ICWA LETTERS

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By Andrew Rice

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening.

You know, Ugandans are crazy about greetings and salutations. A friend of mine once told me a story. He bought his father who lived in a rural village a cell phone. There's hardly a square foot of Africa that's not covered by one cell phone network or another these days, and Africans, being big talkers, have embraced the technology wholeheartedly.

Anyway, after a few months, my friend went back to the village to visit his *mzee*, as respectful young Ugandans call their elders, and found that he had given the phone away. "The thing was useless," the *mzee* told my friend. He had tried using it to call his friends, but their traditional greetings went on so long…

"Hello"

"Hello"

"How is the day?"

"We are surviving, somehow."

… and so forth …

…that they never had time to get to their point before the damn phone ran out of minutes.

So, I'm not going to put you through the kind of elaborate introduction a true Ugandan homecoming speech would entail. I notice that you neglected to buy a goat to slaughter in my honor, anyway—a grievous oversight the spirits of my ancestors are unlikely to overlook, Peter.

Let me just say, though, that I am happy to be home, to be standing before you all tonight, and to have the chance to tell you about Uganda, a country that is at once terrible and beautiful, cruel and kindhearted, calcified and wondrously, bumptiously alive.

It is a country that, for two decades, most of the world had given up on: A place of coups, buffoonish dictators, unspeakable sadism, famine, disease. It was among the world's worst in every category in which a country would want to excel—income, infant mortality, life expectancy. It was the first place in the world to experience the full force of the AIDS epidemic. It was, in short, a basket case.

Foreign correspondents ransacked their thesauruses for words dismal enough

to describe the depths of the country's misery.

Journalist David Lamb wrote in his 1982 book, *The Africans*: "Uganda no longer exists today as a viable nation. It has disintegrated into a cluster of tribal states. Its cities have become frontier towns, terrorized by bandits who will kill for a Seiko watch. Its government is a collection of outcasts and misfits serving only themselves. Most of the bright young Ugandans who came home after [Idi] Amin's overthrow already have returned to exile. There is nothing left to rebuild. The economy, the governmental infrastructure, the spirit of reconciliation had all been destroyed. The Ugandans have committed national suicide."

Knowing the Uganda of today, it is hard for me to comprehend how these words could ever have been true. The Uganda I know is a place of boisterous people, of a booming economy, of boundless promise. In the time I lived in Kampala, skyscrapers have popped up, and western-style movie theaters have opened. There is a fancy new shopping mall, which possesses Uganda's first escalator. There is always a cluster of nervous Ugandans standing at the foot of the strange moving staircase, gingerly lifting their feet to climb aboard—reluctant, but nevertheless trusting that the curious contraption will convey them safely upward.

Living in Kampala, in this world of relative affluence and comfort, of eternal 80-degree days, it would be easy to think that Uganda, too, is destined to ascend forever. President Yoweri Museveni, a former rebel leader who took power in 1986, certainly encourages this view. Under Museveni's leadership, Uganda's economy has grown at one of the fastest clips in the world. For the most part, the country is at peace—though a long-running, low-intensity civil war, which I will address later, continues to bedevil the country's north. Tribes that once warred with one another have reconciled—or at the very least, they have agreed to disagree peacefully. The vicious cycle of an eye for an eye, a coup for a coup has been broken. The birth rate is booming: More than half the population is under the age of 18. This younger generation, the Museveni generation, has never known war or tyranny, or the experience of having men with guns come to your village at night, to rape the women, kill the men, pillage the fields, and burn down everyone's huts. Little wonder, then, that in the last presidential election, Museveni's campaign slogan was "No Change." If you'd lived in Uganda through those days of the 1970s and 1980s, you'd probably want to keep everything just the way it is, too.

So why is it, I wonder, that so many Ugandans today seem unhappy? And why is it that the people who seem most discontented are the affluent, the educated, the cosmopolitan elite—the very people who have most benefited from Uganda's peace?

