

# Çava?

## The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea

Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea

15 August 2010 • No.35



### Presidential run off set for September 19

by Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director

The second round of Guinea's presidential election will be between former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo (of the UFDG party) and RPG leader Alpha Conde. It is slated for September 19, barring any further delays.

Diallo is considered the favorite, having garnered nearly 40 percent of the vote in the first round, but Conde is one of the longest serving party leaders and was the most prominent opposition figure to the regime of the late General Lansana Conte.

The runoff was originally scheduled for July 18 but was postponed to allow the judiciary to rule on several claims of electoral irregularities by losing candidates.

### FOG donates \$250 to Alliance Guinea

by Brian Farenell, FOG Communications Director

The Friends of Guinea board recently approved a \$250 donation to our sister organization Alliance Guinea (AG) for its activities in support of the country's first ever democratic elections.

AG was formed in the wake of the last September's massacre in Conakry by a broad coalition of both Guineans and Americans, including RPCVs. One of its primary missions is "to advocate to governments, international organizations and agenda setters in support of human rights and a peaceful, democratic transition in Guinea." AG was very successful in raising global awareness of the crisis in Guinea following the massacre. The international pressure led to the hard-line leadership of the junta being replaced by a more moderate faction that acceded to the democratic process.

During the electoral campaign and first round of presidential voting, AG developed a system called GV2010 Temoin (Witness). GV2010 allowed ordinary Guineans on the ground to report allegations of voting irregularities, information which could be used in possible legal appeals. It offered Guineans an electoral process with unprecedented transparency and civic involvement and one that attracted widespread international praise.

Friends of Guinea salutes Alliance Guinea's efforts and support of the democratic process in Guinea



## Elections, Rumors, Football, and Waiting

*Susanna Fioratta (G5, Diountou) is a PhD candidate in socio-cultural anthropology at Yale University, currently conducting dissertation research in Guinea.*

A few days before the first round of elections, I sat in a village café and watched a young guy concentrate on making some modifications to a campaign poster for Alpha Conde, one of the major candidates and one of Cellou Dalein Diallo's major rivals. On either side of Alpha Conde's photo, the youth wrote, "No kids" and "No wife." Off to the side, he wrote, "Alpha Conde's wife was rented for 12,000,000 FG [about \$1,800]." If you ask most people around the Fouta Djallon what they think about Alpha Conde, longtime Guinean political opposition leader, they will likely say 1) Alpha Conde is no good because he has lived most of his life in France, he is more French than Guinean, if he wins then he will sell Guinea to France, and/or 2) Alpha Conde would make a terrible president because he has no wife, kids or house. Actually, Alpha Conde did get married not long before the presidential campaign started, but most people I've talked to perceive this to be a marriage of convenience that will be broken off as soon as the elections are over. Sometimes someone protests that they've heard that Alpha Conde does have a kid, but the popular response to this is, "He comes from white people land (*leydi porto*), you can buy children there if you want them." The no wife/no kids issue doesn't seem to be connected to homosexuality for people that I've talked to, whether I hint around about it or ask outright. The simple fact of being a man who is a bit old (he's 72) and not having a wife, or kids, or a house is shocking to people; these are the attributes of someone who almost doesn't even count as a member of society. People say they wouldn't visit such a person, or invite him to things, or want his opinion on issues, because he can't demonstrate that he has done anything. "He who has no children cannot govern a country, he will not have pity on other people's children," gets repeated a lot. "Given a choice between someone else's child and a rock, he will choose the rock."

Meanwhile, Cellou Dalein Diallo can do no wrong in the Fouta Djallon. People are wearing Cellou Dalein, singing Cellou Dalein, decorating their houses and businesses and motorcycles and cars with Cellou Dalein. The last night of the "*Journal de Campagne*" was June 25, two days before election day. I went to a video club with some friends to watch. The first eight or so candidates' spots passed without much remark from the video club audience. Then Cellou's turn came, and the video club erupted in applause. First

there were a few short scenes of his Basse Côte tour, and then his end-of-campaign return to Conakry—cheering masses of people, crowds singing various popular Cellou Dalein songs, and finally some helicopter camera views of the city from above, with crowds thronging the streets. The video club went wild—cheering, clapping, yelling—and getting up to leave. Cellou's slot was over and there was nothing more to be seen, no one cared anything about the remaining 15 candidates. Everyone streamed out of the video club, and so did I, when I realized that the proprietor had turned off the TV. As far as these people were concerned, the elections were already decided.

