



# AFRICAN SERVICES

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## COMMITTEE

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## A Spring Adventure to Ethiopia: Adventures in the North

**Communications Director, Stephanie Kaplan, headed to Ethiopia to observe and document the work being done in the five clinics. Read below as she takes you along on her journey. This is the third and final installment.**



The third and final leg of our journey took us north to the birthplace of our founder, Asfaha Hadera. We saved a long and treacherous journey by car, and took a short flight-on the fantastic, Ethiopian Airlines--north to Mekele. Mekele, located 780 km north of Addis, is located in

the northern Tigray Region of Ethiopia and is one of its principal economic and educational centers. This region is also highly popular among tourists, as it is located near historic sites such as Axum and Lalibela -- famous Ethiopian Christian Orthodox sites. The region is also known for its diverse and mountainous terrain, which makes for great hiking and exploring.

Upon arrival, we were greeted by our 'guide' for the next few days, and taken to Asfaha's family abode in the old town of Mekele. After a brief nap, we headed out to view the African Services' clinic based in Mekele. The Mekele clinic was established in March 2007 and is the northernmost clinic. The city is host to Mekele University, one of the largest universities in the country with over 30,000 students enrolled. The clinic itself occupies a beautiful and large space near the city center, and serves thousands of residents each year.



**A few staff and clinic photos**

The staff welcomed us and gave us with a tour of the grounds - including a library and youth resource center, nutrition, testing, counseling, and more. Once again, as with each clinic I visited, I was overwhelmed by the energy and enthusiasm of each of the staff members. There was a hum throughout the compound as staff distributed TOMS Shoes and nutritional supplements to young mothers, local residents were waiting patiently on the benches to have HIV and TB tests conducted and a few young girls were waiting to speak to a post-test counselor.



**Just a sampling of some of the clients that were at the Mekele Clinic that day.**

Following our visit, we loaded into our van and headed out to the mountains for a short weekend getaway to 'recharge' the batteries from all the traveling and work we'd done. Asfaha and Kim chose the BEAUTIFUL Gheralta Lodge for us to stay. I truly don't have words to describe Gheralta Lodge, except for beautiful! Gheralta is a few hours drive from Mekele, and located near Hawizen, a town nestled at the base of the Gheralta Mountains, a unique chain of mountains, cliffs, and valleys that made a perfect home base for exploring the rock-hewn churches that this region is known for. We spent the weekend exploring the surrounding areas, hiking up treacherous rock paths, climbing over boulders and scampering up hillsides--always being followed by a brave child or two--to reach the hidden Ethiopian churches carved into the hillside. From the outside, they don't look like much, but once inside you are greeted by beautifully colored murals, hanging tapestries and ornate metal work. There are hundreds of thousands of these ancient Ethiopian churches throughout the country, and each one has its own local priest that guards the facility. It is obvious that they take great pride in the space and what they 'protect' and that these spaces serve as places of worship and ceremony for the surrounding villages and local townspeople.



**We had a few friends tagging along with us on our hike**



**And of course there was BEAUTIFUL scenery**

In one area, we were greeted by a young man who had fashioned a violin out of a plastic bottle and some string. He serenaded us as we made our way up to the church. The children are so resourceful!



After a BEAUTIFUL weekend of hiking and some AMAZING home-cooked Italian-inspired meals, we hopped back in the van and headed back towards Mekele. We made a pit stop along the way to check in on one of African Services' newest income generating activities (IGA), our honey farm. The northern region of Ethiopia is well known for its honey, in particular its "white honey" - this rare honey has widespread use in Ethiopia and is traditionally served during festivals with steam-cooked white bread. After inspecting the land and the hives, we were extremely pleased to see that the bees were happily buzzing and producing honey, and hope to have our first batch by late December.



We finally made it back to Mekelle after several detours—thanks to widespread road construction by the Chinese government. The Chinese have definitely taken an interest to investing in Ethiopia, as their work is widespread throughout the country. We spent a final night in Mekelle, and I happily indulged in some amazing 'fasting' food—during Christian holidays, Ethiopians will 'fast,' which means they eat vegan-style food.

My trip was winding down now, and all that was left was a quick flight to Addis, and then boarding my plane for the LONG flight home. It's difficult to reflect back on my weeks in Ethiopia and attempt to sum up all my feelings and emotions about the experience. To say it was an once-in-a-lifetime experience is an understatement. Having spent my previous three years at African Services only hearing about our Ethiopia operations, it was overwhelming to finally be able to travel there and see it first-hand. It is truly remarkable what has been done in such a short time, and it is all because of the determination of our founder, Asfaha Hadera, and the tireless nature and efforts of our staff members.



