

Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu exports Ethiopian heart and sole



Bethlehem Tilahun Alemu grew up in Zenabwork, an impoverished borough of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Its residents were skilled artisans who could make shoes from old car tires and inner tubes, but had no jobs that earned regular money.

She saw resources from elsewhere in Ethiopia — such as coffee and leather — used by international companies to make consumer goods for sale in foreign markets. Alemu looked for a way to bring jobs to Zenabwork and to keep profits close to home. What Zenabwork needed was trade, she believed, not charity and aid.

“My driving passions,” Alemu said, “are sharing Ethiopian cultures with the world and finding exciting ways to keep these cultures vibrant and fully relevant.”

Her passion built SoleRebels, a footwear company she founded in 2004 with five employees and seed money from her family. The company handcrafts footwear with materials local to Zenabwork: Abyssinian hemp and koba. The products include modern variations on the traditional selate shoe, the ones made from car tires and familiar to her since childhood.

While many manufacturers were discovering [the benefits of “going green,”](#) the people of Zenabwork had long experience in recycling to get the most use out of the fewest resources. Alemu refers to

SoleRebels' "traditional zero-carbon methods" as the way her countrymen have been making shoes for centuries.



co-founder of SoleRebels, in 2011 (Courtesy photo)

At Alemu's company in Zenabwork today, 150 artisans craft SoleRebels' shoes. According to the company, it is the only footwear company on the planet to be certified by the World Fair Trade Organization. It pays its workers up to four times the minimum wage and provides them medical coverage and transportation.

With annual revenue of about \$15 million, SoleRebels is the first African consumer brand to open retail stores around the globe, with locations in 55 countries. One of its recently opened stores is in a high-end mall in the heart of Silicon Valley, where entrepreneurship thrives, in California.

What qualities has Alemu seen in successful entrepreneurs? "To me, very successful entrepreneurs have the ability not simply to come up with an idea," she said, "but to exquisitely execute that idea over and over and make it into a living, breathing reality. The best entrepreneurs literally seem to live their companies."

What about advice for those starting out in the entrepreneurial world? "I think the best companies and brands are built by entrepreneurs willing to self-fund their ideas," she said. "My advice would be to build your idea piece by piece and get real and honest traction in the market with that idea while retaining as much equity as you can."

Lorsqu'on en a marre : La Guérilla de la Poésie Urbaine



“Abdoulaye, Faut pas forcer !” Bruyant mais non-violent, *Y'en a marre* a redéfini l'activisme politique au Sénégal grâce à la force du vers et ce qu'on appelle “Guérilla de la Poésie Urbaine.” En 2011, *Y'en a marrea* été lancé par les rappeurs Fou Malade, Thiat et Kilifeu, ainsi que les journalistes Fadel Barro, Aliou Sane et Denise Sow. Ils étaient déçus par la politique et la justice sociale de leur pays et ont donc créé l'idée de « Le Nouveau Type de Sénégalais » dans le but de promouvoir une jeunesse et une communauté plus engagée politiquement et socialement. Ils voulaient créer un mouvement citoyen, responsabiliser leur communauté à s'exprimer et à défendre leur vision du Sénégal.

L'activisme social se trouve au centre de leurs intérêts, et ils ont œuvré à la promotion de l'engagement civique pour l'élection de 2012. Alors, comment ce groupe de rappeurs et de journalistes a pu avoir un tel effet sur l'élection ? Leur approche était diversifiée. Au départ ils organisaient des manifestations, mais ils étaient souvent arrêtés par la police et ont donc cherché de nouvelles méthodes. Ils ont lancé une campagne, avec le slogan « Ma carte (électorale), mon arme » qui avait pour but de faire inscrire plus de jeunes électeurs sur les listes électorales. Ils allaient aussi dans les différents quartiers pour parler de l'élection, et ils jouaient leur single « Faux ! Pas Forcé. » à l'aide d'une stéréo. Cette chanson, une critique de l'administration Wade, est devenue l'hymne de nombreuses manifestations tout au long de la période électorale. Ils se sont servis de leur statut de rappeurs connus pour partager une musique qui transmet un message politique, et encourager leurs concitoyens à s'engager davantage.

