

Eritrean American Harmony

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Magazine



Quarterly Online Magazine of NCEA's National Public Diplomacy Group



NATIONAL PUBLIC DIPLOMACY GROUP



National Public Diplomacy Working Principles

TRANSPARENCY

leads to clear communication, trust, & mutual understanding



PARTICIPATION

helps to utilize: our human, political, economic, social, & intellectual capital



INCLUSION

Members, non-members, youth, men & women, etc.



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of our narratives & collective memory





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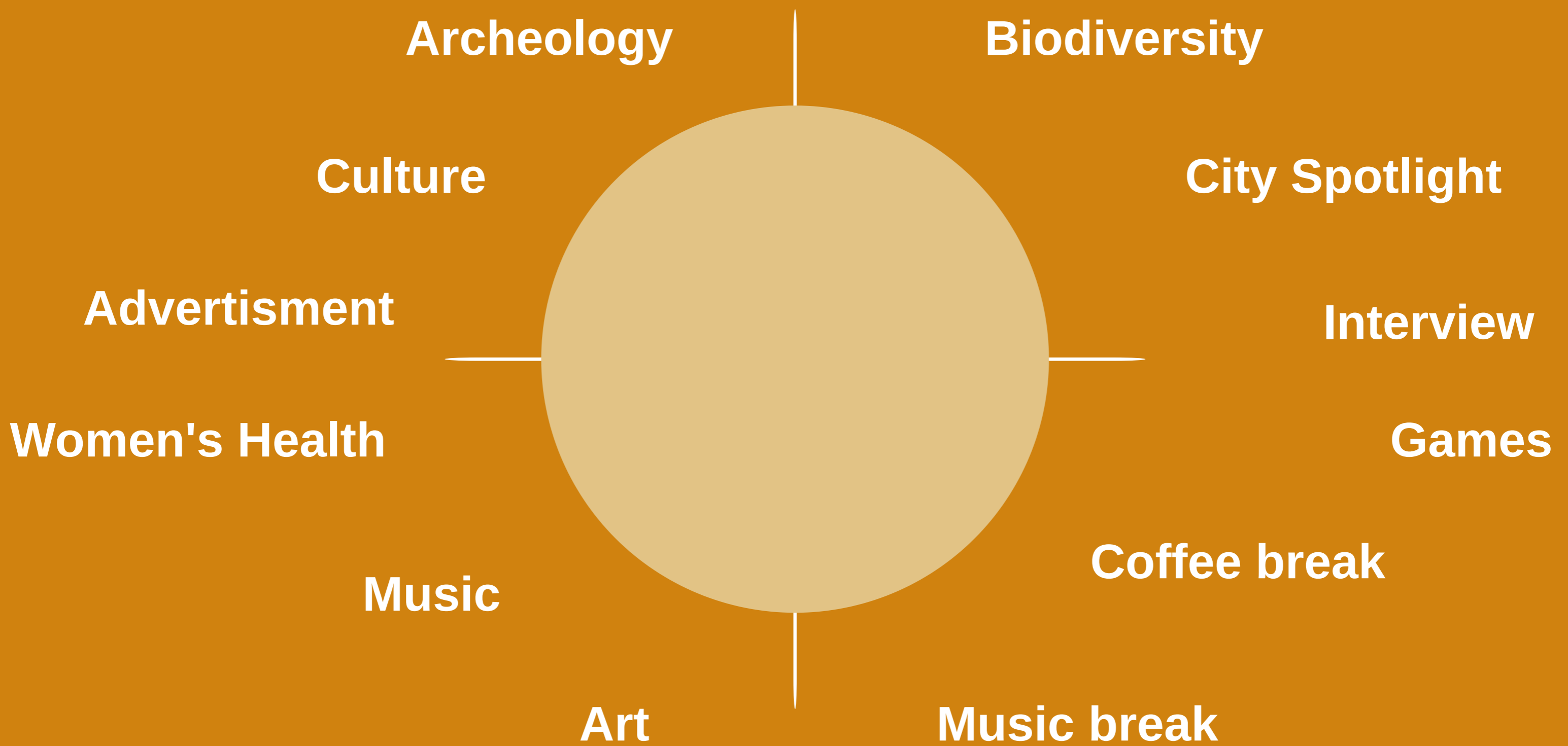
COMEDIES



NEWS + DOCUMENTARIES



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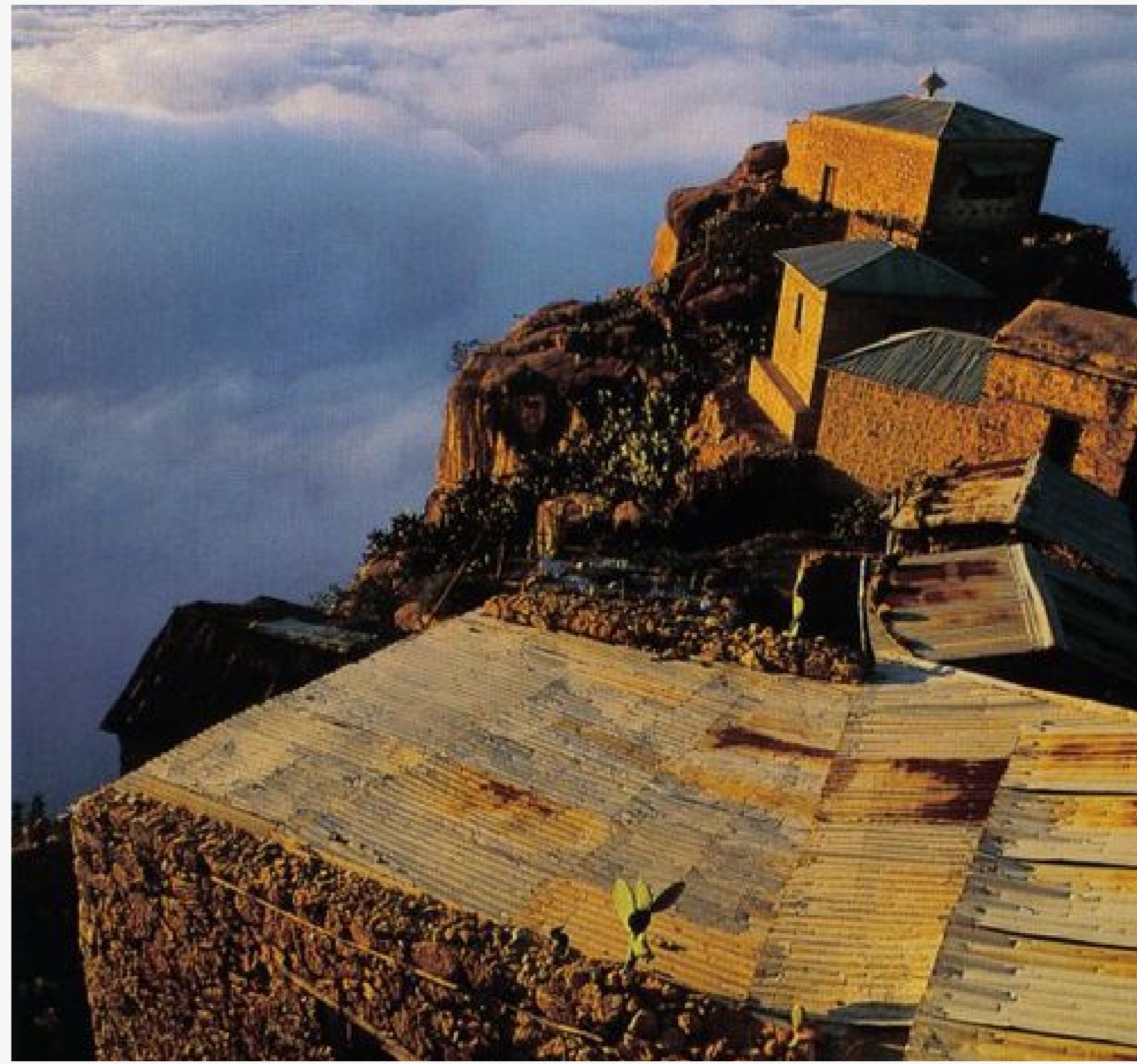
**NPDG Salutes
Eritrean Women
Every day!**

Archeology

A GLIMPSE INTO MUMMIFIED REMAINS FROM ERITREA

Eritrea's rich and unparalleled heritage resources embrace a multitude of features peculiar to the segments of human history. The presence of mummies in some of the earliest monasteries in Eritrea, for instance, represents one of the most intriguing components of the country's patrimony. Mummies have been found in several places, such as Debre Hawaryat of Ham, Metera, Bara'knaha, and Bek'ar. The nature of these finds from the monastic complexes of Eritrea is explained here in this article, together with the description of the art of mummification elsewhere.

The word mummy came from the Persian word "Mumia," meaning "pitch" or "bitumen" - a substance that was believed to flow from mountains in the Near East and had a curing power for diseases. The bitumen from the famous "Mummy Mountain" in Persia was believed to cure diseases. People eventually adopted the term to refer to the preserved bodies of ancient Egyptians, whose blackened appearance was believed to indicate that they had the same medical powers as the mumia (David, 1997). The word Mummy, thus, came to be used for these bodies. According to its contemporary usage, a mummy is an organism's preserved body via a natural or artificial process. Mummies can be preserved in many ways. Some mummies are preserved by natural circumstances depending on the type of climate, the dryness of the sand surrounding the body, the absence of air in the burial ground, etc.