**A collection of a few of my favorite photos**

I was able to talk to countless clients, and although the stories differed from one to another, each one came back to a singular shared moment, "when I encountered African Services, it changed my life. I don't know what I would have done, or what I would do, without their help." It was devastating listening to the stories of hardship that these men, women and children have to endure. However, my heart swelled with pride to know that African Services was there to give a helping hand, and to do what we could to help them through these times, and ensure that they have access to some of the most basic necessities – health care, nutrition, and more. What I saw at each of our clinics was not just a community-based health space, but a COMMUNITY.

It was a true honor to travel and witness first-hand the work we are doing in Ethiopia in our five clinics - spread north to south in the country. I urge every one of you to consider a trip to Ethiopia - not only for a traditional vacation, as the sites are absolutely stunning, but consider stopping into one or more of our clinics. We'd be happy to have you, serve you some delicious Ethiopian coffee, and introduce you to some of the amazing people who both staff and attend the clinics.

Ameseginalehu! (thank you!)

## News and Activities

### African Services ESOL Program a Model for All

Among the slew of challenges facing new immigrants in America, English language proficiency is one of the most powerful determinants of an individual's economic and social trajectory.

Speaking English is undeniably fundamental: individuals who speak limited English face barriers to both economic mobility and community integration. Over 23 million adults share the problem



By Sean Kennedy and John Walters JULY 2013

of having limited English proficiency, 2.9 million of whom are native born. A new study by the Lexington Institute reports that the majority of these programs are not working effectively: nation-wide only 40% of students in government-funded programming are advancing in English proficiency. The study shows that although immigrants are often highly motivated to learn English, adult language students face "high drop-out rates, low proficiency gains, and rigid barriers to participation." In short, as is, the system fails more students than it benefits.

In a concerted effort to target the most significant challenges facing the upwardly mobile immigrant, African Services provides thrice-weekly ESOL courses, open and free to the public. African Service's community-based adult education programs aim to improve both spoken and written English. The programs are run by ESOL teachers and volunteer tutors who provide individual support. Before beginning classes,

each student is evaluated by the ESOL coordinator, to ensure they are placed in a program appropriate to their level.

In the recent Lexington Institute study, they aimed to uncover why, if motivation among students is high, is the national success rate so low? The findings showed that design and implementation of ESL programs determine the success rate, and community-based organizations such as African Services have much better results. It revealed that non-profits, charter schools and private sector organizations have more effective ESOL programs. Standard government ESOL programs have a "one-size fits all" educational model, and unmonitored funding streams, leading to stagnation and failure to meet a community's need. In contrast, Community-Based Organizations (CBO), with their flexible and student-centered approaches, are more flexible to the academic and personal needs of students. These organizations are more likely to create curriculum strategies that fit their students' education backgrounds, and create course schedules that fit the needs of attendees' schedules.



**In a recent class, ESL Students use computers to assist in the English learning process**

The Lexington Institute cites African Services Committee as a model for excellent Community-based ESOL programs. African Services' ESOL Coordinator Amy Kaiman and her staff have worked to create a successful educational model, flexible to the needs of students of all nationalities, languages and academic backgrounds. As a result of New York City budget cuts, the ESOL program has suffered monetarily, and had to reduce its classroom hours. However, without government funding, the ESOL program gained other benefits. Without stiff government curriculum guidelines, Ms. Kaiman created better systems to evaluate students, crafted more effective curriculum, and included more students.

At African Service's ESOL classes, the courses are catered to the student's specific needs.

Ms. Kaiman explains how traditional ESOL educational models incorrectly expect that the students are literate in another language. However, she explains, many of the African-born clientele lack formal education, which makes traditional classroom models less viable. Ms. Kaiman altered the programs accordingly, introducing the use of technology as a teaching tactic.

We are proud to be a model for exemplary programming, and continue to strive to offer our clients and our community what it needs most to move forward and to succeed.

--Sara Klugman

## African Services Committee Celebrates 10 years in Ethiopia

**African Services Committee would like to invite you to**



Join us to celebrate and support **10 years** of HIV health services in Ethiopia. Prepare to be immersed in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of Ethiopia with renowned Ethiopian band, Arki Sound, upscale Ethiopian hors d'oeuvres, traditional Ethiopian coffee provided by Brooklyn Roasting Company, and an Ethiopian 'marketplace' with jewelry, scarves, carvings and other items.