Then came election day. I spent a good bit of time sitting in the courtyard of a junior high school/"*bureau de vote*", watching and talking to people as the process unfolded. There was a fair bit of disorganization, but I didn't see or hear anything to indicate actual fraud going on. What did happen was that, first thing in the morning, the people coming to vote refused to line up and wait their turn. Instead, they all crowded into the classroom at once and the small bureau staff couldn't cope with the throng of voters. The staff eventually managed to get all the people back out into the school courtyard and shut the door on them. Then they decided that since people wouldn't line up, the best course of action would be to call out names one by one from the voter registration list, and each person whose name was called could come in and vote. This, of course, devolved into chaos. Some people sat outside the classroom all day long waiting for their names to be called. Most people's names were called in their absence. The secretary of the bureau, a primary school teacher, complicated the situation by her apparent inability to read. Further confusion arose from the fact that so many people had exactly the same name. By 4 p.m., only 250 people had voted. Eventually, the *bureaus* being allowed to stay open later than originally ordained helped the process along, and by some people heading off to vote in the districts, where crowds were smaller, and in the end everyone who was there got to vote before the polls closed. Of 590 registered voters in this voting district, 385 people voted. Of those votes, 322 were for Cellou Dalein.

The next day, statistics were reported from all over the sub-prefecture. By late afternoon, the owner of the local cell phone charging shop [since no one has electricity, one enterprising man runs a generator and people can pay 1,000 FG—about \$0.15—to leave their cell phones to charge] had filled in the tallies on an extra ballot that he had tacked to the wall. Of about 8,000 votes total, over 7,000 were UFDG; Sidya Toure got 96, Bah Ousmane 32, the PUP (the former

ruling party) 18, Alpha Conde 17, several ballots were blank or otherwise invalid, and the rest of the votes were scattered among the 24 candidates. The only woman candidate, Saran Daraba Kaba, got 0.

Over the next few days, rumors of voting result statistics for different areas of the country were flying all over the place. Some said Cellou had won 3 of the 5 communes of Conakry and was in first place there; others said it was Alpha Conde. People calling to and from other countries claimed very high percentages for Cellou in embassies abroad. A rumor spread that the transitional government didn't want to go to a 2nd round of voting because it would be too expensive, so this first round would determine the actual president after all. Meanwhile, Fouta people were saying they would contest the results if Alpha Conde was declared the winner—they would know he hadn't really won. Other rumors that the youth of Conakry planned to take to the streets in protest if Cellou didn't win made some older people anxious.



By the Tuesday following Sunday's elections, people listening to their radios heard from RFI and BBC first that accusations of fraud had been made, and then that the announcement of the provisional election results would be postponed by 48 hours, from Wednesday to Friday. At this point, the antenna at the video club broke down and we no longer had access to RTG, the national TV station. On Thursday, a particularly persistent rumor came to town that Alpha Conde was in the lead, and people shook their heads grimly and said they were afraid. That same day, however, I got a phone call from elsewhere in the country reporting a rumor that Cellou was in the lead with 42%. By Friday morning, the Sotelgui cell phone network had gone down and didn't come back up for several days. Conspiracy theories multiplied: was the government trying to stop people from spreading

rumors or communicating election results? With no national TV, no phone contact, and limited transport to Labe, everyone kept waiting.

On Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>, the date when everyone was expecting, for the second time, that the provisional results might be announced, I went with several people I knew to the video club to watch the Ghana-Uruguay World Cup game. (The satellite still worked, even if the antenna didn't.) The video club audience (mostly young men but several young women as well) was already full of tension and frustration from all the waiting and rumors and non-communication. Watching the game was only an exercise in compounding tension and frustration. Apart from the moment when Ghana scored their one goal, when everyone screamed and cheered and jumped up and down, the rest of the game was tense, contentious, and finally painfully disappointing for the video club viewers. Everyone was angry and bitter and protesting that they'd been cheated, Uruguay had cheated, FIFA is racist, they are run by Europe and South America and they will do anything to keep an African team from winning the World Cup, etc, etc, etc. One big point of contention was towards the very end of the game, Ghana came very close to getting a goal but one of the Uruguay players illegally deflected the ball from the net with his hands. Ghana was accorded a penalty kick, which they then missed. Everyone in the video club was protesting that they should have "just given" them the goal, it was obvious that the ball was going in, it would have gone in if that Uruguay player hadn't cheated, the goal should be Ghana's rightfully, Ghana should have won the game, we will call RFI to complain, and on and on.