Several mummies have also been preserved by the intervention of human activity that includes an exclusion of air and provision of a sealed environment in the burial place, using additional heat sources to dry out the body tissues, and chemicals such as natron (a mixture of substances like sodium carbonate and bicarbonate) to prevent decomposition. The process involving human intervention may vary conditionally. Yet, the basic principle of mummification can happen if a dead body dries out quickly (to discourage bacteria from growing) after death. The artificial process includes two procedures: the evisceration of the body (i.e., removal of internal organs) and dehydration. Ancient Egyptian mummification is surely distinctive of all the traditions and civilizations that practiced mummification. The word "mummy" often connotes Egypt and Egyptian inventions. While the Egyptian ones are the most famous, mummies have been found in many parts of the world. The fact that there are more elaborate sources about the process of mummification in Egypt than in any other parts of the world where even mummies have been found may, thus, suggest the practice originated in

Egypt. The tendency to see the mummification process in the realm of Egyptian civilization is, thus, not surprising to infuse much of the narratives.

Consequently, it is not a coincidence that people, in their first insight, would think of diffusion from ancient Egypt when surmising the mummies found in the monastic complexes of Eritrea. Although no scientific investigation has been done in Eritrea, mummies have been discovered in the Cultural Landscape of Qohaito, the Orthodox Christian Monastery of Debre-Libanos of Ham, Baraknaha, and recently from Bekaár in the Soira mountains. Little is known about the mummies from Qohaito, which were taken by George Schwainfurth and Max Schoeller in 1894 to Germany and are believed to be in the Anthropological Institute of Humboldt University, Berlin.

A GLIMPSE INTO MUMMIFIED ..

Mummies have also been recovered from the Monastery of Debre-Libanos of Ham in the 1980s, and much has been speculated about these mummies ever since. According to oral tradition, the mummified skeletal remains found in the monastic complex of Debre Libanos (Ham) included the body of Abba Libanos himself, who is believed to have founded the first monastic complex in Eritrea. This monk is believed to have come from the Middle East through Alexandria (Egypt). Therefore, there is a possibility that he might have brought the practice with him. According to the monastery priests, the number of mummified skeletons in the monastery is about 120.

A recent survey around the localities of Bek'ar and Baraknaha, east and south of the town of Senafe, respectively, has enhanced our knowledge of the presence of mummies in Eritrea. The areas believed to have housed monastic communities in antiquity have witnessed that mummies are situated in caves of the chains of the mountain. There are contradictory sources for the origin of mummification in Eritrea. The fact that Abba Libanos came from Egypt, where the practice is mainly known, may imply that he might have brought the practice with him. Yet, there is no doubt that the Eritrean people had the concept of preservation a long time ago. The concept of preserving the dead bodies of organisms has a long history in Eritrea. People used to eviscerate dead bodies to prevent decomposition until recently. Preserving animal flesh, skin, and tail and also plants is common. But the fact that mummies are found only in the monasteries prevents us from safely concluding that the practice of mummification originated independently in Eritrea. According to oral tradition, the mummified skeletal remains found in the monasteries of Eritrea are bodies of the religious individuals and the 'saints' that inhabited them. Confinement of the preserved skeletal

remains in restricted areas of monasteries may suggest that the practice was reserved for the religious elites. The reasons for mummification in Eritrea are still unclear. However, according to oral tradition, the bodies of some religious leaders were preserved because they were 'saints.' The exact time for the introduction of the practice of mummification in Eritrea also remains obscure. But according to oral tradition, the practice might have been introduced by about c 5th to 8th c. A.D., by monks who came to Eritrea from the Middle East via Alexandria.

Whether these mummies resulted from human intervention or natural circumstances is only to be determined by detailed scientific studies. An indication of human intervention in the mummies has come from the presence of this knowledge in the hands of certain monks. For instance, the late Abba Teweldebrhan Andemeskel (a monk and the key informant in the preliminary study of the mummies of the monastery of Ham) had the skill of embalming through evisceration and use of local shrub Mebti'e, whose leaves were boiled to extract a liquid component. The late monk stated in the preliminary study of the mummies that the extraction of the internal organs (the heart, kidneys, intestine, liver, stomach, and lungs) through evisceration (mqshar – in Tigriḡnya) and painting the body a liquid substance to help in drying the body of the organism are central to the traditional practice.

This information, however, is still fragmentary to provide conclusive remarks on the nature of the practice and, particularly, the debate of natural versus artificial procedures. The need to conduct in-depth scientific studies into the art of mummification in Eritrea in the future is, therefore, significant to sketch out clearly why and how the practice was executed and whether the practice of mummification was an indigenous or a diffused tradition as has been often suggested.

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Culture

Oqub (ዑቁብ)

Rahel Musa

I live in the Midwest of the United States, and few things motivate me to leave my home during the winter months. But once a month, whether there is a dusting of snow or a frigid chill in the air, I attend oqub (ዑቁብ) with other Eritrean women who live in my small city.

If you ask my American-born grandchildren, Oqub (ዑቁብ) Saturday – as they fondly refer to it – is a day that the mahber (community group) ladies get together to share a meal and coffee. They often ask if I will bring them back a piece of himbasha (traditional bread) or some other treat back from oqub (ዑቁብ). While the socializing is undoubtedly enjoyable, it isn't the aspect of the gathering that I look forward to the most. The might of oqub (ዑቁብ) comes from upholding a tradition that spans many generations and is practiced at home and in the diaspora.

From a Global West perspective, Oqub (ዑቁብ) can be akin to a grassroots or community savings co-op. However, a fundamental difference is that oqub (ዑቁብ) is not part of a banking system - no bank building, ATM cards, interest rates, late fees, etc. Instead, this is a system of engaging with money based on the power of an unspoken but deeply respected social agreement and a shared understanding rooted in the reverence of community care.

A rising tide lifts all boats. Under this premise, the financial health of my neighbor and my community ensure my financial health and that of my family. Oqub (ዑቁብ) can be structured in so many ways, and many of the guidelines are agreed upon by all during its establishment. In my case, we meet once a month, each member taking a turn to host. Our meeting includes a shared meal or tea/coffee and a lot of time to catch up and hear about one another's life. At the end of the allotted time, all the members put the pre-determined, fixed amount of money into a bowl or basket. A member of the oqub (ዑቁብ), who is not the host, counts the money for accuracy and presents the money to the hosting member. The elders in the space take the time to bless the money and the host – wishing that the collected money serves the family well. Sometimes, the recipient may share what she hopes to do with the money and thank the mahber for their support while also declaring that she will return the trust and favor.

Women traditionally practice Oqub (ዑቁብ), and throughout history has served many purposes encouraging and supporting women who did not work outside of the home and did not earn an income, to save. Many women that came before me shared stories of saving a portion of their household budget to contribute to their oqub (ዑቁብ), allowing them to plan for more significant purchases later in the year (like grain in bulk or treats for the children, jewelry, etc.).

In times of celebration or loss, the order of who is hosting the oqub (ዑቁብ) can be changed to ensure that the host receives the financial support to help her through her life event.

While there is a very practical and economic benefit to oqub (ዑቁብ), the rising of all comes from the camaraderie and community created by this intimate practice of trust. The mahber becomes bound, which is reflected through the support given by and to each member, expanding beyond the space of this savings co-op.

In this world where it seems like we are governed and ruled by money, there aren't many times for working-class people where our conversations about money aren't related to struggle and strife. Oqub (ዑቁብ), and similar concepts and traditions, have existed in Eritrea, and the Global South, for generations. It has allowed me to see money as a tool that can strengthen individuals and communities, not as a tool used to harm and divide. As we are experiencing a global recession, I often hear Western media talking about ways people can save or create good habits with money. These ideas have existed for many communities and oqub (ዑቁብ) works to build strength and resiliency. If you are an Eritrean reading this article and haven't started an oqub (ዑቁብ) in your area – all it takes is one or two other people! If you're not Eritrean and want to start oqub (ዑቁብ), go for it!

From my grandchildren and me – Happy Oqub (ዑቁብ) Saturday!

Biodiversity

Evolutionary History of the Mammal Family Camelidae

Dr. Theodore Papenfuss

Paleontological studies of North American fossils have determined that the family Camelidae (Camels, llamas, and related species) appeared in North America about 40-50 million years ago. North American camels went extinct about 13,000 years ago due to decreasing ground temperatures from the Ice Age and to the arrival of humans who migrated from Asia across the Bering land bridge to North America. These early humans hunted and butchered for food large mammals including, camels, wild horses, mammoths, and giant ground sloths. Bones of camels have been found in archaeological sites that show the cut marks from human's stone tools. The bones, studied using radiocarbon dating, were found to be about 13,000 years old.

The ancestors of living camels had expanded from North America to Eurasia across the Bering Land Bridge about 6.5 to 7.5 million years ago. The ancestors of llamas and related species expanded from North America to South America about 2 to 3 million years ago after the formation of the Isthmus of Panama that connected South America with North America.

Living members of the family Camelidae.

Camels and camel relatives belong to mammal family Camelidae. There are seven living species in the family. Three of the species live in North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia and the other four species live in South America.

OLD WORLD CAMELS

The dromedary (*Camelus dromedarius*) is also called a one-humped camel. This North African and Middle East species is the only camel in Eritrea. Dromedaries were domesticated by humans several thousand years ago and they have not occurred naturally in the wild for about 2,000 years. Historically wild dromedaries lived in the Arabian Peninsula, the Sahara Desert, and the Horn of Africa including Eritrea. There is a rock painting of a camel from the Laas Geel caves in northern Somalia. The rock paintings in these caves are estimated to be between 4,000 and 5,000 years old.

