switzerland, India, Germany and Jordan, and got herself doing presentations in conferences all over the world, from Thailand to Chile, passing through Cairo, Geneva, Kigali and Copenhagen. She describes herself as *“persistent, curious and empathetic – a quality that is worryingly lacking in many well-educated people, who don’t care much about the rest of the world.”*

Her dream? *“If human beings would be empathetic with each other, a lot of problems would be resolved. This is the best thing I could see in my life. We need to teach empathy at different levels within the education system and at work to let us become more human. There must be a way.”*

The famous novel 1984, by George Orwell, is her favorite book, and she also likes The Fifth Season (2016), a fiction about earthquakes and science written by N. K. Jemisin, an African-American female author. She sees her parents and friends as her main role models and source of inspiration. *“My father is a technical engineer at animal farms, who taught me persistence. My mother a scientist, teaching at the National University in Peru taught her about women empowerment. She didn’t want me to be to become a biologist, thinking it would not be a good career choice if I was ending up being as badly paid as her. But in the end, she supported me and here I am...”* As for her friends, she likes to be in tune with *“optimists working on the reduction of inequalities, women empowerment and who think about the future”*. In short, some of her own reflections.

The background of the entire page is a collage of numerous small, semi-transparent portraits of diverse young professionals, including men and women of various ethnicities and ages, all smiling or looking thoughtfully at the camera. The portraits are arranged in a grid-like pattern, creating a sense of a large, vibrant community.

IMPACTFUL EMERGING LEADERS OF THE WIDER ATLANTIC

30 PORTRAITS OF ATLANTIC DIALOGUES EMERGING LEADERS ALUMNI

The Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders Alumni (ADEL) Portraits are a series of journalistic insights that delve into the stories and backgrounds of impactful young leaders of the ADEL community, now 350 alumni strong. These portraits are more than a biography as they capture the motives, success stories, career shifts, and vision behind each emerging leader's pursuit of positive impact. From Morocco to South Africa, Germany to Canada, Brazil and the United States, these young leaders from very diverse walks of life came together in Marrakech at some point over the past 10 years to take part in the annual Atlantic Dialogues Emerging Leaders program, to connect with other young professionals and leaders from around the Atlantic basin, contribute to bridging the North-South divide very much present in the Atlantic space, and become strong actors of intergenerational dialogue which is a central value held by the Policy Center for the New South. This book compiles 30 inspiring portraits, written by freelance French journalist Sabine Cessou, specialized in African and European matters, and a Research Fellow of the Policy Center for the New South.

POLICY CENTER FOR THE NEW SOUTH
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