Many evenings during my time in Uganda, I'd walk down the dirt road outside my house for an evening drink at the local watering hole, the Kasambya Pub. I had a group of Ugandan friends there, all young professionals—the vanguard of the Museveni generation. They were just old enough to remember the days of war, and yet they were forever complaining about the government that had given them peace. They railed against their leaders' corruption and incompetence. They ascribed the darkest, most Machiavellian motives to any Museveni initiative. Like many Ugandans, they were forever predicting that the country was about to collapse into civil war, and always seemed a tad disappointed when it failed to implode according to their predictions.

Many's the time, after a few tall bottles of Nile Special Lager, that one of my Ugandan friends would boozily declare: "Museveni is worse than Amin!"

Of course, this was absurd. As Museveni's supporters are fond of pointing out, anyone saying such nasty things in Amin's day would have been whisked off by men in dark sunglasses to be killed and fed to the crocodiles in Lake Victoria. My friends are too young to remember Amin, so they don't really know how bad it was. The history of Amin's regime is rarely taught in Ugandan schools, in part because Museveni's government is reluctant to stir up latent tribal resentments, so young people don't hear how good-hearted people disappeared, for any reason, or no reason at all.

Sitting in the audience tonight is Duncan Muhumuza, whose father was one of the thousands of people who disappeared under Amin. Those of you who have been reading my newsletters no doubt know the story by now: In September 1972, soldiers kidnapped a local chief named Eliphaz Laki from his office, forcing him to drive away in his prized Volkswagen Beetle. He was never seen again. Thirty years later, Duncan discovered a clue which led him to two men who confessed to killing his father. Those two men, plus the general who allegedly ordered the killing, were arrested and put on trial. I became fascinated with the story of Eliphaz Laki because I thought it offered a fascinating window on Uganda's history. Equally interesting, however, was what it told me about Uganda's present-day politics: The trial was, in every sense, a fluke. For the most part, the people accused to taking part in the killings of the 1970s and 1980s have gone unpunished under Museveni's regime.

Uganda's government has decided that seeking justice is less important than keeping the fragile peace among the country's once-warring tribes. The past isn't talked about much. Misinformation is rife. Ugandans today are apt to hear—as a friend of mine recently recounted one evening at Kasambya Pub—how Idi Amin once insisted on meeting with a British diplomat in thatch-roofed hut, which was specially designed to make the white man kneel as he entered it. Or they'll hear the stories about how Amin kicked out some 40,000 Ugandans of Indian descent, confiscating their property in the name of creating "black millionaires." But when it comes

to the 100,000 to 300,000 Ugandans Amin is accused of murdering, rationalization or outright denial is common.

Last August, when the long-exiled Amin was on his deathbed in a Saudi Arabian hospital, one young Ugandan acquaintance of mine told me he didn't blame the dictator too much for the bloodshed: "It's just the nature of African governments: torture and killing," he said. After Amin died, thousands of Muslims from all over the country gathered at their mosques to say traditional prayers of mourning, and to remember him as a "great man", as one newspaper obituary put it. One eulogist said: "We apologize to all those on whose toes Amin stepped." That's how many Ugandans see Amin's crimes—as toe-stepping, minor acts of inconsideration.

My Ugandan friends have heard, too, that things got even worse after Amin was overthrown in 1979. A liberating army from Tanzania, which had finally gotten fed up with Amin's antics, invaded. Amin's rotten regime quickly crumbled, and after a tumultuous year that featured three presidents and two coups, the Tanzanians reinstalled Uganda's first post-independence leader, Milton Obote. Obote had once been a talented leader, but years of exile had shrunken his heart, and nights of whiskey-drinking had muddled his mind. His regime proved to be even more bloodthirsty than Amin's. When a losing candidate in the rigged presidential elections of 1980 named Yoweri Museveni launched a civil war against the government, Obote's army, which was mostly made up of his northern tribal kinsmen, launched a campaign of brutal reprisals against civilians in the south, where Museveni was operating. An estimated 300,000 civilians were killed in an area known as the Luwero Triangle during the 1980s—most, though not all, massacred by their own government. After the war, in the 1980s, the skulls of the victims were stacked along the side of the road through Luwero, as a macabre reminder of the inhumanity that came before Museveni.