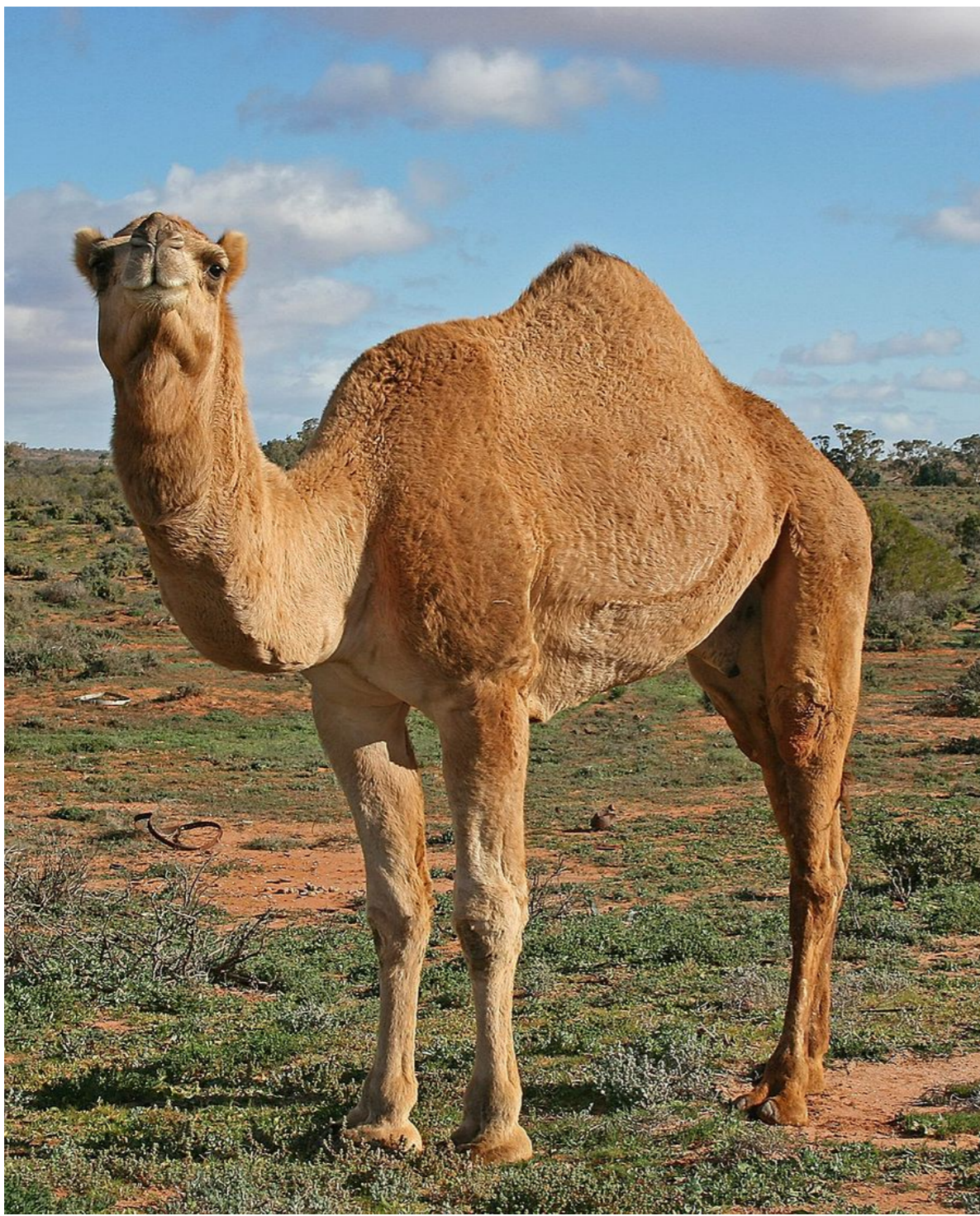


Karen camel market



Laas Geel camel rock painting here

Biodiversity



Camelus dromedarius (Dromedary Camel)

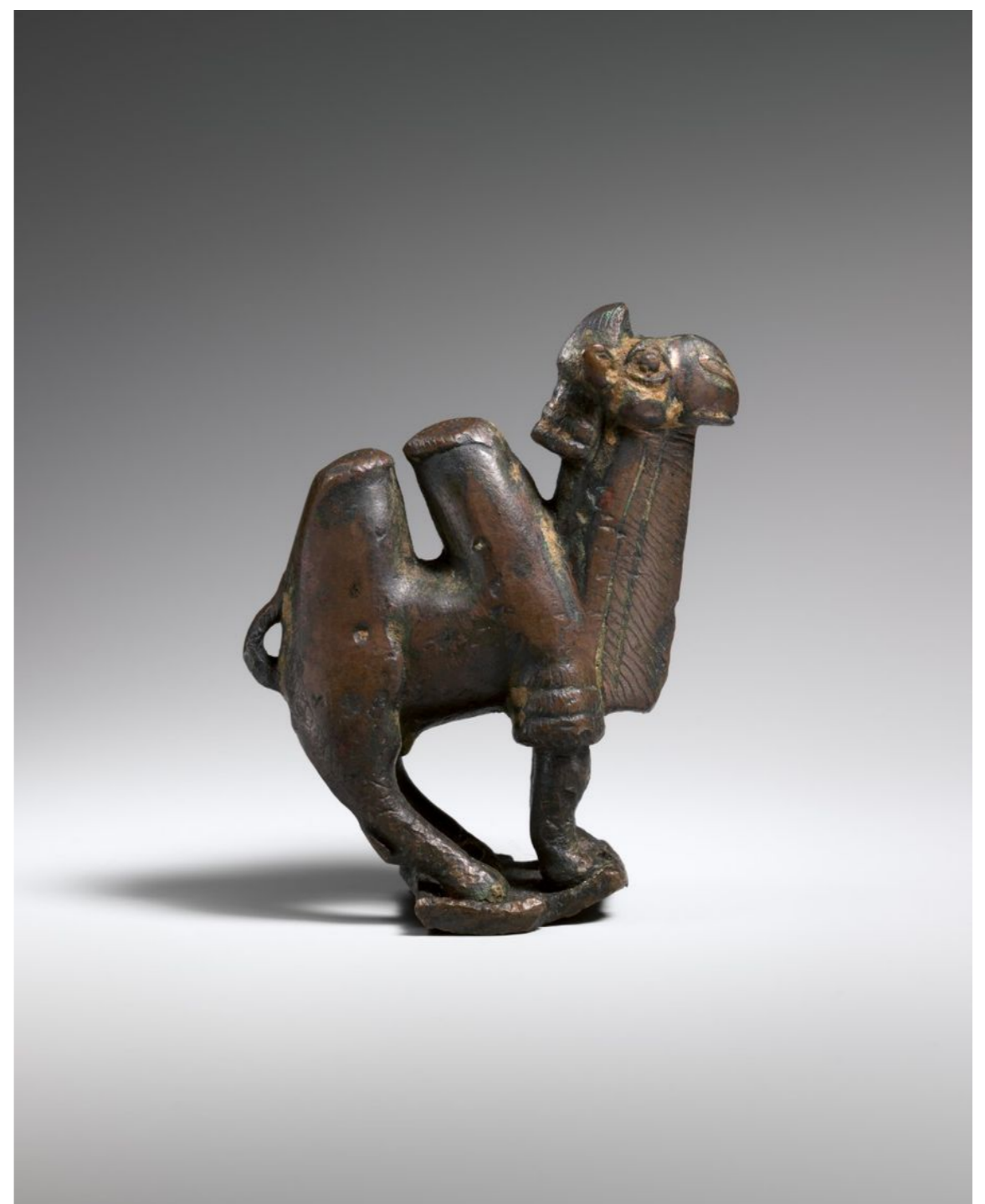
Studies using radiocarbon dating of camel bones found at locations in the Arabia Peninsula suggest that camels were being used by humans about 3,000 years ago. The bones were found at sites of ancient copper mines in the northeastern part of the peninsula near the borders of Israel and Lebanon. Early Bronze Age archaeological sites located in the United Arab Emirates have been excavated. Camel bones from the sites have been studied in molecular labs using ancient DNA and the bones are from 4,000 to 5,000 old. Cut marks on the large bones show that the human inhabitants cut the meat of the bones before discarding them. Starting about 2000 years ago camel domestication facilitated the development trade routes among different human societies in Arabia, the Middle East, and Africa.

The Bactrian camel (*Camelus bactrianus*) or Mongolian camel has two humps. Mongolian camels were domesticated at least 3,000 years ago. These estimates are based on skeletal remains of domestic Bactrian camels found in Iran. The name Bactrian comes from the ancient region of Bactria in Central Asia, now in the present-day countries of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

Bactrian camel caravans were used to carry products, both directions, along the Silk Road between China and the Mediterranean Region



Bactrian camel



4000-year-old copper figurine from Bactria in Central Asia

Biodiversity



Bactrian camel small caravan

Wild camels (*Camelus ferus*) live in the Gobi Desert of Mongolia and the western part of China. This critically endangered species is a two-humped camel that is related to the Bactrian camel. Genetic studies found that this species diverged from Bactrian camels about one million years ago. The governments of China and Mongolia have established reserves to protect this species. There are only about 650 individuals living in China and 450 in Mongolia.



Wild camel in Mongolia!

Genetic studies found that this species diverged from Bactrian camels about one million years ago.

NEW WORLD CAMELIDAE

Vicuñas (*Lama vicugna*) are a wild species that live at high elevations above 3000 meters in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, and Ecuador. This is the smallest of the South American camelids with a weight of 40-60 kilograms and a maximum height of about one meter at the level of the shoulders. Like all other camelids it has a long neck. The vicuña is the national emblem of Peru. There are vicuña reserves in Peru where the harvest of wool is carefully regulated. Vicuña wool is the most expensive wool in the world with a cost of from US \$400-600 for one kilogram.



Vicuna Peru

Peru



Peru Emblem

Biodiversity

Guanacos (*Lama guanicoe*) are a wild species found in Bolivia, Chile and Peru. They live in small herds consisting of one male and several females and young. There are guanaco farms where the animals are kept for harvesting wool. Guanacos are a common species with estimates of 1.5 to 2 million wild animals.