Pour faire entendre leur message, les activistes ont dû utiliser des méthodes créatives. En plus de l'organisation de concerts informels, ils ont travaillé avec des rappeurs locaux et montaient dans les bus publics pour quelques arrêts, pour distribuer des flyers et rapper sur la situation politique et l'importance de voter. Ils ont créé une “Foire aux Problèmes” pendant laquelle plus de 300 participants ont tenu des stands pour ouvrir le dialogue et le débat sur les problèmes quotidiens au Sénégal, allant du transport à l'éducation, passant par le prix de la nourriture. Environ 7000 personnes ont participé à cette foire, pour écouter et partager. En dehors de *Y'en a marre*, d'autres initiatives, utilisant les mêmes outils, ont vu le jour. Les rappeurs Xuman et Keyti ont lancé le “Journal Rappé” - une émission hebdomadaire de nouvelles rappées en français et en Wolof. Ce projet démontre à nouveau comment la musique peut être efficace pour toucher le grand public et pour relayer les actualités. Le Journal Rappé s'est à présent étendu au Niger et à la Côte-d'Ivoire, avec des rappeurs locaux qui produisent leurs propres émissions.

Depuis que Macky Sall a été élu en 2012, *Y'en a Marre* reste engagé pour s'assurer qu'il s'engage pour aider son pays. Ils continuent aussi à suivre les nouvelles décisions politiques. Le 16 février

2016, malgré sa promesse de réduire le mandat présidentiel sénégalais de 7 à 5 ans dès son propre mandat, Sall a annoncé qu'il restera au pouvoir pour la totalité des 7 ans et que le mandat présidentiel sera limité à 5 ans à partir de 2019 seulement. Cette réforme a été soumise au peuple sénégalais lors du référendum constitutionnel du 20 Mars. *Y'en a marre*, à travers leur page Facebook, ont publié un nouveau single le 24 Février et ont appelé diverses organisations sociales, mouvements citoyens et individus, à l'action. Le slogan du « Front du Non » encourage les gens à voter « non » afin de d'obliger Sall à respecter sa promesse. Il y eu une faible participation au référendum du 20 Mars, mais le « Oui » l'a remporté à la majorité, soutenant le référendum (et Macky Sall).

Y'en a marre, à l'aide de leur guérilla de la poésie urbaine, qui promeut la justice sociale à travers les traditions orales, revisitées dans un style de musique moderne, a montré que la façon dont nous usons de nos mots peut être notre meilleure et plus puissante arme. Leurs actions en amont de l'élection de 2012 ont montré à la communauté que tout le monde peut et doit être impliqué. Leurs méthodes étaient simples, s'agissant surtout d'aller de personne à personne, de quartier à quartier, en partageant de la musique et en initiant des échanges. Bien que leur statut de rappeur les ait aidé à gagner du terrain, l'objectif était de lancer un mouvement auquel toute la communauté se joindrait et de montrer que tout le monde a les outils nécessaires pour être engagé politiquement, pour exiger que les politiciens répondent aux questions d'importance primordiale pour la communauté. Ils ont porté l'esprit de résistance et de responsabilité dans l'environnement politique du Sénégal et ont donné aux jeunes l'information et le soutien nécessaire pour devenir « le Nouveau Type de Sénégalais », ainsi que la volonté de se battre avec leurs mots pour défendre leur vision du Sénégal.

Pledge to Make a Safer World for Women and Girls

(
U
S
A
I
D
)



Nothing holds back women worldwide as much as gender-based violence. “Gender-based violence” (GBV) describes a wide range of persecution based on a person’s biological sex or gender identity as well as that person’s perceived conformity to cultural norms of masculinity and femininity.

GBV is physical, sexual and psychological abuse. It’s also economic deprivation and deprivation of liberty, whether inside or outside the home. It’s battery, dowry-related violence and rape, but it’s also harassment in the workplace or in school. Gender-based violence crosses every social and economic class, ethnicity, race, religion and education level.