But those skulls were buried a long time ago now. Like them, the history of Uganda's tribulations has mostly been interred, consigned to a history no one has much desire to commemorate or remember. Occasionally, when it suits his purposes, Museveni will raise the specter of the 1970s and 1980s—if he does not remain in power, he says, it could all happen again. But for the most part, the president has encouraged people forget the past. The government does not even commemorate the anniversary of Amin's overthrow.

Museveni would rather that Ugandans focus on the present, the Uganda of today, the Uganda I experienced. The Uganda that western visitors lavish with praise. It is, they say, that rare thing: An African success story. One typical visitor was the editor of the *Times* of London, who traveled to Uganda a year or so ago, enjoyed an audience with the president, and produced a long profile in which he called Museveni "a blend physically and philosophically of Nelson Mandela and the late Deng Xiaoping," and anointed him, and I quote, "the model leader for the rest of a blighted continent." President Bill Clinton visited Uganda in 1998, and hailed Museveni as a leader of what he described as an "African renaissance."

There is a lot of truth in this portrayal. It is true that most of the country is no longer at war. It is true that, under Museveni, the country has been at the forefront of fighting the AIDS epidemic, and that the prevalence of HIV in Uganda has fallen sharply, though how much the rate has really decreased, and why, are still matters of debate. It is true that in Kampala you can buy a decent sandwich, that you can drink and dance late into the night, that you can howl and moan about the government to your heart's content, that you can read a reflexively anti-Museveni newspaper called *The Monitor*.

However, take a walk around the city center of Kampala, and you'll find that the superficial prosperity of the capital mingles with shantytown poverty. Drive a little outside town, and you reach a countryside of banana farms and thatch-roofed huts, where people live on $2 a day. For all Museveni's efforts, Uganda today is still frightfully poor— this is a country where a farmer's eyes would light up if I brought a gift of a loaf of bread and or a pound of sugar when I came to his hut to talk.

The rate of HIV prevalence has gone down—but this is a country where everyone I know is constantly attending funerals, often for men and women in the prime of their lives, people prominent in business, academia or government service. The stigma still surrounding AIDS is such that people speak in euphemisms about the disease. Obituary writers bend to find a sufficiently innocuous cause of death—my all time favorite of these circumlocutions occurred recently when Uganda's foreign minister died, according to the government owned newspaper, of, quote, "breathing difficulties." Epidemiologists often talk about "the Ugandan miracle" when they discuss the country's success, but I know several people who are HIV positive—again, all affluent young professionals—and from what I know from talking with my male friends, and judging from the number of them who have fathered illegitimate children, it seems safe to say that Ugandan vigilance when it comes to using condoms is waning, at the very least.

Uganda is more democratic than it once was. But it's still far from free—something that many western visitors, swept up by the charm of Museveni, and by the superficial boom of Kampala, prefer not to admit, or at least not to dwell upon.

Museveni promised so much when he took over Uganda, and he delivered on some of it: He called on people to forgive and forget, and for the most part they have followed his lead. He coaxed and bribed rebel groups into laying down their arms. He instituted a system of local councils, which run all the way down to the smallest village, which are an ex-

ample democracy in its purest at least in theory.

(Actually, I should stipulate that the phrase "at least in theory" needs to be attached to everything I say in this speech, since in practice, Uganda's government tends to be as wildly inconsistent as the society itself—as I once wrote in an article about driving, Ugandans love legalities, but they ignore their laws.)

Under Museveni, there have been two presidential elections that, while not exactly models of Jeffersonian virtue, were at least not entirely rigged. Uganda's president has many fine qualities: He is an intelligent man, a canny political tactician, a strong military leader, a charming interlocutor, and enlightened on many issues of public policy. If any of you have ever had the opportunity to hear him speak, you know that he can also be an eloquent and downright hilarious orator.

