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Sewing Dissension

By Andrew Rice

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KAMPALA, Uganda—Rebecca Bagonza was trained as a social worker, but couldn't find a job anywhere.

Milly Nabula was working as an elementary school teacher, but wanted something better.

Doreen Abalo was living in a refugee camp in the war-torn north of Uganda.

The young women were from disparate parts of the country, but they had a lot in common. They were all in their twenties. They were all unmarried. They all had high-school degrees. And they all recognized that, barring some miracle, the future didn't promise much for them. One of the perversities of Uganda's poverty is that it is felt most keenly by people with some education. A diploma raises expectations, but in a country where 35 percent of the population lives in poverty, where unemployment is rife, and where nepotism and tribalism are key factors in hiring, diplomas don't open many doors. Uganda's cities and towns are full of jobless degree-holders, frustrated and unhappy, too proud to farm, but helpless to do anything with their learning and training.

"I was on the streets looking for a job," Bagonza, now 28, recalled. But she was beginning to lose hope.

Then one day in May 2002, Bagonza's eye caught a headline in the state-run newspaper. It read: "Museveni Gets 1,000 AGOA Jobs for Girls."

The short article beneath the headline described how President Yoweri



Yoweri Museveni, Uganda's president, was once a Marxist rebel. Now he is a free-market evangelist beloved by the Wall Street Journal editorial page. Here, he loads a box of pants onto a truck, part of the first shipment of garments to be shipped from Uganda to America under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. Museveni would later say the moment was Uganda's most momentous since independence. (Photo courtesy of the Presidential Press Unit.)

Museveni had recently announced a program to recruit young women into a job-training program. The jobs would be at a textile factory in Kampala, which the government and a pair of Sri Lankan investors were setting up to take advantage of the African Growth and Opportunity Act, an American free-trade initiative.

Few Americans have ever heard of the law. But in Uganda, "AGOA," as the initiative is commonly called, is a magic word, invoked by politicians and businessmen, diplomats and foreign-aid donors—and most of all by President Museveni. To hear Museveni tell it, AGOA represents "the greatest act of fraternity towards Africa by the USA," the first step toward breaking Africa's debilitating dependence on foreign aid, and the beginning of an economic awakening that will raise the continent from the depths of poverty. Uganda's government predicts that by 2006, AGOA will more than double Uganda's export earnings, to \$1.2 billion.

Many Ugandans, following Museveni's lead, see AGOA as an elixir that will cure their country's poverty and soothe its poisonous politics, transforming Uganda into a contented little kingdom where all tribes labor prosperously among green hills and smokestacks—if not quite Switzerland, then at least, say... Thailand.

In this atmosphere of fevered expectation about the benefits of free trade, the announcement of the opening of the new textile factory, and of the 1,000 jobs, was attended by the kind of excitement another country might reserve for hosting of the Olympics, or firing a rocket into space. Young women from all over Uganda clamored for spots in the job-training program. Parents with pull worked connections to get their daughters in. The newspapers played the story of the "AGOA Girls," as they dubbed the job trainees, as a heartwarming rags-to-riches tale: "Pygmalion" in a textile factory.

"We wanted to rise up from the levels where we were, and become somebody, do something," said Abalo, now 21.

"President Museveni said ... you're going to help your parents," recalled Nabula, now 23. "So I said let me go. Let me get money for my brothers and sisters, to pay school fees for them."

Local government officials fanned out across the country, traveling from town to town to recruit promising young women who fit the program's criteria: candidates had to be 18 years old, to have some high school education, and to be "single and in good health." Competition was tough. Because the government wanted geographical and tribal balance, each district was to send just 19 trainees to Kampala.

Rebecca Bagonza, Milly Nabula and Doreen Abalo all made the cut. In early July 2002, they boarded busses that carried them to Kampala. They mustered at the national soccer stadium with the other recruits. More than

1,600 were there from every corner of Uganda. (The government had enlarged the size of the program because of overwhelming demand.) Many of the young women had never been out of their villages. Their jaws dropped in awe as they entered the vast concrete stadium.

