



**The Newsletter of the Friends of Guinea
Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea**

Ebola in West Africa: Good News and Bad News

Teresa Pope FOG Advocacy and Communication Chair

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The Good News: Liberia was declared “Ebola-free” by WHO as of May 9th.

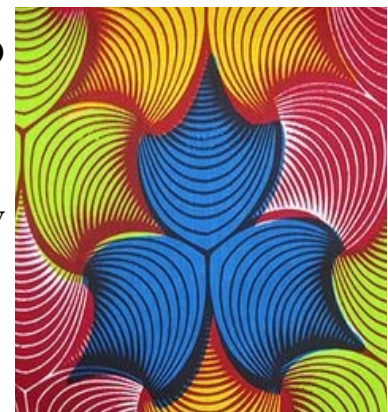
The Bad News: Guinea and Sierra Leone are still experiencing new cases of Ebola. In addition, Guinea continues to face problems with community resistance, and with the rainy season approaching, the urgency for getting aid to the region is paramount.

FOG gave \$500 to the National Peace Corps Association’s Ebola Relief Fund (ERF) in 2014, and we want to make another sizable gift. However, given our modest bank account and the fact that membership in FOG is free – well, frankly, **we need help!**

At this time please consider giving a gift to FOG so we can help fund key projects that are combating Ebola. **You can do this at the [DONATE NOW](#) button on our website www.friendsofguinea.org.**

A donation in any amount would be very much appreciated, and we hope that we can count on your help. Donations can be made to FOG at any time, but our Ebola relief fundraiser will end June 15th so we can get our gift to the NPCA **ASAP!**

For more details on the NPCA’s Ebola Relief Fund Steering Committee Activities see their website and FOG’s blog posts.
<http://www.peacecorpsconnect.org/>



Special points of interest:

- *Ebola Update*
- *Hanging on a Word*
- *FOG Announcements*



Through the Eyes and Lens of Cappy Phalen

By Hannah Koepl FOG Communications Assistant

Photography is a powerful art form that brings the corners of the world to individuals' finger tips, laps, and eyes. Cappy Phalen (RPCV Fer-messadou-Pombo 2014) donated several photos to FOG for our new website and we wanted to know the stories behind some of them. She took time to catch up with me while hiking the Appalachian Trail. That's right, she answered my questions with her limited internet connection at a public library.

HK: How did you get interested in photography?

CP: I think a few things sparked my interest in photography; pinpointing one would be difficult. I have a few family members who are adept with a camera and I that played a role, but I think it sticks because I like being able to freeze-frame an emotion and give it to someone else. Facial expressions are not describable in the same way that photos provide... I like for people to be able to take pleasure in a moment that they may have missed.

HK: Do you find yourself exploring any themes in your work? Recurring images you find really moving? Any of those specifically from Guinea?

CP: Emotion and expression are my favorite subject matter, particularly positive emotions. I like to capture happiness in places that we don't necessarily imagine it in, such as situation we may associate with grief or broken-ness because I think it is a necessary reminder of our resilience and community as a species. It is exceptionally simple to find these moments in Guinea because Guineans are faced with struggle in an extreme sense daily. Poverty, hunger, disease, sexism, classism, death, governmental corruption; all of these things are present in Guinea in a much greater concentration than

I'd ever been exposed to before, but the people were more joyful and celebratory in everyday life than any place I've been.

HK: Do you have any favorite photographs from your service in Guinea? Can you tell me the story behind them?

CP: Favorite Guinea photos: girl and boy with basket ball on his head, just kids being kids, laughing and having attitude. (See next page top left) Also, my brother-in-law holding his son in the air during a break from rice farming. He was the most present and engaged father I've spent time around. (next page bottom left)

HK: Final thoughts?

CP: I'd just like to note one thing that Guinea taught me: any ability I have with a camera is pure luck, I was lucky to have a family that could inspire and support my work. Fanta, my sister in Guinea, would watch me with a camera and occasionally direct me to photos she wanted taken, even going so far as to arrange a basket of fish so that they caught the light well. She will probably never own a camera, we will probably never see work from her and she will probably never be known outside of her own community because she lacks access to develop skills I took for granted.

Something I take away from Cappy's work is the of course, beauty, the human spirit, the texture, wonder, and joy. I see the balance of skill and serendipity of the craft.