This angry and bitter mood spread around town, and soon afterwards, around 11 p.m., the provisional election results were announced. I heard them by myself in my room, as I was listening to Radio Rurale before dropping off to sleep. The next morning, as I watched the news spread around town, the whole situation reminded me a lot of the previous evening's game. People had been so tense for such a long time, waiting to see what would happen, wanting to win so much, and then, much to many people's disappointment, Cellou was not named president right off but rather would be subject to a second round against Alpha Conde, the most feared opponent of all! Using the same language as they had with the game the night before, several people expressed the opinion that the CENI and the transitional government and the international community should "just give" the election to Cellou Dalein because he had the most votes. I was a little surprised—I thought that people would be pleased that their candidate came out ahead,



with 39% of the vote, well ahead of Alpha Conde's 20%. But so many people had convinced themselves that there would be no second round and that the presidency would be theirs (or, rather, Cellou Dalein's) right away, that there was major disappointment and even anger all around. From some brief interviews I heard on RFI with Alpha Conde supporters, I gathered that they had had comparable expectations for their candidate.

Several days went by, during which people gradually got used to the idea of a second round, and daily life picked up again—the cell phone network came back up, the TV antenna was repaired, people started traveling to and from Labe. Meanwhile, most of the candidates raised accusations of fraud and irregularities, and the date of the second round was postponed from July 18 to an indefinite future date as the Supreme Court set about examining the accusations.

I kept up my own work as much as I could. With elections suspended in limbo and so many expectations disappointed, people were hesitant to be interviewed or recorded formally, so I just fell back on what seems to have become a trusty fieldwork strategy: trying to pay attention. Over the next few weeks I paid attention to sad stories of lost love, sick babies and whether they should be taken to the health center or to the local holy man who would write them a medicine from the Koran, election conspiracy theories, buying and selling at the market, personal accounts of the September 28<sup>th</sup> stadium massacre and the January-February 2007 national strike, bush taxi breakdowns, popular opinion and suspicions about “ninjas,” or women who dress in full burka with their faces covered up, migration stories, reminiscences of life during the Sékou Touré era, discussions about electricity, stories about thieves and fornicators and family disgrace, rumors that Dadis plans to come back from Burkina Faso and disrupt the elections process, deaths (including one involving a botched abortion), a personal account of working in a Chinese fishing boat off the coast of Guinea, stories of car accidents, and debates over whether Guinea, which hasn't known war, has known peace. I forget how it happened that I ended up explaining the American phenomenon of the Easter Bunny to one guy, but he responded with the information that Guineans say the rabbit, which is very crafty, is the one responsible for children wetting the bed at night. The rabbit comes and whispers to sleeping kids, “You're awake! You're outside! You should pee right now!” So I am pleased to be able to include that information among my research “findings.”

One day a woman stopped me in the market and said, “Who will govern?” (*Ko homBo laamoto?*) “I

don't know,” I said, surprised. “You know!” she said. “The white people know who will govern.” “But I didn't vote,” I protested stupidly. “It's Guineans who vote, it's Guineans who will decide who will govern.” She would have none of it, and said, “It's you French people, you're the ones who know!” I told her I was not French but American, but that didn't seem to change her mind.

Last Tuesday, the Supreme Court finally announced the definitive election results, including their rulings on the various fraud accusations. The RTG television coverage of the event was, characteristically, simultaneously riveting and stultifying—the head of the Supreme Court reading out every single accusation and the relevant articles of the Constitution and long lists of names and numbers—but in the end, the results are the same. Cellou Dalein, now with 43% of the vote, will face Alpha Conde, now with 18%, in a second, yet-to-be-scheduled, round of voting.

