

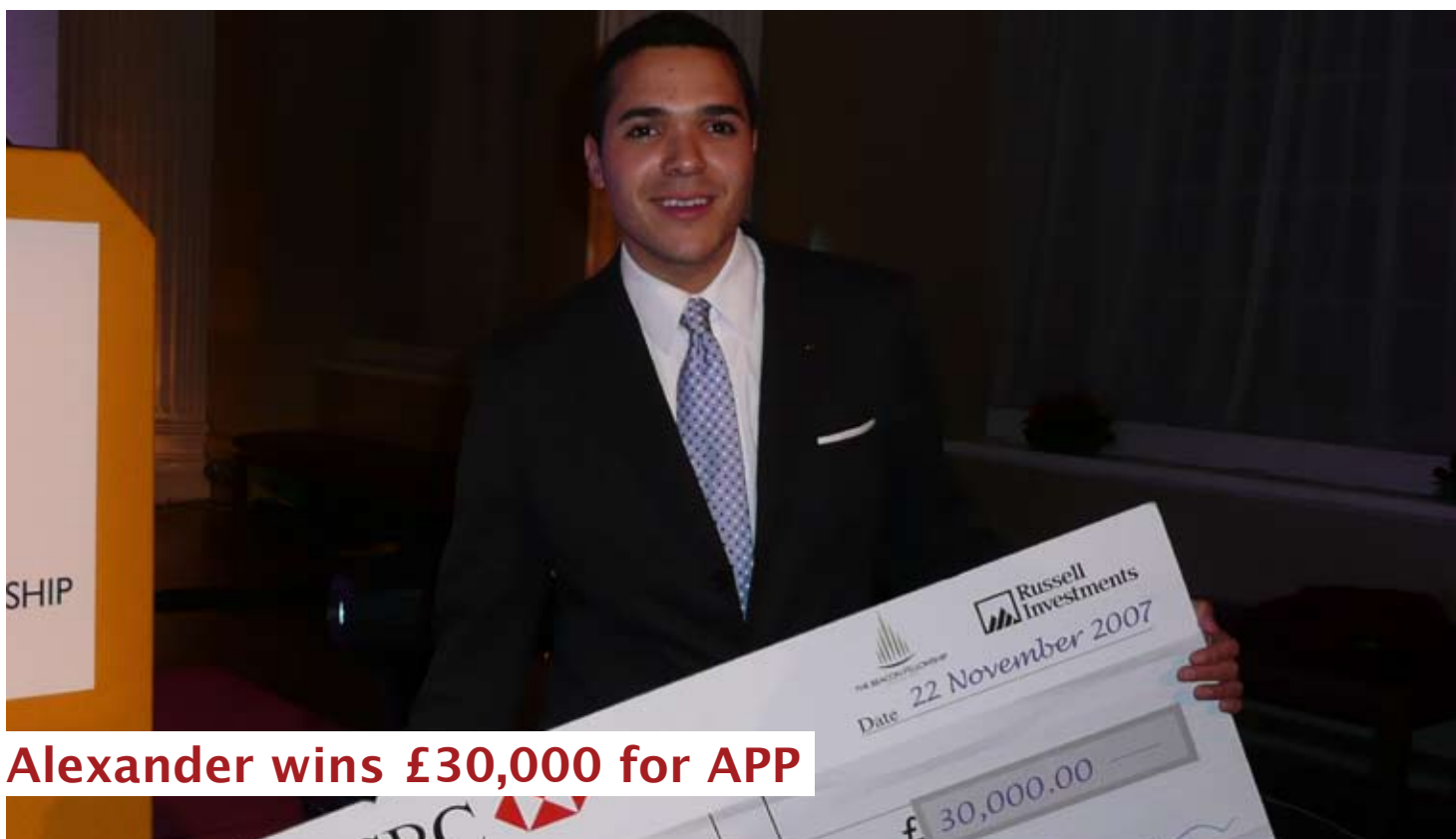


AFRICAN PRISONS PROJECT

LETTER FROM AFRICA



Welcome to issue one of *Letter from Africa*, the newsletter of the African Prisons Project (APP). APP believes that a person should not be denied basic medical and educational facilities simply because he or she has made a mistake. So we're helping to renovate prisons in some of the poorest countries in Africa. To do that, we need your help. We're very grateful for the donations you send, but we still need more. *Letter from Africa* is our way to keep you informed. We hope the newsletter will show how we spend your money, help us spread the APP word, and keep us in your thoughts. Please forward the newsletter to any friends or family that may be interested. In the meantime, enjoy the first issue!



Alexander wins £30,000 for APP

The founder and director of APP has won a prestigious award for philanthropy.

Alexander McLean is the youngest person ever to receive the prize, which recognises individuals who have given time, money or skills to help worthy causes that enrich our communities. In total, 13 winners were made Beacon Fellows at a ceremony held in November 2007 at Whitehall Palace, London. Alexander won the Young Philanthropist prize, and was also presented with the title of Overall Beacon Prize Winner – and £30,000 for the project!

Newsreader and Beacon Chairman Martyn Lewis hosted the ceremony. He said: “Alexander’s achievement is phenomenal. He and his colleagues had to overcome so many hurdles. This is an incredible example of self-sacrifice,

which shows real results in improving the lives of those less fortunate.”