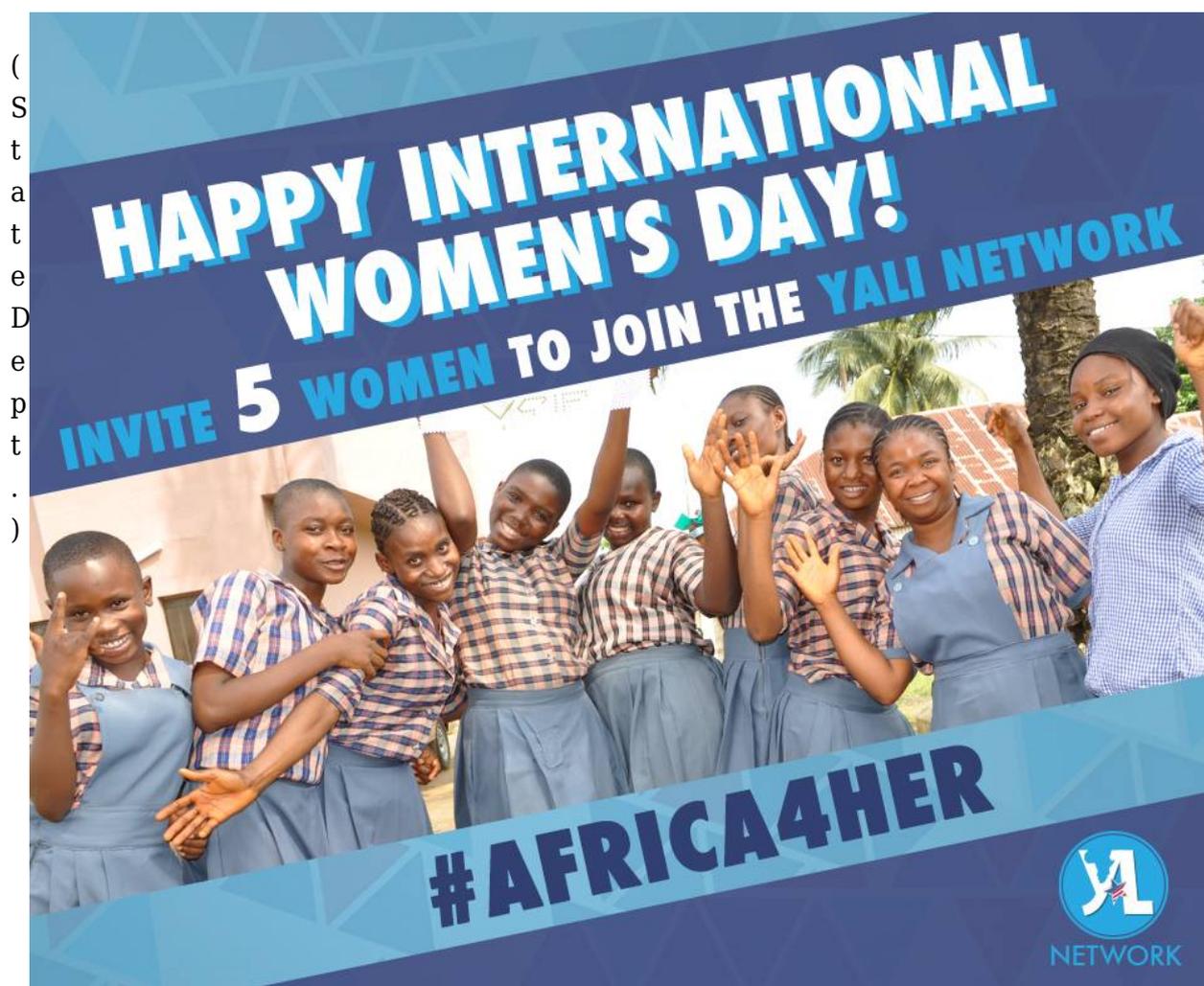
One out of every 3 women worldwide will be the victim of gender-based violence. In conflict zones, those numbers increase greatly. Women are disproportionately victimized in civil unrest and election-related violence.

Sexual violence limits the educational opportunities and achievements of its victims, affecting their ability to support themselves and contribute to their communities. Women who have been victims of violence are also at a higher risk of HIV infection. In addition to being an affront to its victims’ essential human rights, GBV threatens public health, economic stability and security.

Among the greatest tools for fighting gender-based violence are education and awareness. Combating it means starting discussions among girls and boys about how our cultures treat women — from portrayals in the media to expectations of their roles within families. President Obama observed that “communities that give their daughters the same opportunities as their sons ... are more peaceful, they are more prosperous, they develop faster, they are more likely to succeed.”