Guanaco Herd in Chile

Llamas (*Lama glama*) are the largest South American camelid with a weight of 130-140 kilograms and a height 1.4 meters at the shoulder. Studies of ancient DNA have determined that llamas are a domestic species that descended from guanacos. Llamas were domesticated by humans for use as pack animals over 4,000 years ago in the Andes of Peru and Chile.



Llama at Machu Picchu, Peru

Dromedary camels have been used by humans in Eritrea for centuries. Adulis, the ancient city in the Red Sea Bay of Zula south of Massawa, was a trade center as long ago as Roman times. At independence in 1993 the dromedary camel was selected as the emblem of Eritrea. The use of camels in Eritrea from historic time to the present will be discussed in my next contribution for Eritrean American Harmony Magazine



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Appointment Date: _____
 Time: _____
 Additional Information



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Should I Give the Insurance Company a Statement?

Insurance companies will have their adjusters attempt to get an oral or written statement from you immediately after an accident. Never give a verbal or written statement to an insurance company regarding your case without first consulting your lawyer. Any communications with an insurer should either be through your lawyer or only with your lawyer's explicit permission.

Can I Get a Rental Car or Cash in Lieu of a Rental Car?

Yes. You should be able to get a rental car if your insurance policy provides for one. If not, 3rd party Insurers (the insurers for the party at fault) may help you get a rental car to use for a limited period. 3rd party Insurers may also reimburse you for your rental car expenses upon presentation of valid receipts or write you a check for loss of use of your car.

Can I Have a Body Shop of My Choice Repair my Car?

Yes. You may use the body shop of your choice to repair your car. Some insurers will even directly write you a check covering the cost of your car repairs if there is a mutual acceptance of an estimate.

Does the insurance company have to pay my medical bills?

Yes. Under the law you are entitled to compensation for all your collision-related "necessary and reasonable" medical expenses. If you have Personal Injury Protection ("PIP") with your insurer, your insurer is required to pay the medical bills that are related to your collision and deemed "reasonable and necessary" for the treatment of your injuries. Sometimes, insurers try to weasel their way out of their financial obligations by arguing certain treatment is unrelated, unreasonable, or excessive. If this happens with you, we suggest that you speak with your lawyer immediately.

Can I get compensation for my pain and suffering?

Yes. Under the law you are entitled to compensation for all your collision-related pain and suffering.

YOUR PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEYS



Take pics of the vehicles involved and the accident scene.

Write down witnesses' name and telephone numbers.

AN INTERVIEW

Ruth Negash, CEO



Work history:

I worked in the U.S. for 14 years before moving to Eritrea and working for eight years in Education, Management, and Leadership professions. First, I taught for four years, fulfilling my national service at the Eritrean Institute of Technology (EIT), and worked at Bisha Mining Share Company for four years. Then, as I grew in my profession, I found an opportunity to work in the Federation of National Associations of women in businesses at a regional level in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). This is my third year at the COMESA Secretariat.

On COMFWB:

I am the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of COMFWB. My organization, the COMESA Federation of National Associations of Women in Business (COMFWB), currently promotes women and advocates for women in business across the 21 member states in Africa. In the Regional Economic Community (REC) of COMESA, our mandate includes implementing activities to help women with their specific business needs, influencing policy alignment across the member states, and advocating for inclusive and conducive Trade Policies for women and young people. Now, except for Ethiopia, all 20 countries have established active and registered national federations.

These Chapters already have members who run many micro, small, and medium women-owned and women-led enterprises. The enterprises focus on sensitization of policies, organizational structuring, building human business capacities, and product development starting from production, processing, and marketing to compete in Trades.

COMFWB Secretariat organizes and coordinates the member states to source the best expertise, so women can produce good products for trade markets and stay competitive. This year, we have focused mainly on strengthening the institutions in the member states, delivering capacity-building workshops and equipment where women can process their products. In addition, members are learning how to develop competitive products and link them with the national standardizing entities and COMESA departments.

“ **COMFWB Secretariat organizes and coordinates the member states to source the best expertise, so women can produce good products for trade markets and stay competitive.** ”

Secondly, this year, we've also focused on grouping the 21 member states into five sub-regions: The Northern region, the Horn of Africa region, the Eastern region, the Southern region, and the Indian Ocean Islands region. All five Sub-regions held their first annual summit and discussed a plan for activities they can implement together in 2023. They also have trade linkages across their borders because they all share borders with similar cultures, traditions, and foods hence the market for their products. Each region has agreed to hold conferences and conduct experiential visits, bazaars, trade fairs, and more in their plans. These activities will improve trade, expose their products and services, and develop their national tourism.

On Recent Sub-Regional COMFWB Summits:

High-level government officials, Ministers of Trade, Agriculture, and Gender, COMFWB cooperating Ministries, and Heads of National Organizations graced the sub-regional summits' openings. At its first annual round of summits, COMFWB succeeded in holding three physical and two virtual summits. The Southern Region started the First Sub-Regional Summit in Eswatini graced. The Minister of Trade and Head of Parliament of the Eswatini government, the Paramount Chief, and several other Parliament members graced the summit in Manzini, Eswatini. The chapters in the region, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi, attended the summit to align their action plans to trade across their shared borders

and toured various businesswomen sites, such as feedlots and chicken processing plants. Additionally, at the southern summit, the government of Eswatini pledged to provide land to the chapter for commercial farming and build a business incubation center.

The presence of the Minister of Trade, Head of Parliament, and Paramount Chief at the summit were instrumental in acquiring land for the COMFWB chapter members. As a result, the government of Eswatini has become exemplary in supporting women to advance their economic agenda and is working closely with the COMFWB Chapter. As a result of the COMFWB Secretariat and local chapter advocacy efforts, the Eswatini chapter acquired 10 hectares of land for commercial farming and to build a business incubation center. And it signed a Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with COMFWB, the Center of Financial Inclusion, and the World Food Program (WFP) to procure farm products from women in targeted communities and allow access to financing for women to grow their businesses. In addition, the chapter received additional assistance to operationalize an incubator to support the chicken processing plant.



an interview with CEO of COMWFB

As a result of the summit, the Eswatini Bank agreed to work collaboratively with the chapter to allow women to open bank accounts for their small businesses. As a result, over 300 women have opened accounts since the summit in May 2022, marking a milestone for Eswatini women to start trading formally and become bankable. Hence, the Southern Region Summit was a very successful mission and looking forward to Zimbabwe as a host next year. In addition, Eswatini, Zimbabwe, and Malawi members have started trading across shared borders. In their shared experiences, the Zimbabwe Women Excel SAACO Bank assisted Zambia in opening and launching the Women's SAACO bank in Zambia. This collaboration of the Southern Chapters will continue as women farmers and enterprises share experiences, form business-to-business linkages, and add value to their products to become trade ready.

Eritrea hosted the Second Sub-Regional Summit for the Horn of Africa. The Sudanese Sub-Regional leader, Madam Siham Sheriff, recommended hosting the 1st ever COMFWB Summit in Eritrea because Eritrea is currently the most stable country in the HOA Sub-Region. Hence, in Somalia, Djibouti, and Eritrea, the Board Chair from Zambia respected the invitation by the Sudanese chair and arrived in Asmara, Eritrea, on July 28, 2022. Accordingly, Minister Arefaine Berhe, Minister of Agriculture, our cooperating ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade, National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW or HAMADEE, its Tigrinya acronym),

and the National Confederation of Eritrean Workers (NCEW or HAKOSE'E, its Tigrinya acronym), graced our summit.



Eswatini



an interview with CEO of COMFWB



Southern Region Summit meetings



The delegation was also received by the President of Eritrea, H.E. Isaias Afeworki, the President of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW), Mrs. Tekea TesfaMichael, and the late President of the National Conference of Eritrean Workers (NCEW), Mr. Tekeste Baire, in Eritrea. All national leaders vowed to support COMFWB chapters with this valuable initiative to support women's economic activities both locally and regionally. Furthermore, H.E., the Eritrean President, advised the National Chairs to "talk less and do more" for the people of Africa by providing organized support for the grassroots for value addition industries and formal trading. His Excellency added

added that African women must transform their enterprises "from subsistence economies to commercialized economies."



Madam Selamawit Mekonnen, the Eritrean COMFWB Chapter Chair, co-hosted the summit coordinating all logistics for conferences, tours, and a Bazaar. The summit concluded meetings where the HOA Chairs agreed to visit each other for experience sharing and exposure of their member's businesses and national commodities and observe women's involvement in their national economic development plans. In addition, the Eritrean Chapter members displayed their products in their July 2022 monthly bazaar.

Eritrea Chapter hosted the participants to tour different dams and various women-owned agri-business value-addition factories. The delegation traveled the country, well accommodated and regarded by the government of Eritrea, including the mountainous central and southern regions. This was a very successful mission where the Chairs of the HOA parted, agreeing that Sudan would be the host country next SR Summit. Inshallah, allowing conducive situations in Sudan, they've decided to have an HOA-SR Trade Fair, a Tour of women-owned factories and other valuable industries for experiences, and several trading activities showcasing products of their shared borders.

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The two Sub Regional Summits, namely, the Eastern and Indian-Ocean islands, were held virtually. The Indian Ocean countries-Mauritius, Comoros Islands, Madagascar, and Seychelles, were led by the Comoros Islands as a host. The chairs agreed to work together to host each other's trade fairs and attend conferences

The primary point discussed and deliberated was the limitations of the logistical challenges of impeding trade to each other and the African continent. Hence, the summit deliberated that a request is submitted to the concerned governments and COMESA to establish logistics channels to go by ship or air across their island states. This will link and improve the regional trade of the Indian-Ocean Island states to the other 17 member states in the African mainland. As a result, Madagascar will host the next Indian Ocean Summit.