"The girls, tired after traveling long distances from their remote areas, let out a deafening shriek when told that they would be housed, fed, and [medically] treated at the training premises, all costs met by the government," according to a newspaper account of the day. "The girls jumped, sang and danced away in ecstasy, overwhelmed at the sudden turn their lives had taken."

* * *

With the benefit of retrospect, it would be easy to say that things were doomed to go wrong. But no one could have imagined an unhappy ending on that optimistic day in July.

President Museveni hailed the opening of the plant as the fulfillment of his predictions of an AGOA-spurred economic boom. The foreign businessmen running it saw a future filled with profits. "We shall in no time begin exporting to the USA," one of them promised that day at the soccer stadium.

The AGOA Girls felt that they had been chosen to take part in a noble mission, to better themselves and to better Uganda. Museveni called the textile trainees his "daughters." The AGOA Girls reverently referred to him as "His Excellency." They were engorged with the pride of the select: The president *himself* had called them. "Our parents were happy, we ourselves were very happy, because we expected to progress,"





Rebecca Bagonza had a degree in social work, but ended up taking a job at the Tri Star factory. Government recruiters “told us the jobs would be so nice and high-paying,” Bagonza said. “They would develop [us]. So we had such high expectations.” They were to be let down hard.

Bagonza said one Saturday afternoon in October.

Fifteen months later, she saw things differently.

“Right now,” she said, “it is a very big disappointment.”

At that moment, Bagonza, a slight, determined woman wearing a frilly red shirt and a heart-shaped locket, was sitting in a fluorescent-lit cafeteria in Uganda’s Parliament building. She, along with about 300 other AGOA Girls, had marched to Parliament several days before to complain about their treatment at the factory. The protest was the last act in a long drama that began with grumbling about long hours, low pay and nasty managers at the factory, and climaxed with a two-day strike in mid-October that was broken up by riot police. The plant’s managers had fired the ringleaders of the strike, including Bagonza, Nabula and Abalo. Now the dissident AGOA Girls were camped out in a parliamentary lounge, an occupying force grudgingly tolerated by a government that wanted to avoid any further AGOA-related embarrassment.

“We were brought to this place by His Excellency,” Bagonza said. “So we want to know the reason why we were terminated.”

If the strike started off as a garden-variety labor dispute, it quickly evolved into something more. In the days afterward, newspapers and parliamentary committees dug into the textile plant’s finances and discovered the government had invested millions of dollars in the plant. Foreign “investors” hadn’t put up a penny. Dark rumors

circulated of government corruption and loan defaults.

“This is a bottomless pit,” groused a member of Parliament’s Finance Committee.

Fingers pointed in all directions. The Sri Lankan factory owner blamed the AGOA Girls, whom he labeled uppity malcontents. The AGOA Girls blamed the factory owner, who, in treating his workers in a way they saw as callous and patronizing, conformed to Ugandans’ worst stereotypes about businessmen from the Indian subcontinent. President Museveni blamed unnamed agitators—presumably opposition politicians or union organizers—for encouraging the strike, saying, with characteristic hyperbole, that such people were “worse than Kony,” a rebel leader notorious for kidnapping children and hacking off people’s heads. More level-headed observers, including some people in government, said Museveni himself was to

blame for rushing into business with some unproven investors for political reasons.

In truth, plenty of blame could go around. In the end I came to see the story of the AGOA Girls not simply as a labor dispute or a financial scandal, but as a parable about the hazards of high expectations. In a desperate country, a proselytizing president told his people that free markets were the answer to all their problems. They believed him. But the AGOA Girls’ naiveté—and indeed, the expectations of all Ugandans—would not survive an encounter with the cold, hard reality of life in the global marketplace.