But Museveni can also be thuggish when circumstances demand it—particularly when he feels his position in power is threatened. In the last election, when a member of his inner circle defected to the opposition to run against him, Museveni's ruling Movement party unleashed paramilitary gangs on the countryside. Opposition activists were subjected to harassment, intimidation and worse. Human-rights groups decry the existence of a network of "safe houses," where political dissidents are allegedly tortured by the secret police. The government denies the existence of these "safe houses," but everyone knows they exist.

Museveni has never made any secret of his contempt for political opponents. In March 2002, he said in a speech to Uganda's parliament that those in his government are, quote, "people in suits by day and uniform by night."

"Don't play around with freedom fighters," he warned. "You can see Mugabe."

Unlike Robert Mugabe, the onetime international darling who has made Zimbabwe into a pariah state, Museveni still enjoys considerable good will, among world leaders as well as his own people. In part, he benefits from lowered expectations—anyone would have been an improvement over the Ugandan leaders who preceded him. Paradoxically, though, Museveni's government today is a victim of its own success. Ugandans are no longer afraid that their leaders will kill them—so now they are asking for more.

One of the first people I met when I came to Uganda was a man named David Ouma Balikowa, the managing editor of *The Monitor* newspaper. As we ate lunch, he posed the question: "How much longer must we thank him for simply not killing us?"

Given the enthusiasm that previous Ugandan leaders showed for killing their own countrymen, one might argue that some gratitude is in order. But let's play the devil's advocate for a moment, and look at the other side of his record.

Western leaders often point to Museveni as a solid regional statesman. But the reality is, since Museveni took power in 1986, his relations with his neighbors have been uniformly chilly: He has been a major supporter of the SPLA rebels in southern Sudan, of the RPA rebels who took power in Rwanda in 1994, and of various miscreant warlords in the disintegrated nation known as Congo. You can argue that the rebels Museveni supported were less bad than the governments they were fighting—particularly in the case of Rwanda, where the Hutu-led government was organizing villagers to hack apart their Tutsi neighbors—but any way you look at it, he's not exactly been spreading hugs and kisses around the region. And in Congo, Uganda's involvement was almost completely indefensible: A United Nations investigation found that high-ranking army officers, including Museveni's own brother, were getting filthy rich off diamonds, timber, and other resources looted from Congo's bountiful eastern region. Meanwhile, an estimated 3 million Congolese died in the war.

How about Museveni the brilliant military leader? Again, there is less to his reputation than meets the eye. Consider the army's miserable record in putting an end to the war that has ravaged Uganda's north for the past 17 years.

The war grew out of the ethnic politics of the 1980s. After Museveni overthrew the government, the soldiers he had defeated fled back north to their tribal homeland. There, they reorganized themselves into rebel armies. Then, through a complicated chain of events, these former soldiers came under the spell of a youthful local witchdoctor named Alice Lakwena. Lakwena, channeling spirits, told her fighters that if they joined her movement they would be impervious to bullets, and that the rocks they tossed at their enemies would be transformed into hand grenades.

Needless to say, this was not a viable long-term military strategy.

Lakwena did win a few miraculous victories. But the Ugandan army did eventually rout the rebels, and Lakwena fled to exile in Kenya, where she still lives.

Eventually though, a young follower of Lakwena named Joseph Kony came along to pick up her mantle. Under Kony, the rebels, which are now known as the Lord's Resistance Army, or LRA, have long since stopped fighting against government troops. Instead, they attack civilians—their own tribesmen—killing the adults, and kidnapping the children. The boys are given guns and are forced to fight. The girls are made into concubines and divvied up among LRA leaders.

Museveni, who is first and foremost a military man,

is forever promising to kill Kony, boasting that he will wipe out the rebels by the end of the next dry season. But the war continues. Since the government launched a major offensive in 2002, it has even gotten worse. In the last year and a half, Kony has kidnapped around 10,000 children, according to UNICEF, which is roughly the same amount he abducted during the entirety of his rebellion prior to the offensive.