The last Sub-Regional Summit for 2022 was held virtually for the Eastern Africa region led by Rwanda. Uganda, Burundi, DR Congo, and Kenya attended. They also agreed to trade and take experiential tours across their shared borders for trade fairs. There is a need to explore the value chains and conduct gap assessments and market research of commodities. In addition, all agreed to start incubation programs and ensure women entrepreneurs are being incubated, organized, and coordinated to boost their recruitment. Finally, they explained their positions on moving the agenda for trade across the Eastern African States, where women can be included during trade negotiations and linked with their cooperative ministries of COMESA.

Thank you, Madam Ruth Negash for your time.

From previous events check the following pages.





Women's Health



Moderator: Anything that you know that you did for fun when you were there?

Melba-Williams: Kirk: We had a packed schedule in a short time across the country. Really. I remember. Oh, just seeing the landscape. I always remember a small town called Ghinda. I believe. Going through there and how beautiful it was. It was very green. And probably the experience that sticks out in my mind is that curvy road that used to be a train would travel, I believe it is the road to Massawa. It is scary traveling around that curve mountain, but you know, we met friends there. Ironically, I remember the first students we met at the University—there, I went to graduate school with one of my best friends from Florida. And so, yeah, I had a lot of weird connections like that, like meeting people I would meet later on in life. So, to me, I always confirm that you're in the right place at the right time. You're exactly where you were supposed to be. So yeah, you know,

Moderator: If you're going there four times a year, were you going during different seasons?

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: Yeah, we went when they told us that we could come, and it had to do with harvesting crops, and when they met people in the field, so we would always find out from your Ministry of Health when they thought, and they also had to have based in the hospital, and they had to have nursing staff and equipment. And so, we didn't pick the times we came when we were invited.

Moderator: It makes sense because since it is associated with rural life and all that.

Dr. Ambreen Sleemi: Yeah, right. Also, during religious holidays, everything had to be sort of, you know, taken into account for what everyday life was like, but yeah, definitely around harvest time, planting time. So, the Ministry of Health figured out our schedule as one of the best times for the patients and the hospital staff with the Ministry of Health.





Women's Health

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: Yes and remember the post-op care. In this country (US), people go home three or four days after surgery. That's not what happened. People stayed for a month post operation. So, they had to have a prolonged recovery time. The whole family would come to the hospital, and the Ministry of Health would feed them. Every family would camp outside the hospital and then come in and help care for the patient and the whole family would stay there while the patient recovers, so they would. The family would move to whatever compound around the hospital, the Ministry of Health, and set up and stay there for a month and a half.

Dr. Ambreen Sleemi: Dr. Paul and the rehab center in Mendefera that was set up.

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: Oh, right. Let's talk about that. That was new, and it was a beneficial thing.

Moderator: If you can talk about the Rehab Center, Dr. Ambreen.

Dr. Ambreen Sleemi: Honestly, I feel like there were so many people who touched our lives. Also, we are one of the few groups in Eritrea because we had such a long-term relationship with that. We were able to do a specific type of surgery called a urinary diversion which is an extensive surgery that really needs long-term follow-up care. You know, very close, close laboratory checks and such. And it was something that we could offer to a handful of patients who qualify for it. And I think one of the stories that stuck out stuck with me is the women who were able to have this extensive surgery, after basically, they didn't have any hope and were able to get pregnant afterward, and one of them returned with her baby. So I think being able to, not all women can get pregnant, but to be able to give some women that chance to start a family again. And so, seeing those patients back, a handful of patients would stay and work for the hospital as nursing assistants. And I think that it was remarkable always to be able to see some of your patients who now had had a job, and we're able to, you know, make a living for others who had taken it and who wanted to opt for some repost rehabilitation training user sewing. They chose to start their businesses nearby. And so we would see many of our patients again over time.





Moderator: That's remarkable. How many Eritrean doctors and trained to do the surgery?

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: In the beginning, we dealt with two people at dr. Lilti, a woman doctor. And Dr. Habte GYN. So, since that time we would have when The Residency program started, we would have residents that would rotate with us, and then a couple of them had taken this on as something they wanted to be involved with. One of them is with Dr. Habteab. I don't know now because we haven't been there for a while. How many other residents are still involved with the training? But you know, during part of their rotation, they would spend time inMendefera because that is the regional center and get exposure and experience with this particular surgery.

Moderator: When do you plan to pull back?

Dr. Ambreen Sleemi: As soon as we're invited.

Moderator: Thank you for your time, is there anything that you would like to add?

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: I want to say one thing that I think has been very important to my family and me because I brought my daughter, and I was remarried. I got my second husband, who has no medical background, and thought it would be terrible to watch. Somebody does that general surgery, but it's like watching a delivery.

Once he was there, he was fascinated by it, and my daughter loved it. All she did was transcribed the history, when Dr. Abraham, with a question, a patient, she lives he would write it down. I think it's essential. And Melba is a prime example of somebody with no medical training who came and functioned and enjoyed it. And in contributed. I think it's essential not just to bring Physicians. I think everybody should have this kind of experience and should understand what it means to go someplace and do something you love just because you love it. Not because somebody's paying you and not because you have to but because you're doing something that is productive and fun and makes you feel good about what you're doing. And that's not just for doctors. That's for everybody. As you bring people into the country, you can bring writers and filmmakers and plumbers and electricians. I think everybody should have that kind of experience.

Melba-Williams Kirk: Oh, well, I want to thank Dr. Polan for allowing me and inviting me into the background; it was one of the highlights of my experiences at Stanford. And so, I appreciate it. And you are now having to be a mother. Mother, it really changed my whole perspective of healthcare in America here and how privileged we are. When I hear women complain about this or that, or we're not worrying about scheduling their C-sections. .



Women's Health

And I'm like, no, you are highly blessed. So, it's just, I, I think that it's incredible what you establish, and it's so amazing to see what can happen when people work together.

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: That was wonderful having you, Melba.

Dr. Ambreen Sleemi: I wish I was there, Melba. I must have come after that, yeah. I did want to say that, you know, this will be an experience for me for the many years that I've been involved with this project. Really solidified the idea of collaboration and working with ministries of Health working with the National Union of Eritrean, women working with the Department of Education, and getting a partnership with the regional hospital with our surgeons that we worked with nursing. And I think that the model of, you know, really like long-term commitment with surgical training, which is a transferable skill, you know, it's something that when you start with somebody interested, who has, you know, medical knowledge, but mostly the commitment to learn. You can have a very successful partnership, and I think that the partnership and collaboration in Eritrea were a model for me so when I started International Medical Response, which I've been doing for almost five years full-time, working with surgical programs in different countries. This has been the model for creating a genuine partnership with equity. And I think that that was important. And I believe that one of my biggest takeaways from the many years of working in Eritrea was

how to have an equitable partnership in healthcare with again, everyone who make it happen, including the patients.

Moderator: Thank you all for your time.

Dr. Mary Lake Polan: Thank you for letting us talk about our experience.

Melba-Williams Kirk: Thank you.

Dr. Ambreen Sleemi: Thank you.

I think that the partnership and collaboration in Eritrea were a model for me so when I started International Medical Response, which I've been doing for almost five years full-time, working with surgical programs in different countries. This has been the model for creating a genuine partnership with equity.

Games: A Quiz & A Jigsaw Puzzle

A	
B	
C	

2. What is the capital city of Eritrea?

[https://puzzel.org/en/quiz/play?
p=-NPklqZtdENaqyNyJ0KM](https://puzzel.org/en/quiz/play?p=-NPklqZtdENaqyNyJ0KM)



[https://puzzel.org/en/jigsaw/play?
p=-NPkqGgvGBxub9wuHaQI](https://puzzel.org/en/jigsaw/play?p=-NPkqGgvGBxub9wuHaQI)

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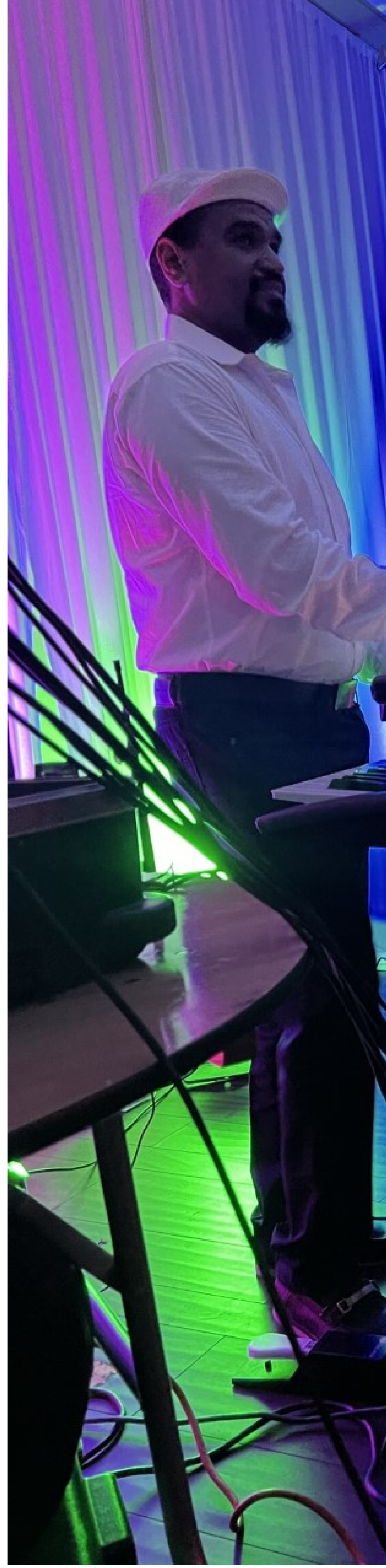


Music Guayla

On Saturday,

January 28, 2023, Bahlna Entertainment Presents presented a spectacular live Eritrean music event in the Los Angeles area. Legendary Eritrean vocalist and liberation fighter Helen Meles (IG: @helen_meles_official) made a rare return to Southern California along with acclaimed vocalist Jemal Romodan aka Jimmy Asmarino (IG: @jimmy_asmarino), for a rousing night of northeast African music. Backed by an accomplished trio directed by Minnesota-based keyboardist Awet Okbay (IG: @awet_okbay) featuring tenor saxophonist Ghenet Tesfatsion and bass guitarist Belay Mengesha, the event attracted two hundred local Eritreans who danced to a heavy guayla beat and other infectious rhythms as the vocalists alternated with spirited performances of their respective repertoire. Awet, who went to elementary school and played in the Kassala, Sudan-based Red Flowers band with Helen, informed me that he and Helen were both surprised and pleased by the large multi-generational turnout at the venue hall in Carson.