Winning the award took Alexander by surprise. “I hadn’t thought of preparing a speech as I hadn’t thought I could win,” he wrote afterwards on his blog. “I was momentarily lost for words. I garbled something about how much the prize money could help prisoners, but my mind was clouded by the enormity of the cheque we were receiving. Considering how far we can make one or two thousand pounds go, an award of this size will allow us to do magnificent things.”

NEWS...

ALL THE LATEST FROM APP



APP becomes a charity

At the end of 2007, the UK's Charity Commission granted APP charity status and the charity number 1121764.

The Charity Commission is the body that acts as regulator and registrar of all charities operating in the UK. The commission ensures that registered charities operate for the public benefit, and are independent of government and commercial interests.

APP founder Alexander McLean said: "Having charitable status will be a great help for us, and we hope it will mean we enter 2008 ready to make an even bigger difference to lives of prisoners and also that we'll receive more volunteers to get involved with projects on the ground in Africa."

Leaflet and newsletter up and running

The APP presence continues to expand. We've managed to produce a stylish new leaflet filled with all the relevant information about the charity. And we also have a newsletter for the new year, so far put together by a young chap from London. Let us know if you have any more ideas!



Newsflash: books all at sea

At the time of going to press, a container full of books, computers and some medical equipment was about to set sail for our projects in Africa. Thanks for all your donations! Please get in touch if you'd like to donate more of the above items.

FEATURE...

FOR ISSUE ONE, WE'VE TAKEN A LOOK AT A KAMPALA INSTITUTION, TO GIVE YOU A SLICE OF CULTURAL LIFE FROM UGANDA.

Uganda: theatre of dreams

by
Adam Smith

Uganda's capital city Kampala is a rich blend of opportunities. Whether you fancy book trading by the roadside, skirting with death on the roads themselves or observing gigantic birds swooping through the city centre, there's something for everyone. The city's theatre offers an untold array of experiences all by itself.

Uganda's National Theatre sits on the periphery of Kampala's centre, but you can't miss its concrete façade that makes it look like a tall stereo speaker lying on its side. When I was in town in October 2006, I went there to see a comedy of errors. I had actually turned up at the theatre with the purpose of finding out about the live jams hosted by the bar upstairs. The next session was suspended to observe the completion of Ramadan, so I was advised to check out the theatre instead. I went downstairs to the box office and bought myself a ticket for the following night. Thrilled by this spontaneous turn of fortune, I was

tucking the ticket into my pocket when the teller noted, "It's all in Luganda by the way."

"Oh," I said. "Not English."

"No," she replied, unable to contain her mirth at having sold a ticket to a white boy with no hope.

"O...K..."

"But you will enjoy," she giggled. "Go. You will understand. It's very funny. And there are some words in English."

During the performance the following evening, I counted four. My favourite phrase was 'she's going round the bend'. After the Ugandan national anthem, played on a gramophone from colonial times, the play began - and it wasn't long before unselfconscious audience members began holding mobile phone conversations at full volume. However, the players did not mind and they delivered a standout performance. I am quite unsure of the plot, but it involved political Machiavellian ambitions, family spats and, mysteriously, an absurd butch male actor sporting an army cap and a slim leopard skin-print frock.

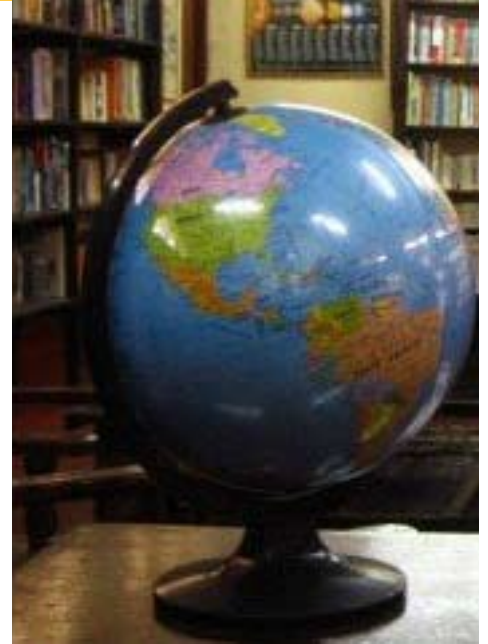
APP's Alexander McLean also enjoys a trip to the National when he's in Kampala. In fact, he even takes APP visitors there. "It's a slightly ramshackle building," he says affectionately. "Usually 15 or 20 people turn up to watch a performance and about 50% of the time the

...THANKS FOR READING!

power goes off in the middle of the show.”

Alexander recalls how, on his recent outing, he took along a Ugandan friend and a visiting Press Association journalist to an unexpected sell-out performance of a parody version of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. A British doctor had adapted the story to satirise the Ugandan government's topical (mis)management of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Conference. Outrageous wigs played a large part in the hilarious performance. “The journalist walked out at half time,” remembers Alexander. “But my Ugandan friend thought it was fantastic.”

Kampala's theatre is undeniably escapist. But it seems perfectly reasonable that a city polarised by poverty and wealth would choose to express itself with theatre – especially if it's absurd.



We hope you enjoyed the newsletter. Why not forward it onto friends and family who might be interested in finding out more? And please get in touch if you have any suggestions. Email the editor, Adam Smith, at: admin@africanprisons.com

And please remember we still need your donations. Please give what you can so we can continue to help improve the lives of prisoners in Africa.

AFRICAN PRISONS PROJECT

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