What can you do to fight gender-based violence in your community? [Pledge](#) to help end GBV.

It's International Women's Day. What Will You Do to Make a Difference?



Happy International Women's Day! For more than 100 years, countries around the world have used March to celebrate women's contributions to world economies, societies and governments.

While that century has seen remarkable progress, with women now working in the highest ranks of business, politics and education, the rights and opportunities for women worldwide still fall short of those for men.

For the last 10 years, the World Economic Forum has measured the global gender gap to demonstrate how the disparities between men and women have damaged global economic growth. Their [most recent report](#) highlights the work still to be done:

- In 2015, there were a quarter of a billion more women in the global workforce than in 2006. However, while the average yearly earning for men has risen from \$11,000 to \$21,000 in that time, the average earning for women has gone from \$6,000 to only \$11,000.

•□ The political realm has seen the most progress for women. Fifty percent of countries have had a female head of state. Yet women still lag behind in legislative bodies around the world, representing only 18 to 19 percent of parliaments and government ministers.

The World Economic Forum estimates that at the rate of progress it's measured in the last 10 years, economic parity for women will not be achieved until 2133.

What will you do to speed that progress? As a member of the YALI Network, you can mark International Women's Day by helping bring gender equality to the YALI Network by [inviting 5 women to join](#) this exciting group of young leaders.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to yali.state.gov/pledge to make your pledge.

Everyone Thrives When Women and Girls Learn



Advancing women's rights in Africa and throughout the world begins with giving girls access to education. In the last decade, remarkable advances have been made in sub-Saharan Africa in girls' enrollment in primary education. But in the majority of sub-Saharan African countries, fewer than 1 in 10 girls graduates from secondary school.

Adolescence is a critical period in a girl's life and shapes her future. In too many parts of the world, this drop-off in education comes when girls become subject to norms that limit their social roles, reduce their choices and threaten their health.

Because of poverty, many families feel they cannot afford to lose the labor their daughters contribute to the household by sending them to school. However, evidence suggests that educating adolescent girls is one of the most effective ways to achieve development goals.

Consider these points:

- Girls who attend school as adolescents marry later, have children later and have lower rates of HIV/AIDS.
- Each extra year of a mother's secondary schooling reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5-10 percent.
- Girls with secondary schooling are up to six times less likely to be married as children.
- When a girl in the developing world receives seven years of education, she marries four years later and has 2.2 fewer children.
- A child born to a mother who can read is 50 percent more likely to live past age 5.
- Every year of schooling increases a girl's individual earning power by 10-20 percent, and the return on secondary education is even higher.

Given these and the others facts you'll learn in the upcoming weeks of [#Africa4Her](#), the education of girls and women goes even beyond its importance as a human right and affects directly their health and prosperity.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to yali.state.gov/pledge to make your pledge.

[Unlocking Opportunity for Women in Business](#)

Justina Balankena is a small-business owner in Bomani, Tanzania, where she sells  lightbulbs, electrical tape and paintbrushes, as well as small, single-unit solar lights and energy-efficient cookstoves. (Courtesy of USAID)

As the YALI Network kicks off [#Africa4Her](#), we're looking at some of the biggest issues facing women in sub-Saharan Africa today. And the issues that hold back women — 50 percent of the population — hold back the countries they live in.

Nowhere is this so clear as in the economic sector. When it comes to fueling economic growth, studies have repeatedly shown that giving women economic opportunity is among the most powerful fuels that exist.

A report by global investment and banking firm Goldman Sachs found that bringing more women into the labor force has the potential to boost a country's per capita income by an average of 12 percent by 2030.

The same research showed that women use their earnings to buy goods and services that improve family and community welfare, which in turn creates further economic growth.

And yet worldwide, 70 percent of businesses owned by women have no access to financial services such as savings accounts and loans. Laws and cultural traditions limit the economic contributions women are able to make, whether by not allowing them to borrow startup money in their own names, by favoring male relatives in the ownership of capital, or by demeaning their opinions in male-dominated business environments.