**WHEN:** 7 pm - 9:30, Tuesday, October 29th, 2013

**WHERE:** The WNYC/Jerome L. Greene Space  
44 Charlton Street, Soho, NYC

corner of Varick Street | Subway: 1 to Houston | C/E to Spring

Purchase tickets online at [www.africanservices.org/FromHarlemToAddis](http://www.africanservices.org/FromHarlemToAddis)

Young Professional\*: \$50 | Regular Ticket: \$100 | Premiere Ticket\*\*: \$150

\*Young professional is any individual under 30 years of age

\*\*A Premiere Ticket includes a hand-woven Ethiopian Scarf of your choice at the event

**For more information, contact [events@africanservices.org](mailto:events@africanservices.org) or call 212.222.3882, ext. 130**

## Fun in the City

Stephanie Kaplan, Communications Director recommends...





African Services Committee and Health GAP are proud to present a screening of the Sundance-selected Documentary, "Fire in the Blood."

This film tells the story of how Western pharmaceutical companies and governments aggressively blocked access to low-cost AIDS drugs for the countries of Africa and the global south in the years after 1996 - causing ten million or more unnecessary deaths - and the improbable group of people who decided to fight back. Join us for an exclusive screening at the ImageNation RAW SPACE

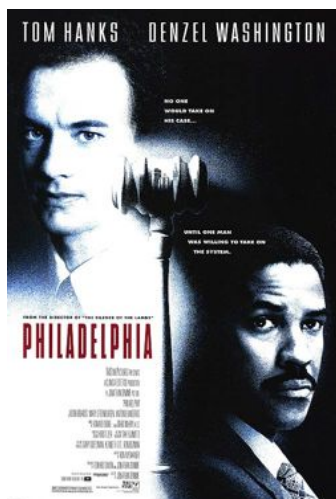
**When:** Friday, September 6th, 2013, 7:30-9:30 pm

**Where:** ImageNation RAW SPACE -- 2031 Adam Clayton Powell Blvd. b/w 121st and 122nd Street

**Cost:** Tickets are available for \$12 online, click here to purchase.

\*\*Director, Dylan Gray, and contributor, James Love, will be there to introduce the film\*\*

**Kim Nichols**, Co-Executive Director recommends...



## **Philadelphia Twenty Years Later: Narrative and the Epidemic**

Jonathan Demme and the creative team behind *Philadelphia* come to Columbia University to commemorate the 20th Anniversary of the groundbreaking film

The Program in Narrative Medicine at the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons is hosting an event commemorating the 20th anniversary of *Philadelphia*, the groundbreaking film directed by Jonathan Demme and starring Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington. "Philadelphia Twenty Years Later: Narrative and the Epidemic" will mark the milestone with events featuring the team directly involved in the project, as well as those who lived through the era and guided the narrative.

**WHEN:** Tuesday, November 12th, 2013 (ALL DAY -- see website [here](#))

**WHERE:** Alumni Auditorium, Columbia University Medical Center, 650 W. 168th (at Ft. Washington)

**TICKETS:** Purchase online [here](#) -- \$20 with Columbia University ID; \$50 General Public\*\*

There are also VIP Tickets available for \$1000 which include:

- Reserved seat in first three rows
- Limited edition poster of sketches drawn at the event by Caldecott Award winning illustrator, David Small
- Event Poster
- *Philadelphia* DVD
- *Philadelphia* Soundtrack
- **AIDS Doctors: Voices from the Epidemic: An Oral History** - Ron Bayer and Gerald Friedland
- **Narrative Medicine** - Rita Charon
- **Atlantis** - Mark Doty
- **Cure for Grief** - Nellie Hermann
- **What the Living Do** - Marie Howe
- **Stitches** - David Small
- **The Grim Reader: Writings on Death, Dying, and Living** - Maura Spiegel and Richard Tristman

\*\*African Services Supporters receive a \$10 Discount by entering the following promo code:  
"africanservices"\*\*\*

**All proceeds from the event will benefit African Services Committee. ASC provides health, housing, legal, and social services to more than 10,000 newcomers to this country each year, focusing on HIV prevention, testing, care, and advocacy.**

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**AFRICANSERVICES**  
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The graphic features a yellow background with a white arrow pointing to the right. Below the arrow is a smartphone displaying the Constant Contact logo. The text is in various colors: yellow, white, and black.

Want to help us spread the word about ASC? We've made it EASY for you to sign up friends and family to our newsletter list with the new TEXT function. We've made it EASY for you to mobilize your friends to join our efforts!

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