Currently based in Dubai, Helen Meles performed in Los Angeles as part of a short tour, including stops in Washington D.C., Seattle, Dallas, and Houston, before going straight to Massawa, Eritrea, for the 33rd Fenkil Day celebration. Operation Fenkil occurred in February 1990 and was one of Eritrea's most successful and decisive military victories during its war for independence with Ethiopia.





Helen Meles brought the Los Angeles crowd to their feet as well as onto the stage as she delivered her well-known songs “Abaka Ember Ab Men Da’a Mo,” “Adha,” “Firfir,” “Nihnan Nsikin” and “Beleni Ta.” While draped in an Eritrean flag, Meles showed that her voice is as strong and endearing as ever as she swayed to the music with her fans who celebrated her rare concert appearance in greater Los Angeles.

Moreover, Eritrean artist Jemal Romodan also electrified the attendees with renditions of “Gezana,” “Nkoneki,” “Asmarino,” and “Nski do Tbdeli.” His sets perfectly complimented Meles’ by keeping the energy high until closing. Music director Awet says that as a younger prodigy, Boston-based Jemal sang with Showet Assanet? in Eritrea. Los Angeles-based restaurateur and kirar artist Aron Tadesse (IG: @industryjazzcafe) also jumped on stage to sing a number with the band. Awet says that there are no current plans to bring Helen Meles back to Los Angeles. Still, she is scheduled to perform for Eritrean Independence Day celebrations in Boston, MA, and Las Vegas, NV, for which his ensemble will again provide the backing music.

MUSIC



While draped in an Eritrean flag, Meles showed that her voice is as strong and endearing as ever as she swayed to the music with her fans who celebrated her rare concert appearance in greater Los Angeles.



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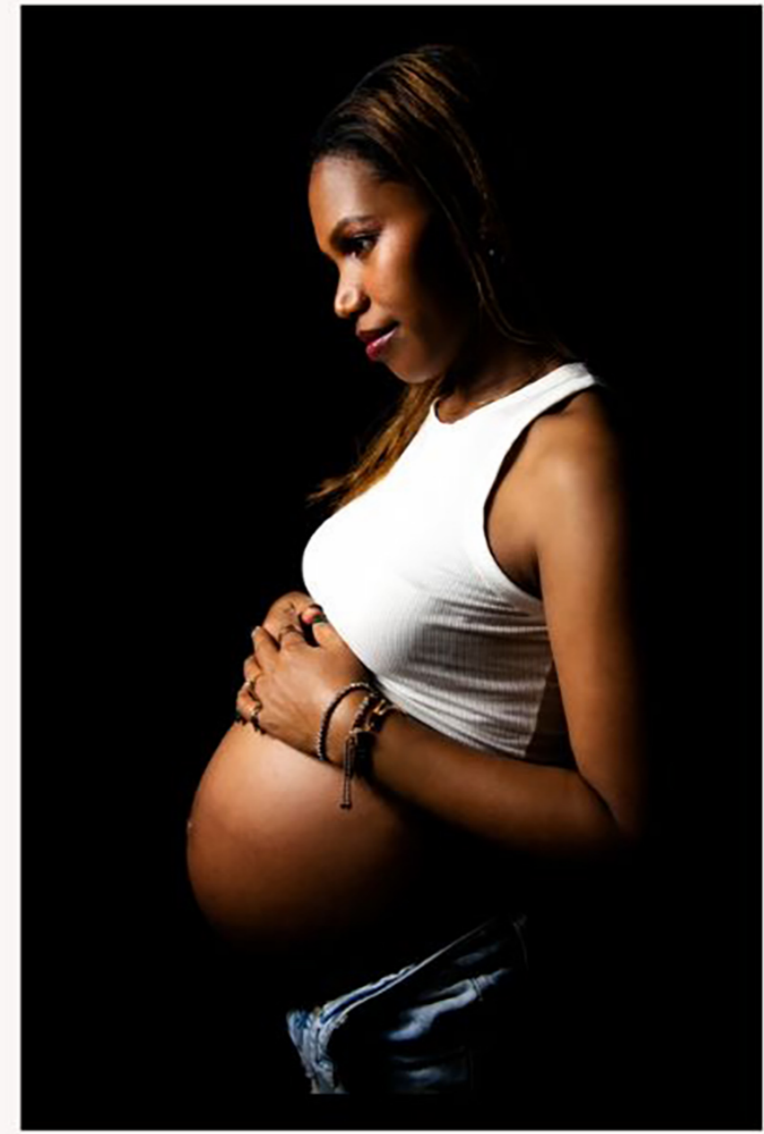
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City Spotlight

New Orleans, Louisiana



Though the Eritrean American Community has been around for a long time since the early arrivals of Eritreans in New Orleans and surrounding, officially registered as a community with the Government of the United States under 501. C in 2016.

As African Americans and first-generation immigrants, we know many challenges in the United States. The challenges are basic economy to retaining and practicing your original culture and language. Even though there are many economic opportunities here in the United States, competing and earning middle-class wages is challenging as an immigrant. The lives of most immigrants are a dialectic between the memories of the world left behind and the day-to-day struggles of learning the ropes of a new society. Just like the rest, mastering a new language, living and working among strangers, and coping with the unfamiliar are just some challenges Eritreans face. I want all Eritreans to take advantage of the cooperation as a community, as Eritrean Americans, and as a society to retain our values. Our community generally finds comfort in our values where we are familiar with religious traditions and rituals, seek out newspapers and literature from the homeland, and celebrate holidays and special occasions with traditional music, dance, cuisine, and leisure-time pursuits. All the community members considered themselves brothers, and their priority was that wanted a community that had the skills and commitment to discuss complex issues and solve challenging problems cooperatively so we would have our community place. Therefore, my challenges as a leader during the beginning were unique and varied from the typical challenges a private immigrant faces.

The Eritrean community in New Orleans became active and successful by managing our central vision: to bring everyone together, celebrate our festivals, and maintain language and culture through cultural shows. We do have program cooperation with the Southern University at New Orleans, New Orleans specifically with the Department of African American Studies. The program entailed that we donated Eritrean artifacts to the Department and curated the artifacts in their library. Part of the deal in the program in cooperation with the Department; we visit high schools and give a presentation about Eritrean culture, then the collection is borrowed and displayed in the high school couple of weeks to project our culture to the students and teachers.

Our Eritrean community here in New Orleans tries to help in any way valuable to our brothers and sisters back home. For example, we often collect medical equipment, library and lab equipment books, and financial help for our martyr's families. We send the ordered items and money through an Eritrean-owned cargo company in Houston, TX.



The vision of Eritrea is one of the gifts of the thirty-year struggle for independence. The generation that brought about independence has stated its vision in the National Charter of Eritrea: "We must pass on to our children a country that is free from war and conflict, a country of which they can be proud, a country in which independence, peace, and prosperity prevail." This is the case in all economies regardless of size and known physical resource endowments. The government's primary effort is Education, and skilled labor is productive and enhances the productivity of all other factor inputs in the production system. To eradicate poverty and secure sustained development with social justice, Eritrea's priorities in development strategies include the development of human resources in agriculture, infrastructure, and rural development. To date, since Eritrean Independence, Eritrea has built 785 dams, including 557 dams that could hold from 10 to 100 thousand cubic meters of water, 198 dams that could hold from 100 thousand to one million cubic meters of water, and 30 dams that could contain from one to 330 million cubic meters of water.

Our Community Association contributed to exposing our Eritrean culture and tourism here in the USA. Our community has held an annual flag-raising ceremony at city hall during Eritrean Independence Day, May 24th. We invite special guests, speakers, and community leaders from all organizations during the ceremony. In addition, we serve cultural coffee, food, and music during the flag ceremony. The flag is then flown for two weeks, a week before the independence and a week after. Since the city hall is located at the heart of downtown New Orleans, we expose our culture and flag to the people of New Orleanians.

"We do have program cooperation with the Southern University at New Orleans, New Orleans specifically with the Department of African American Studies."

"We visit high schools and give a presentation about Eritrean culture, then the collection is borrowed and displayed in the high school couple of weeks to project our culture to the students and teachers."





Eritrea Community Members and JZZ



Flag raising at the City Hall





Testimonials from New Orleans, Louisiana Eritrean Community Members

Solomon G. Egziabher

My name is Solomon G Egziabher, and my wife is Hewan Gebrehiwot; we have two children, Wintana Solomon and Joshua Solomon. I arrived in New Orleans in 1986. However, New Orleans was not my first destination. I arrived in the State of Arkansas, in a small town, to attend college, and my status was student visa (I-20). My challenge then was that my visa did not allow me to work legally, and the only Eritrean was my brother Assefa G/Egziabher who was married to an American woman. He is the one who brought me there to go to school. My first job was killing chickens at the Tyson Chicken Factory in a small town in Arkansas, and it was the most demanding job I've ever done.

Nevertheless, I went to school and graduated in business administration with and minor in accounting. I didn't know anyone when I arrived in New Orleans in 1986. I met the first Eritrean after three months while working in a gas station. I met my late friend Mr. Berhane Ghirmu who invited me to his house and met his family. I ate Taita (injera) for the first time since leaving Addis four years earlier. I credit Berhane and his wife for speaking in Tigrinya with me because they did not speak Amharic, so I had no choice but to learn my native language.