We'll look at women in Africa who have taken on these obstacles and made strides toward a more inclusive business culture. We'll look at ways both men and women can address gender bias and unlock the potential for economic growth that women represent.

In the upcoming YALI Network Online Course "Paving the Way for Women Entrepreneurs," entrepreneur/executive E. Diane White gives practical tips on what women can do to ensure their voices are heard in the business world.

How will you invest in women and girls? Go to yali.state.gov/pledge to make your pledge.

What Do You Need to Know to Run a City?

(
©
A
P
I
m
a
g
e
s
)



The campaign's finished, the election's over and, congratulations, you're the new [mayor](#). But how much do you know about creating a city budget or navigating the relationships among your governmental agencies? Running a city day to day — and running it smoothly — comes with a learning curve. Depending on their experience, newly elected leaders can find themselves gobsmacked by what it takes.

That's why, since 1975, Harvard University has hosted its "Seminar on Transition and Leadership for Newly Elected Mayors." The university's Institute of Politics, in conjunction with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, invites mayors-elect of large and small cities across the U.S. for the intensive three-day seminar. The 23 participants from December's seminar came from cities in 18 states, including Pennsylvania, Tennessee, California and Alaska.

"Some of them have been police chiefs and know everything about a police department," said Christian Flynn, who directs the program, "and some were small-business owners who never thought about the police department."

Flynn consults with Harvard faculty and the Conference of Mayors about what should be on the agenda each year. Additions to this year's agenda included "Policing and Public Safety" and "Attracting the Millennial Generation to Your City."

T
h
e
r
e
c
e
n
t
l
y
e
l
e
c
t
e
d



mayors who participated in December’s seminar for newly elected mayors at Harvard University. (Courtesy photo)

Finance experts and the sitting mayors of Baltimore and Miami, as well as journalists from the New York Times and CNN, spoke to the new mayors. Workshops covered setting priorities for the first 100 days in office, policing, communicating [during a crisis](#) and developing local economies.

Flynn is quick to point out that the program is nonpartisan and that Harvard — rather than any government or corporate or special interest — pays for it.

Alison Silberberg, the new mayor of Alexandria, Virginia, picked up some advice from the police commissioner of Boston, William Evans. “He told me to be careful about all the ‘toys’ for policing people want you to buy as a new mayor,” she said. He suggested that instead of spending money that could strain the city’s budget, Silberberg should get police officers out of their cars and away from the desks and into the community to build trust with citizens.

During the seminar, mayors-elect stay in the same hotel and eat their meals together. “There was a remarkable sharing of ideas, not just from the experts, but from all the mayors: ‘We have that problem in Nashville, let me tell you what we did,’” Silberberg said.

She has already acted on many recommendations from the seminar. “Mayor [Marty] Walsh of Boston recommended I have a public safety meeting on day one, which was a great idea, and I did it. Well, I did it on day two because the chief of police was out of town.”

Flynn dreams of a lengthier seminar, but said that “because of [the mayors’] schedules, it can be hard to get them for the three days. I wish I could get them for a month.”

What do your elected officials need to know to serve effectively, and how are they getting that

important information? Take the YALI Network Online Course “[Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility](#)” to learn, among other things, about engaging with candidates and elected officials.

[Online learning spurs offline climate action](#)



n-Agberemi)

How do you transform online energy into offline action? It helps to have an important subject and an engaged network of community leaders.

The [YALI Network](#) is part of the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), an effort by President Obama to encourage young African adults to become active in business, community organizing and public management.

The network, with its 200,000 members across sub-Saharan Africa, makes online resources available to young Africans who want to make positive change in their communities and countries.