Why can't Museveni, the self-declared liberator of Africa, put an end to this war of enslavement? Many politicians from the north, who due to old ethnic rivalries are predisposed to think the worst about Museveni, say that the president is deliberately trying to prolong the war, since it keeps their people imperiled and impoverished. I find this hard to believe. Museveni is nothing if not a proud man, and the fact that a ragtag apocalyptic cult has proven so resilient against his army is a source of humiliation to him. What seems apparent, though, is that the complacency, corruption and malaise that afflicts the rest of Museveni's government has seeped into the war effort as well. Recently it was discovered—I should emphasize "discovered"—that thousands of soldiers, perhaps a third of the army by some estimates, simply didn't exist. Army paymasters invented the "ghost" soldiers in order to collect their paychecks.

Under Museveni, high-ranking army officers drive around in late-model Mercedes and SUVs. They have amassed huge herds of cattle. They have constructed mansions fit for drug lords atop Kampala's hills. The former army commander is currently building a gigantic luxury hotel in his home village.

Meanwhile, a friend of mine who recently returned the front lines of the civil war, an area in the far north that few non-combatants ever dare to visit, told me that she saw government soldiers wearing rags, trudging around in flip-flops. Little wonder then that they don't put up much of a fight.

Museveni claims that he has all but won the war against the LRA—after all, he recently pointed out, Kony doesn't even control a single village. But, as one fine military strategist once observed, and I quote, "In revolutionary warfare, the mere fact of an insurgent surviving and not being eliminated is in itself a success." The strategist from whom I am quoting, I should say, is Yoweri Museveni, who wrote these words about his own guerilla struggle. By his own definition, then, Uganda's president is losing the war.

So what will Museveni's legacy be? Will he be remembered as the father of democracy in Uganda, or as a benevolent dictator—or, in the worst case scenario, as one more dictator who started off benevolent, but went bad? Will he be remembered as the man who saved Uganda, or as the man who lulled it into thinking everything was fixed? Will he be Uganda's Nelson Mandela, or its Robert Mugabe?

I believe that the answer to these questions will become apparent very, very soon. Uganda has reached a crucial crossroads, a historical moment in which Museveni's commitment to democracy will be tested, and his tolerance of dissent sorely tried. For most of my time in Uganda, one issue has dominated the political discussion. And that issue is the future of Museveni himself.

In 1995, nine years after Museveni took power, an elected assembly produced a new constitution for Uganda. Under this constitution, the president is to be limited to two five year terms in office. The following year, Museveni won election, and in 2001, he won a second term. The president was born into a nomadic cattle-keeping tribe, and he is not sure of his exact birthday. But he is about 60 years old, and according to the constitution, he should be preparing to retire to his ranch in western Uganda, to look after his beloved cows.

His cows may stay lonely a while longer, though. The calls for a constitutional amendment to allow Museveni to run for a third term began shortly after I arrived in Uganda. They grew in volume the entire time I was there. It is clear by now that the calls are being orchestrated by the president himself, or by people very close to him. He has systematically purged from his administration several prominent ministers who spoke critically of the third term. In recent months, supposedly spontaneous rallies have popped up all over the country, where people draped with dried banana leaves, a sign of third-term support, sing songs in praise of the president and beg him not to deprive the country of his wisdom. Meanwhile, political groups opposed to the third-term effort have seen their peaceful meetings broken up by policemen or gangs of thugs recruited from the local bus parks.

Museveni's supporters claim that the push to revise the constitution is simply about democracy. It's the people's right to determine who leads them, right? So why narrow the public's choices by eliminating the most popular, most experienced, best-qualified candidate? Museveni's opponents, whose ranks are now swelling with people who served in his rebel army, who supported his government, who used to call him *mzee*, say that the whole exercise is just a bald attempt to hold onto power.