My biggest accomplishment was to find my way out of the small town in Arkansas after finishing school. I didn't know where I was going to end up. All I knew was that I had to get out of that small town and find a legal way to help my mother in this country.

I didn't know many people then, but against all odds, I became legal, and I accomplished my mother's dreams of visiting the Holy Land and coming to the United States to see her children, whom she hadn't seen in nearly twenty years. The community in New Orleans was very small, probably less than thirty people. Most of them ended up in this area because they were seamen, and New Orleans is a big port city. We used to meet and have parties in small individual apartments.



Testimonials from New Orleans, Louisiana Eritrean Community Members

Taddesse Tewelde

My name is Taddesse Tewelde, and I came to the United States in 1971; 50 years ago, my first arrival was on August 1st, 1971, in Detroit, MI. When I came to the United States, Eritreans traveled abroad as Ethiopians because we carried Ethiopian passports, and I was on a student visa until April 1975. It was not until 1981 that we had to apply for political asylum; a year later, we got our resident card. Then, a couple of years later, we became American citizens.

When I came as an immigrant student, the first person I met in Detroit, MI, was Mengsteab and his family, the only family from Eritrea living in Detroit, MI. At that time, I had a work permit and was working in nursing homes, and I also worked at Ford Motor Company as a janitor. It was good money for the living standard of the time. I went to school all the way through while working. I was at Wayne Community College for two years and received my associate degree. Then, I transferred to Wayne State University to attend their College of Pharmacy. It was so expensive that I couldn't afford it. So, I looked for a cheaper university and found a school in Houston, TX. I enrolled at Texas Southern University School of Pharmacy and graduated in 1977. After graduation, I had to move to Louisiana because Texas Southern University wanted to expand here so that they could accept Texas graduates to take the board exam. That time the manager that I used to work with in Houston hired me to work at the Tulane Medical Center here in New Orleans as a pharmacist. That's how my life started here.

Then, I transferred to Wayne State University to attend their College of Pharmacy. It was so expensive that I couldn't afford it. So, I looked for a cheaper university and found a school in Houston, TX. I enrolled at Texas Southern University School of Pharmacy and graduated in 1977. After graduation, I had to move to Louisiana because Texas Southern University wanted to expand here so that they could accept Texas graduates to take the board exam. That time the manager that I used to work with in Houston hired me to work at the Tulane Medical Center here in New Orleans as a pharmacist. That's how my life started here.

The three people living in New Orleans named, Tekle, Tesfai, and Silvana were the first ones I met before I moved my family to New Orleans. I stayed with Tekle and Tesfai for about a month and a half. At the beginning of my journey in New Orleans, I worked at Tulane Hospital for a year and a half before I started working at the retail outlet, and I was looking for a job as a commercial pharmacist. I worked as a commercial pharmacist in a small-town drugstore. This is the same drug store that hired me, and about a couple of years later, I bought the pharmacy; another year and a half, I bought land across the street from the pharmacy and built my big pharmacy and a supermarket. The present location where our store is at the exact location till 1991. We used to call it Piggly Wiggly. We recently called out the supermarket Teweledé's Market, used the Eritrean flag emblem for our logo, and added an anchor sign in the middle.



Tewelde's
FAMILY MARKET



Taddesse Tewelde

We worked at this store so hard and went through so many ups and downs because of the nature of the weather in this area. We've been hit with so many hurricanes, but then we keep rebuilding; that's how our life is established. We have five children and six grandchildren; our last grandchild came about three days ago; that's Akila's son—my youngest. So, we are very much blessed in everything. I believe that family comes first. So, we have family values and thank God we did very well in business.

On Eritrean Communities:

The Eritrean communities in the 80s started in the early 1970s when Eritreans for Liberation in North America (EFLNA), commonly known in its Tigrinya acronym ENASA, recruited all Eritreans. Dr. Andebrhan led the organization then, and Mengsteab and Abraham Mao were the recruiters. They traveled from city to city, letting Eritreans know about the organization. In 1972, my wife became a member of the ENASA, and we stayed active until 1977. I believe it was in the year 1977 the NSA was dissolved. I think in 1980 or 1981, it was revived again as a community organization, and since then, my wife and I have been very active in the communities and national activities. I am still involved in New Orleans, LA's Eritrean Community, and the chapters.



Flavors of New Orleans, LA.



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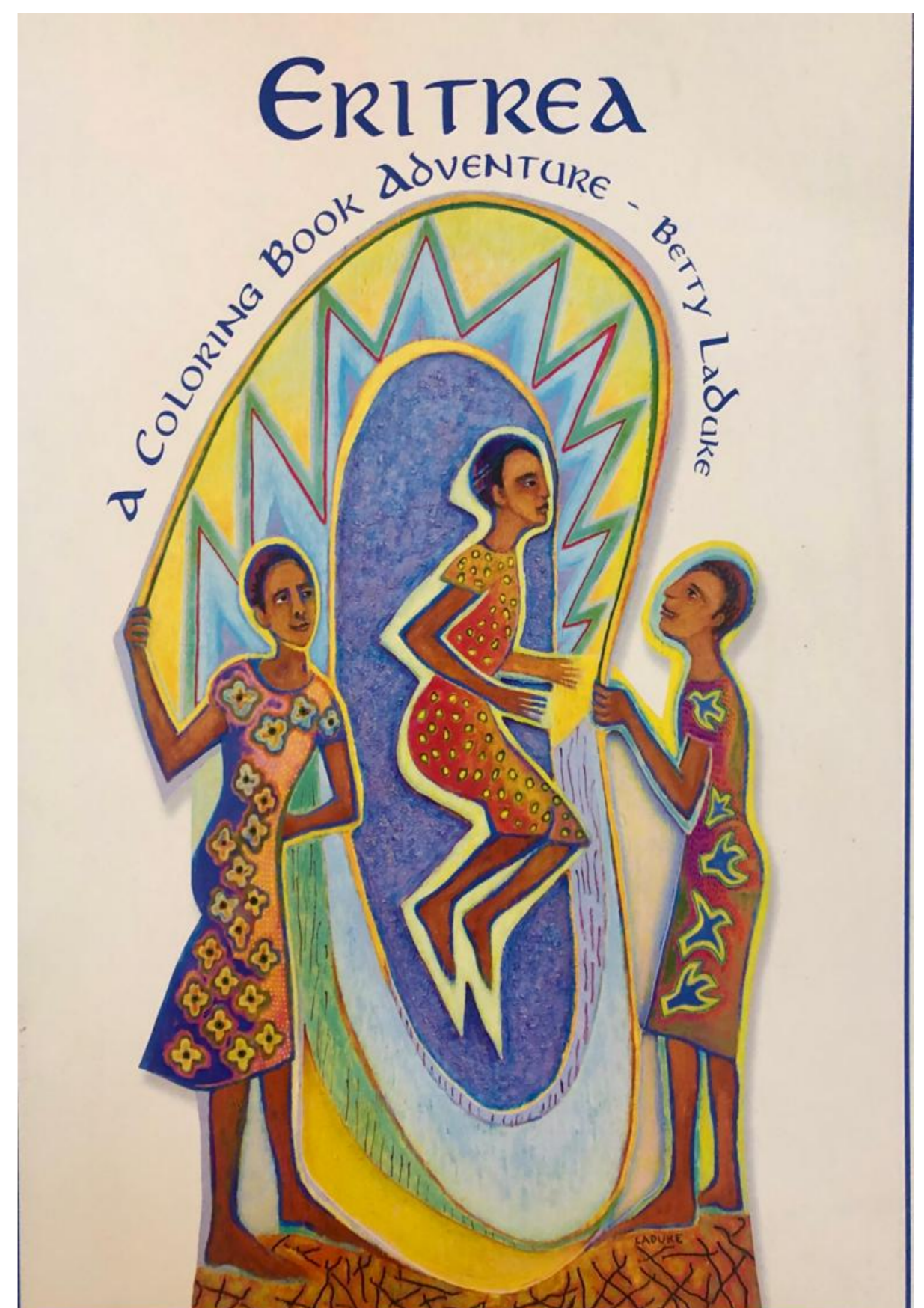
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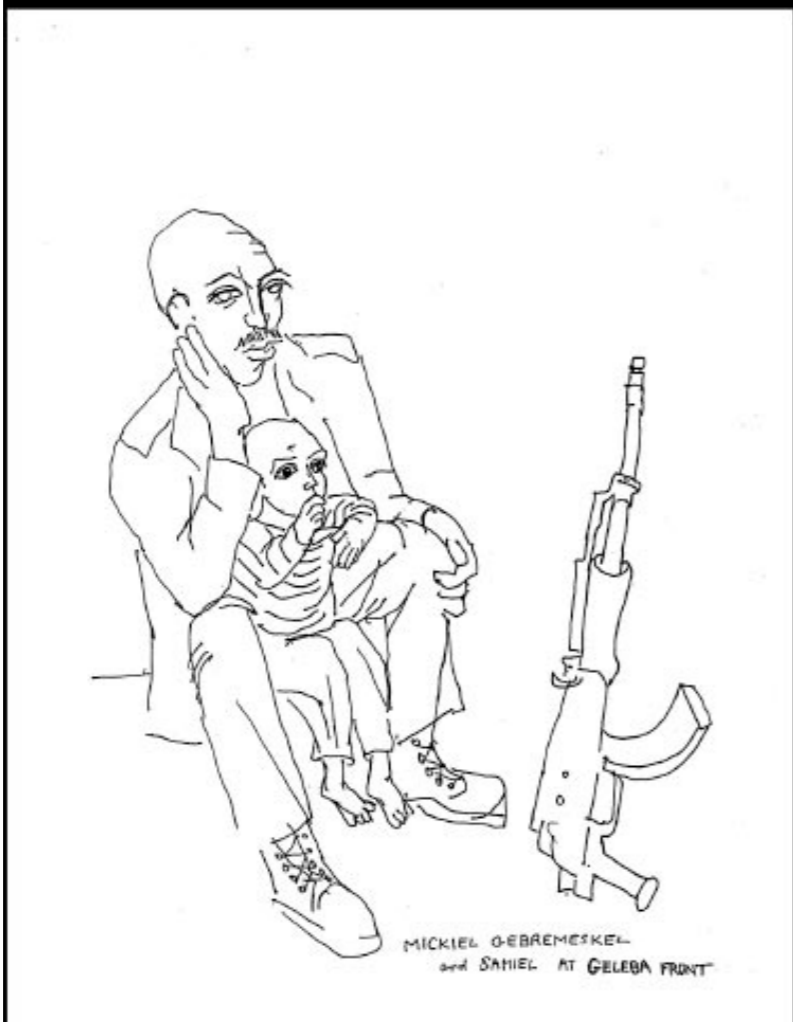
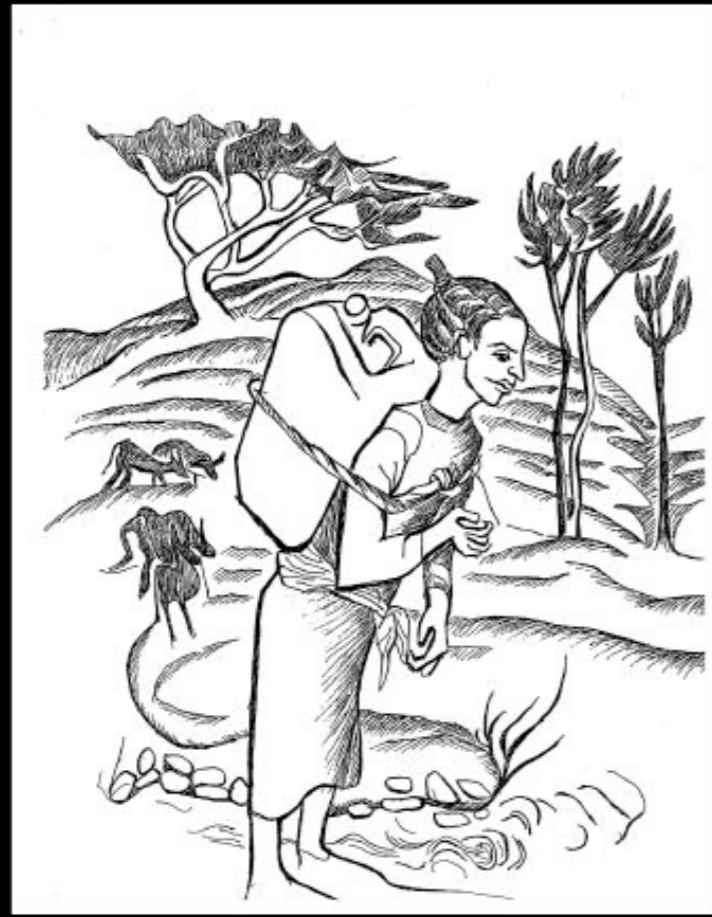
Professor Betty La Duke will publish *Eritrea: A Coloring Book Adventure* soon. As a reminder, Prof. Betty La Duke, a world-renowned artist-scholar and professor of art emeritus at Southern Oregon University, donated her Eritrea-related paintings, sketches, and wood panels to the people and government of Eritrea at the end of 2016. The paintings, as mentioned above, were exhibited in over 25 cities and university museums in the United States before Prof. La Duke donated them to Eritrea, their permanent home. The exhibition's sponsor was the Commission of Culture and Sports of Eritrea, and Asmara Palace Hotel was the venue for the first exhibition. Prof. La Duke's artwork includes 23 paintings on canvas, three wood panels, and 18 sketches in various parts of Eritrea.