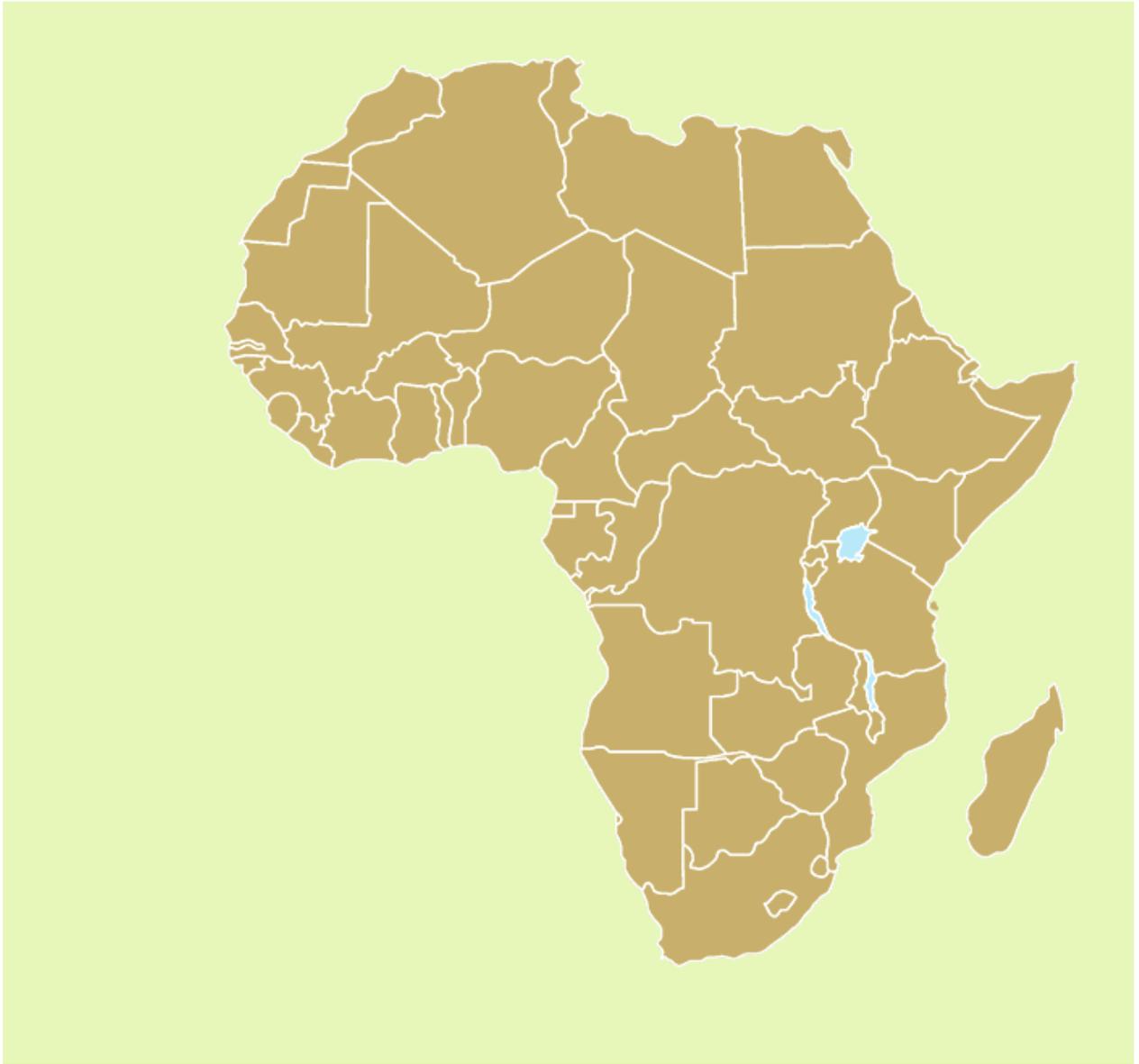
At the end of November, with the hashtag #YALIGoesGreen, the network began a campaign that bridged online enthusiasm and on-the-ground action. The campaign challenged YALI Network members to share their stories on [the YALI Network Facebook page](#), [Twitter](#), and social media of how [climate change](#) affects their communities and to earn a certificate with the three-part YALI Network Online Course "[Understanding Climate Change](#)."

Things really got interesting with the challenge to become a "Green Champion" by hosting a [#YALILearns](#) event using the course's discussion and activity guide. Throughout December, network members all over sub-Saharan Africa sent feedback and pictures of events they hosted in their communities and schools.

David Mboko Mavinga introduced 35 students at Notre Dame de la Providence secondary school in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, to the science of climate change and discussed with them everyday ideas for taking action. The event was important, Mavinga said, "because we speak about climate change on the radio, the television and in newspapers, but very few people speak about it in daily life."