See more of Cappy's photographs on her website www.cappyphalen.com

Photos by Cappy Phalen RPCV Fermessadou-Pombo 2014



HANGING ON WORDS

FOG Guest Writer Cady Pyne (RPCV, Soyah 2012-2014)

In typical Peace Corps fashion, I went to Guinea expecting to learn a lot about new people and another culture and unexpectedly learned a lot about myself. While adjusting my diet to the available food, I realized I like pickles more than I like ice cream. I discovered that I make a terrible celebrity; I don't like being ceaselessly the center of attention nor being constantly photographed by people I've never met. I saw that I am more similar to others than I am different.

I went expecting to learn new languages and unexpectedly also learned about my own native language – English. Living in Guinea gave me real world understanding of English idioms that I hadn't experienced before. I don't mean just those feel-good ones about how I worked through a *tough spot*. *Against all odds*. *Made a difference*. *Little by little*. *Petit à petit*. When push comes to shoving a stalled taxi. I mean the ones whose origins I never really thought about. I've collected several of my favorites that I'm sure you can relate to as well.

Level the playing field. Most football fields I saw looked like they might double as an obstacle course. They definitely gave new meaning to the *home team advantage*. The home team always knew how to play around the village signpost that lived three meters inside the boundary line, the small ravine cutting across the field that flooded during rainy season, or the line of women traversing to the pump.

Chicken scratch. I've seen unclear handwriting but I've never seen anything so indecipherable as the marks chickens leave in the dirt. They never seemed to find anything when scratching through the dirt either. And unless they had been running, I couldn't always tell what their path was. Where did the chicken come from? Which direction did it leave? To cross the road? Really, why wouldn't the chicken cross the road? Chickens wander everywhere else already. The better question is why is that sheep still standing in the road after narrowly escaping the fenders of the six cars that passed in the last five minutes?





A pot calling a kettle black. This one is more complex than I originally thought. Yes, both are black on the outside from the smoke of the fire, but silver on the inside. *A silver lining?* Or even better, often the pot was also used to boil water in place of a kettle. Tricky.

Stuck in a rut. Particularly on those dry days during rainy season. In taxis or while biking.

Burn the midnight oil. Or gas for the generator. Or your care-package batteries.

Let the cat out of the bag. I heard of a cat being delivered to a fellow Volunteer by rice sack. I think that cat was glad to be out of the bag.

Curiosity killed the cat. This one worried me when I saw my kitten (the only non-fish pet I've had in my life) eyeing up and playfully following a snake. Likely a nonpoisonous variety, but I was warned by village friends that all snakes are poisonous (and chameleons, too). Don't fret, the kitten lived on to eat a plastic bag a few weeks later. She lived through that, too. She was a survivor.

Snake in the grass. This worried most of my village, so we burned down the grass around our houses.

Hit the hay! Hit the sack! Or hit the giant hay-filled mattress made of rice sacks...

The whole nine yards. Does anyone else buy not one, not two, but all three pagnes? Okay, maybe that isn't quite nine yards, but it is still an awful lot of fabric.

Serving as a Volunteer in Guinea let me step out of the routines and expectations I developed and the language I spoke growing up in the United States and developed a new perspective on my culture, my native language, and myself as a member of a global community. I'm honored to have shared this experience with all of you. *Way to go, friends – high five!*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HELP WANTED!

Friends of Guinea is looking for a coordinator of the Guinea Parent Support Group (GPS). Interested in supporting parents and families of Guinea PCVs? Enjoy connecting people and being a resource? We need you! If interested, please contact Anne Redmond Sites (RPCV Sareibo & N'Zerekore, 1994-1996) sitesas-soc@aol.com

Check Out Our Updated Website!

By Teresa Pope *FOG Advocacy & Communications Chair*

The FOG website has a fresh, new look thanks to our webmaster Marc Dysart (RPCV Lélouma '94 – '96). We trust that you will enjoy this improvement, as well as our other efforts including this recently-retuned newsletter, new Facebook page, and thanks to RPCV Shreyan Sen (Djelibakoro '12 - '14) FOG is also now on LinkedIn!

Link with us at <https://www.linkedin.com/grp/home?gid=8303247>



Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former Guinea Peace Corps Volunteers, Guineans inside and outside of Guinea, and others interested in promoting the cause of Guinean development in the world at large. We are a country-of-service affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association.



Do you want to contribute a piece to the next newsletter? Contact Fog Communications Assistant Hannah Koepl at newsletter@friendsofguinea.org