I came to Conakry to visit people and take care of some business before the second round of elections closes everything down again. It's interesting to be in Conakry again after exactly a year away. Candidate posters are all over the place. Although I'm in the capital city, I'm still not moving in the right circles to get a true diversity of political perspectives—I still hear a lot of one-sided pro-Cellou language, sometimes where I least expect it. I did talk to one non-Fouta, non-FulBe guy who said he had voted for Sidya Toure but planned to vote for Alpha Conde in the second round, because, though he didn't like to say it, but the truth is that you can never trust a Peul. However, he hoped that Alpha Conde would only stay for one term and then step down, because by that time he would be too old to keep governing. One taxi driver I talked to said that he had voted for Sidya Toure in the first round and didn't plan to vote at all in the second round, because Sidya had been cheated. Anyway, we'll see. Stay tuned for Round Two. *You can read more about Susanna's work at <http://18months18months.blogspot.com/>.*



*Photos left,  
page 1 and  
page 3,  
courtesy  
Claes  
Schamberg.*



## G-15 Weddings

*Thanks to G-15 RPCV Sam Levin for submitting this information.*

G-15 member Amy Hylinski (Kankan '07-'09) got married in February in Bamako to former PC/G staff member Mamadouba Daffé. Many, many PC/G staff members were in attendance including Condé, who served as her ceremonial "wedding counselor." The couple recently re-located to Pennsylvania. The picture on the right includes numerous PC/G staff members. From left, Dioulde Barry-APCD Education, Mamadouba Daffé, PC staff members Kadi Sow, Odette Leno and AnneMarie Loua, Amy Hylinski Daffe, and Abdoul Diallo - APCD Agfo.



Above: PCVs at the wedding in Mali. Left to Right: Danielle Clifton (G-17), Mary Batchelor (G-17, Noukounkan), Scotty Fay (G-18, Baro), Yik Lam (G-18, Fria), Raven Smith (G-15, Soumbouyadi), Molly Lemoine (G-18, Boke), Mike Conway (G-17, Mandiana), Amy Hylinski Daffe (Kankan), Mamadouba Daffe, Dorian Connelley (G-17), Mark Lawrence (G-18), Corinna Merrill (G-17), Marissa Conway (G-17, Mandiana) and Erich Pacheco (G-15, Maliville).



And on July 1 there was another truly PC/Guinea wedding. G-15 members Ciara Ignacio (Tiguibery) and Adam Johnson (Missimana) were married in LA. RPCV attendees included G15ers Alex Yalch (Sabadou Baranama), Teale Walheim (Mankountan), David Solana (Koumban), Caleb Mariani (Missira), Katie Ryan (Mandiana), and Julie Ehrlich (Dakonta). Above, a photo of the couple.



Then, in June another G15er Andrew Haile (Bouliwel '08-'09) got married in North Carolina to René Marshall. RPCVs Katy Murtaugh (Dalaba '08-'09), Justin Sumner and Amber Sahlberg (Koubia '08-'09) were in attendance ... sort of. They were stuck on the interstate for hours due to an accident! They said it felt like a bush taxi. Unfortunately, they missed the ceremony, but got there at least for the reception.

The below photo is of all the people at the wedding who had some connection to Guinea, including friends and family who visited Andrew in Guinea, Katy (third from left), Amber (fifth from right), Justin (third from right), Guineans living in the US, and the happy couple (center).







On July 4 weekend, 10 years after leaving together for Dakar, seven members of the last PC/G group trained in Senegal met up as the Edwardsen's hosted a G-0 reunion at their suburban DC home. In attendance were (from left to right) Erik Vickstrom (Dinguiraye), Owen Okie (Friguiagbe), Mackenzie (Pfeifer) Dabo (Saramoussaya and Conakry) and daughter Mariama, Annie Mascorro (Kerouane), Justina (French) Edwardsen (Telimele) and daughter Molly, Matt Edwardsen (Dialakoro), and Kristen O'Planick (Siguri).

CaVa? Is the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Guinea and seeks to maintain contact and community among members as well as inform them of official activities of the organization. We welcome submissions!

FOG is run by a small group of volunteers. Consider joining our ranks! Email us ...@friendsofguinea.org

communications@.... Brian Farenell

finances@... Shad Engkilterra

gps@... Diane Carlson (parents)

listserv@... Urska Manners

membership@... Brian Clappier

mentor@... Meghan Greeley (parents)

secretary@... Position open (volunteers welcome!)

newsletter@... Mackenzie Dabo (editor)

newsletter2@... Rita Gerlach (distribution)

projects@... Donald Parker

registry@.... Lance Constien

web@... Karen Star

[info@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:info@friendsofguinea.org) (General information)

Website: <http://friendsofguinea.org>

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. Dues are \$15 annually for individuals and \$23 for families.

# CaVa?

3605 Reedsport Ct, Sacramento CA 95826



Visit us at: <http://friendsofguinea.org>