In Accra, Ghana, Temitope Amujo offered an event he called "Sustainable Climate Actions: From Reactions to Actions" for a gathering of 24 local professionals just before the [Paris climate summit](#) at the start of December.

By the end of January, the YALI Network reported over-the-top results, having turned an important online discussion into real action.



Rock the Vote: Harnessing the Power of Young Voters

E
.
J
.
J
o
h
n
s
o
n
(
l
e
f
t
)
a



and Ireland Baldwin dance their way to a voting booth in a Rock the Vote video. (Courtesy photo)

When young people vote, they can decide elections. It happened [in Nigeria](#) and Burkina Faso in 2015. It happened in the U.S. in 2008, when Barack Obama was first elected president.

If you want to learn how to get young people involved in elections, you probably should check out Rock the Vote. The organization has one goal: getting the youngest eligible voters in the U.S. to the polls. For 25 years, the nonprofit, nonpartisan organization has inspired young voters using pop culture, music, art and technology.

The backbone of [Rock the Vote](#) has been their emphasis on removing practical obstacles to voting — cutting through red tape to make it clear where young people need to go to register and when they need to do it.

“Our generation is the most connected and diverse generation ever,” said Rock the Vote’s president, Ashley Spillane. “We live online and on social media.” That’s why Rock the Vote delivers its messages online.

R
o
c
k
t
h
e
V
o
t
e
p



resident Ashley Spillane (right) with rapper Darryl McDaniels at a Rock the Vote event. (Courtesy photo)

It hasn't always been this way. When Rock the Vote started in 1990, it launched a television commercial featuring pop singer Madonna encouraging voting. More typical of today's efforts are the YouTube video in which rapper Lil Jon turns his hit "Turn Down for What" into "Turnout for What" or the video made by fashion model [Kendall Jenner](#) (with her mobile-phone camera) that nudges people to participate in National Voter Registration Day.

No matter who delivers the message, "the focus has to be on getting [youth] to channel their passion for issues into action and also letting them know how easily and efficiently they can vote," Spillane said.

A recent poll by Rock the Vote and USA Today found that in the U.S., the issues most important to Millennials (people born from the early 1980s to the early 2000s) are the economy and the need to convert to renewable energy. Spillane said Millennials do not identify strongly with political parties, but are passionate about issues. While they don't vote as much as older people — the reason Rock the Vote exists — "young people are much less cynical than people assume," Spillane said.

"Listen to them, and give them opportunities to voice their concerns," she said. "Demystify democracy and ramp up education about the political institutions that should be responsive to them."

One way to demystify [democracy](#) is to learn more about democratic institutions and the electoral process with the YALI Network's three-part online course Understanding Elections and Civic Responsibility. Take all three lessons, pass the quiz and earn a free YALI Network certificate.

What do Nelson Mandela, George Washington and an ancient Roman consul have in common?

by Scott Bortot



arily stepped down after serving one presidential term. (© AP Images)

What do Nelson Mandela, George Washington and Roman statesman Cincinnatus have in common?

Each walked away from political power.

The contrast with dictators who cling to power for decades is obvious. And, says Michigan State University political scientist William B. Allen, leaving office voluntarily “amounts to a humble submission to the authority of the society above the ambition of the ruler ... [and] an index of democratic character.”

In 1999, when Nelson Mandela voluntarily stepped down after one term as South Africa’s president, he followed in the footsteps of Roman statesman Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519-430 B.C.E.), who on two occasions renounced near-absolute emergency authority to return to his farm.

T
w
o
t
e
r
m
s
w
e
r
e



nough for George Washington.
(Courtesy photo)

The first president of the United States, George Washington, set a similar example when he declined to run for a third term — despite being urged to do so — declaring that two terms were enough for any president. (The U.S. Constitution was later amended to formalize a two-term limit.)

Peaceful transitions of power, adds George Washington University political scientist Michael Cornfield, contribute to a nation’s political health.

Reformers in over 60 nations participate in the Open Government Partnership, an organization that works to make governments more transparent, more accountable and more responsive to their own citizens.

The United States honors the South African leader’s legacy through the Mandela Washington Fellowships, the exchange program of the Young African Leaders Initiative that brings young African leaders to the U.S. for intensive executive leadership training, networking, and skills building, followed by a presidential summit in Washington, D.C.