People who have known Museveni for years have noticed a change about the man. Recently, I went to visit Augustine Ruzindana, a member of parliament who is a leader of the resistance against Museveni's third term effort. Ruzindana is a man of great personal courage: In the days when Museveni was fighting against Amin, Ruzindana used to infiltrate Uganda to recruit young men to join the rebels. Later, when Museveni finally came to power, Ruzindana served as Uganda's first Inspector General of Government, an office created to fight corruption. He has known Museveni since they were both schoolboys.

Ruzindana told me, and I quote: "His world outlook has changed. There is no doubt that his style of life has

changed. He was an ascetic person, very highly disciplined …. Now all these things have changed. He likes pomp. I think he likes power for the sake of it. He likes luxury now. He likes money. … I think that now its not that he dislikes people who disagree with him—he actually *hates* them."

I have heard the same points made by so many other Ugandans. The government's corruption is particularly grating. Of course, Uganda is not unique on this count—sadly, greedy governments are the norm in Africa. But Museveni promised to be something different. When he came into power, he cultivated an upright image. When his troops took Kampala, he warned looting soldiers that they would be shot; in the early years, he and his lieutenants were renowned for their relatively austere lifestyles. This no longer holds true. One old comrade from the war years, now the health minister, has built a house in his home village as luxurious as a five-star hotel. Another, now the environment minister, was recently busted for importing a load of illegal timber from Congo. The president's brother, Lieutenant General Salim Saleh, who plays a role in Ugandan politics that combines aspects of RFK, Billy Carter, Bob Marley, and Robin Hood, keeps getting caught with his hand in the cookie jar. Occasionally, a hand gets slapped, but that's all.

It seems clear that what matters to Museveni is not financial honesty, but personal loyalty. One friend of mine, an old college chum of the president's, told me that he had repeatedly turned down entreaties to serve as a government minister. "I can't get into politics. I'm a businessman," my friend told Museveni. "That's ok," he told me the president replied. "In my government, you can be both."

Though there are plenty of rumors, Museveni himself has never been conclusively linked to any large-scale corruption. But, like many leaders who have stayed in power too long, he has shown a growing disregard for perceptions, while simultaneously—and not coincidentally—displaying an extreme concern about his security.

The president's increasingly clumsy political touch was dramatized most dramatically by a recent scandal. The Ugandan newspapers found out that he had dispatched his daughter to Germany aboard the presidential jet in order to give birth. The trip cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. The newspapers pointed out that Kampala has plenty of private hospitals perfectly suited to bringing a presidential grandkid into the world.

Museveni, instead of apologizing, penned a rambling letter to the editor of *The Monitor*, in which, among other things, he revealed that he refuses to be examined by Ugandan doctors, for fear that they might try to poison him. After the letter appeared, the leader of an opposition party wrote his own newspaper reply, which was headlined, "Uganda Has No Facilities To Treat This Paranoia."

Other recent incidents indicate that far from being out of the ordinary, the airplane scandal is in fact an indication of how isolated the president has become, surrounded by his cocoon of loyal yes-men. The degree to which the president seems out of touch with public opinion—or at least elite Kampala opinion—was dramatized in a recent satirical play. At the end of the production, the playwright, who was also the lead actor, carted out a series of three paper-mache busts of Museveni, intended to depict how the president had changed over time. One bust had two ears. The middle one was missing one ear. And the third bust had no ears at all.

But if the president is not hearing the people, are the people hearing *him*? Since the vast majority of the Ugandan population still lives in rural areas, it is impossible to gauge how popular Museveni's third-term initiative really is. What is certain, though, is that most people within the ranks of the country's educated elite, and even within his own government, are opposed. Every time a government minister dies, which in the age of AIDS happens fairly frequently, we discover that he was privately opposed to the third term. The most recent example of these posthumous "now you tell us" moments came just a few weeks ago, when the attorney general was killed in a car accident. It came out subsequently that in an off-the-record conversation a few days before with a prominent Ugandan journalist, the attorney general had expressed doubts about the way the president was going about his efforts to hang onto power. Reportedly, he told the journalist he had said as much to the president, but had been brushed aside.