Prof. La Duke is the mother of Winona La Duke: renowned American environmentalist, author, political activist, and US vice presidential candidate with Ralph Nader.

The Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art added the Betty La Duke Eritrea Photographic collection.

Check out the announcement on their entry blog at:





Eritrea
War Zone Sketches 2000



Eritrea: Harvest Rhythms

1998

Acrylic 54 X 50



Eritrea: Harvest Dreams

1998

Acrylic 54 x 50



Eritrea: Shepherd

1996

Acrylic 54 x 50



Eritrea: Water Carrier

1996

Acrylic 54 x 50



Eritrea: Tree of Life 1998
Acrylic 68 X 54



Eritrea: Tree of Life 2009
Wood Panel 82 X 44



Betty LaDuke's work celebrates cultural diversity and the planet we live on. It serves as a bridge between people, continents, and cultures by sharpening our sensitivity to life's diversity.

John Olbrantz, Director
Hallie Ford Art Museum, Salem,
Oregon

Eritrea
Women Celebrating
1998

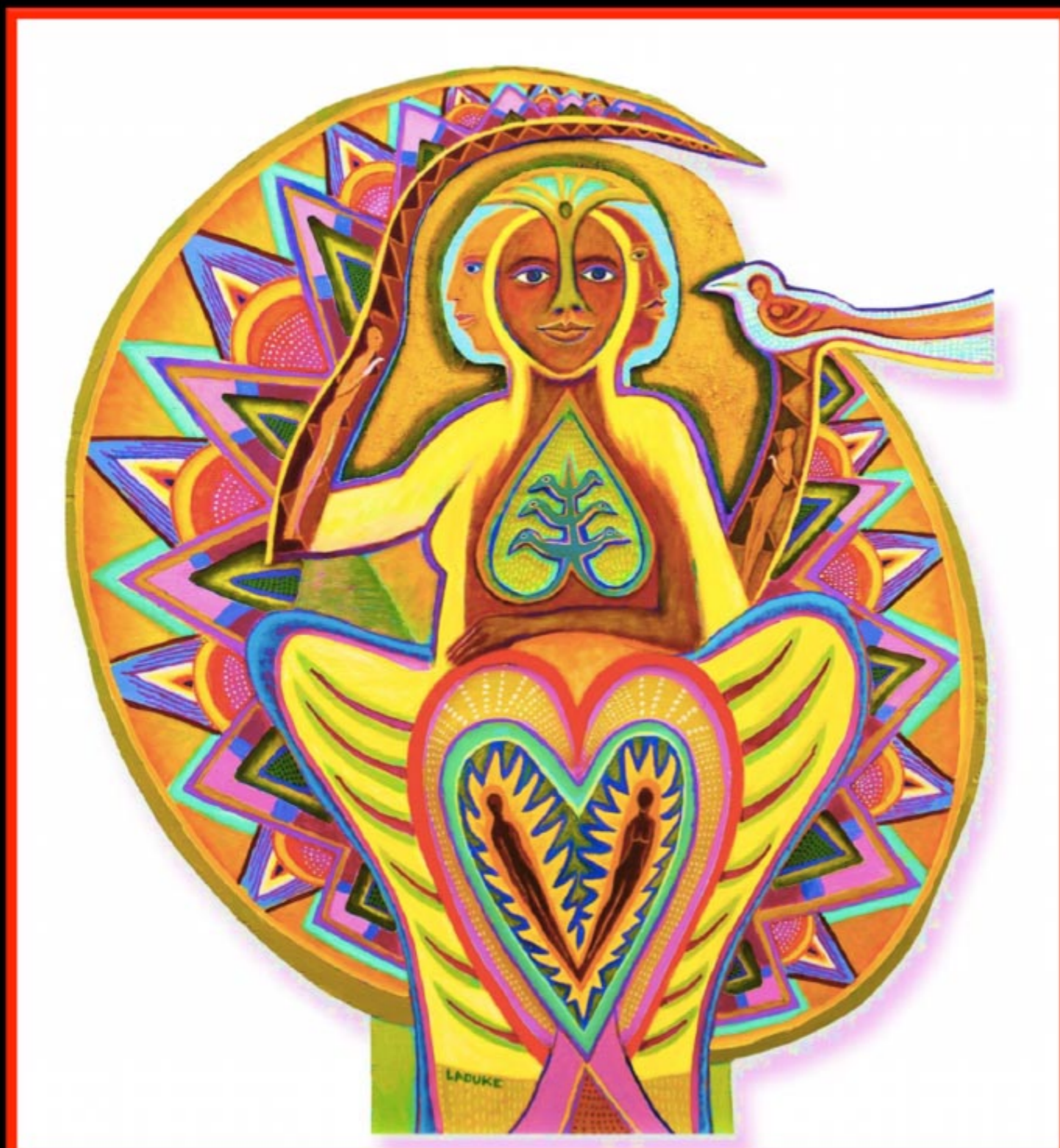
Acrylic 54 x 68

Eritrea unexpectedly captured my heart when I first arrived in 1994 to interview artists and make sketches for a book project.



Eritrea
Basket Weavers
1998
Acrylic 44 x 32

Peace



From Endless
Conflicts and Wars
Our Longing for
Peaceful Solutions

Eritrea
Dreaming Peace
2009

Wood Panel 48 x 44



Donated to the United Nations
Development Fund for Women in
2000

The Secretary-General

My wife and I would like to thank you
very much for sending us the stunning
print of your beautiful painting, *Eritrea-
Ethiopia: Grandmothers Dreaming
Peace*.

Kofi A. Annan

Your Painting serves as a symbol and a
reminder of our commitment to
women's contribution to peace building
around the world.

Executive Director of UNIFEM

Noeleen Heyzer



Eritrea
Dreaming Home
2001

Acrylic 54 X 50



Eritrea

Sifting Grain
Sharing Dreams
1995

Acrylic 72 X 68



In the market place
awaiting customers the
women vendors
mythically bond with
the chickens they are
selling.

Eritrea
Chickens
1998

Acrylic 54 x 50



