

Kevin's Story

My name is Kevin Kambo; I was born in Nairobi, Kenya and came to the United States about five years ago for undergraduate education at Stanford University – my prospects for marathon running were not very encouraging, you see – and I am currently working in Manhattan. My plan is to complete graduate training and then return home to Kenya as a university professor.

More importantly, though, what brings me here before you this evening? In a word, it is *Harambee*. "*Harambee*" is a curious word with complex and diverse meanings. One translation renders it into English from Swahili as "all together for one." But this does not faithfully convey the whole reality of the word itself.

First of all, when it was time for *Harambee* at home, the proper phrase to use was *to do a Harambee*. This means that a *Harambee* is an action – not just an inanimate thing – there is a will, energy and strength behind it. The "all" who engage in the *Harambee* are those who devote their wills, energy and strength to something collective; it is an action of a community, not just of one person. You cannot have *Harambees* alone, by yourself.

On the other hand there is the "one". This is somewhat deceptive because there is more in the "one," so to speak, than is apparent. At first look, the "one" clearly refers to the single-minded goal that the community is trying to achieve. But on another level we see the action of a unified community - the gathering of different people from varied circumstances to act as one. It is, therefore, easy to see how the *Harambee* goal – be it the schooling of a child, the building of a resource, or the helping of a family in need – becomes a reality. The goal is never seen as something extrinsic to the community but rather as something fundamental, positive and intrinsically good. Thus, the invitation to do *Harambee* is not merely an asking for alms, but an extension, in a certain sense, of membership in the community. It is a summons to participate in the life and destiny of the community not merely as a benefactor, but as a sharer in that same life and destiny. In short, *Harambee* is all together for one in that we come together for a common goal, all together as one, in that we gather as one people regardless of our differences and histories, and all together under one in that we act as a family. The Italians have a saying, *traditore, traduttore* which means the translator is a traitor. Now I am sure you better understand my joy at seeing that the *Harambee* initiative decided to keep the original word, with all its beauty and integrity.

I met the international Harambee organization in 2002 when it was launched in Rome, Italy. This was because the same person, Josemaria Escriva, who inspires *Harambee* was also the inspiration behind my school, Strathmore School – which was the first multi-racial school in Kenya. I suppose, then, I am a product – albeit imperfect – of the same spirit that animates Project *Harambee*.

Harambee USA is a non-profit Foundation started in 2007 designed to international solidarity and cooperation with sub-Saharan Africa. It has two aims of which I will speak only briefly. The first is the promotion and preservation of African culture in the world, and the second is education and development within Africa.

This may at first seem funny, but it is also true. Our first aim, to raise awareness of the richness and complexity of African culture, is a fundamental part of our help to Africa. It reminds the world of the 'oneness' of all peoples and the dignity of each. It can also teach people the world over that helping Africa financially is not futile, but must be combined with a mutual respect for and a sincere appreciation of the highest African wishes, ambitions, and hopes for their nations, including the most fundamental human desire for family, home, work, health and education. When the rest of the world recognizes this commonality of

human rights and affirms it in Sub-Saharan Africa, it empowers these peoples to be more self-reliant, more capable of building their own future, enriching and communicating their traditions in a respectful and respected way, and ultimately combining their youth, desires for peace and justice, and love for work and family, with cooperation of the like-minded people everywhere.

The need for our second aim: education and development within Africa, is, unfortunately, self-evident. Africa is now seen as one vast continent of poverty, war and disease, whose people live on the verge of despair, starvation and death. While this is not the whole picture, the problems are grave and far reaching. It is clear that solutions cannot be imposed from the outside. We need leaders – at every level – both faithful to their homeland and knowledgeable about the world.

The good news is that Africans are very resourceful and hard-working people endowed with the ability, through life experience, to do a lot with just a little. Africans are more than willing to put their shoulders to the plough in order to sow the seeds of knowledge, integrity, good will and hard work for a better future. This makes *Harambee's* goal of supporting education (especially education), job training, better nutrition and cures for disease within Africa, highly desirable and profoundly commendable. We want Americans, Asians, Europeans and people of all nations to be among Africa's friends—near and far--*Harambee-Style*: each one doing what can be done for the common good of the neighbor.

Tonight, I come to you from a continent that is ready and willing to come of age through the work of its own hands and I invite you with a sincere and grateful heart to share in the AFRICAN WILL, ENERGY, AND STRENGTH to accomplish great things. Given the chance to work together on this "African Dream" my hope is that you will see this evening, that helping *Harambee USA* is more than an act of charity for a needy people; it is an act of belief in a people who are passionate about advancing their community, and an act of hope in a young and vibrant continent.

In closing, I simply want to call you to go out and do Harambee, helping us to do *Harambee* too. If you help us to educate the world about the Real Africa you will also be helping Africans to help themselves: All Together For One: single-minded, as a community, as a family.

Thank you once again for this wonderful opportunity to share my story with you tonight. I'll be happy to tell you more the next time our lives cross paths, either in New York or even in Kenya! I wish to extend a warm invitation to all of you to come and see the "real" Africa. I will show you real fruits of past *Harambee* ventures and the groundwork for future ones.



HarambeeUSA is helping Africans help themselves.

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