Ugandans love conspiracy theories, and after the car accident, rumors abounded about who *really* did the attorney general in. I'm inclined, however, to believe the simplest explanation, which was that it's a bad idea to drive at breakneck speed down a deserted, potholed highway at night. Later, the Ugandan papers would note that before the accident, the attorney general appeared at an awards ceremony at which he spoke for, and I quote, "an unusually long time." Having heard my fair share of Ugandan politicians speak, I shudder to think about what the papers meant by "unusually."

A cautionary tale for any public speaker. So let me shift from telling you about Uganda's past and present, to making a few predictions about the future.

I think that by now, President Museveni's intentions are fairly clear. He plans to stay in power as long as he can, and to do so, and he is not going to let niggling details like his own country's constitution stand in his way. The question now, for Ugandans, is how to respond. When I talk to opposition leaders, I'm struck by their passivity. Most often, they ask me what *America* is going to do—will we cut off foreign aid, impose sanctions maybe

even… hope, hope … *invade*, the way we did in Iraq?

The truth is, the First World's potential to influence Uganda is fairly limited, especially when the question is Museveni's very political survival. As the case of Robert Mugabe proves, the rich nations of the world can only do so much to show another country's leader the door. There has to be pressure from within. And I see precious little of that in Uganda today.

On so many occasions, I have heard Ugandans argue eloquently about the necessity for change. Then I have asked them whether they would be willing to protest for it, to take to the streets.

"What?" they reply, looking at me incredulously. "And get shot?"

It's true, Museveni has never made any secret of his contempt for peaceful protest—opponents of the government complain that the only way to get his attention is to start a rebel army. But there is something else at work, a distressing sense among many people that Uganda's future is not in their own hands. It is up to the donor countries to intervene, up to America, up to the United Nations.

It's not hard to see how Ugandans might have gotten this impression, seeing as half their government's budget comes from other countries in the form of foreign aid. But the truth is, the question of leadership is one that only Ugandans can sort out. I know so many people in Uganda who think that their country is slipping toward the abyss, but who aren't willing to risk their good jobs or their comfortable houses or their kids' private school tuition in a quixotic fight. If there is ever to be a peaceful transition of power in Uganda, though, it is these people who will have to bring it about, through words and by action.

So, that is where I will end. There is still so much more to say. Uganda has baffled me, has infuriated me, has filled me with the greatest wonder, and has made me grope for strange new adjectives. Sometimes, I feel like I understand the place less today than I did when I departed America two years ago.

But then again, that's how it is with any subject of inquiry, isn't it? We reduce elements to molecules, molecules to atoms, atoms to protons and neutrons and quarks, and yet we never get to the bottom, to the stuff life is made of. But just because answers are elusive doesn't mean the questions aren't worth asking.

You know, when I first arrived in Uganda, I thought Yoweri Museveni might be the answer to Africa's problems. After I'd spent a year there, I thought he might *be* Africa's problem. But lately, I've felt my heart softening towards the man. I think he means well. I think he wants to lead his country as best he can. I think he does have a vision for Uganda's future. It's just that there's so much to do, and so little time.

Augustine Ruzindana, Museveni's old comrade and present-day political opponent, made an observation that I thought profound. He said he didn't think Museveni's desire to hang on as president was about a lust for power, or at least solely about a lust for power. He thought it was about legacy and mortality, about his old friend's fear that he had left too much unfinished. Like all of us, Museveni feels the weight of time bearing down on him.

I can relate to the feeling a bit. A couple of days ago, I got on a plane, happy at what I'd accomplished, but at the same time tinged with the regret of unfinished plans. "If only I'd had another year," I thought. But in ICWA, if not Uganda, there are no third terms, and so I return to you, older, wiser, and eternally grateful.

Thank you all.

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Institute Fellows are chosen on the basis of character, previous experience and promise. They are young professionals funded to spend a minimum of two years carrying out self-designed programs of study and writing outside the United States. The Fellows are required to report their findings and experiences from the field once a month. They can write on any subject, as formally or informally as they wish. The result is a unique form of reporting, analysis and periodic assessment of international events and issues.