* * *

The AGOA Girls got their first look at the Apparels Tri Star textile factory two days after they first massed at the soccer stadium. The factory was on an expansive campus in a suburb of Kampala. It had once been a government-owned coffee market. It had gone derelict after the coffee industry was denationalized in the 1990s. A high-rise building dotted with candy-colored panels—from afar, they looked like the pixels of a TV screen—dominated the property. “Academy of Apparel Technology,” read a large white sign attached to the façade of one of the buildings. “From Town to Village—Help the People Build the Nation.”

Inside, paint in dormitory rooms was still wet. The factory owners had rushed to finish renovations. That day they were staging a grand opening, and President Museveni was to be the guest of honor.

The young women gave the president a rousing wel-

come as his motorcade pulled into the complex. They chanted “No Change,” his campaign slogan during the last election. Museveni, wearing his trademark round tan hat and a garland of flowers, cut a ribbon and pronounced the factory open.

Then he delivered a speech, in which he scornfully criticized government officials who were hampering private entrepreneurship. Investors, he said, were like musical composers. “My job as president is to encourage all composers to come to my country,” he said, according to a newspaper report. “This is just the beginning; [I] am bringing more and more.”

Museveni told the AGOA Girls to work hard—the future of the country was riding on them. He instructed them to learn to use toilets properly, and warned them not to sneak off the factory grounds looking for boys while they were in training. “You are coming here to learn how to make garments using modern machines,” he said. “What I want from you is discipline. Tell your boyfriends ‘I am still busy; let me first qualify, don’t divert me. Let me qualify and we shall have a better life.’”

Next day, the boldface headline on the front page of the state-owned newspaper trumpeted: “No Sex For AGOA Girls.”

It was an entirely typical performance for Uganda’s president, who often seems to view his countrymen—all of them, from the lowest peasant to the highest cabinet member—as a bunch of muddle-headed children. Museveni is Uganda’s chief executive, the commander of its army and its lecturer-in-chief, forever instructing Ugandans about the origins of their “backwardness.” When he is not around, his aides refer to him as *mzee*, a term of respect that evokes a wizened village elder. Many Ugandans venerate him as a father figure. So Museveni’s words had a deep effect on the AGOA Girls.

“We took his advice,” Rebecca Bagonza said.

By this point, some of them were already starting to realize that life in the textile industry was not going to be as glamorous as they imagined. Recruiters in their villages had

wooed them with promises of important jobs and high salaries, but they had already learned that they were not to be paid while they were undergoing training. The training was likely to last for months. Afterwards, they would be given real jobs at the factory—but no word about how much they would be paid.

“I got discouraged,” Milly Nabula said. “But when His Excellency said, ‘You’re going to be OK, maybe you’ll even go out [of the country] for further studies, I was patient.’”

* * *

Museveni had a lot riding on the success of the textile plant. He had built himself an international profile as a champion of free-trade, by-lining op-ed columns for the *Wall Street Journal* and other publications. His views were cited approvingly by everyone from editorialists at the ultra-conservative *Washington Times* to Charlie Rangel, the gravelly-voiced paleoliberal congressman from Harlem.

“The Afro-pessimists do not bother to understand what is happening in Africa,” Museveni said in March 2002, as he gave a speech opening a conference on free trade in Africa. “They normally say, ‘Oh, we do not know what is happening in Africa; Asia has come up, why has Africa not come up?’ There are some reasons, and I know them. That is why I had to spend many years in the bush sorting them out.”

In his youth, Museveni was Marxist. He went to col-



The Tri Star garment factory. Located in a suburb of Kampala, the factory was originally a government-owned coffee market. Later, Museveni personally struck a deal with a pair of Sri Lankan investors to renovate it. The plan was for this factory to be a model facility, an exemplar to impress outside investors and the Ugandan public. It hasn’t turned out that way.

lege at Dar es Salaam University in the late 1960s, during the heyday of Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere, the inventor of “African socialism.” The young Museveni was a fan of Frantz Fanon, militant author of *The Wretched of the Earth*, and wrote an approving dissertation on the Mozambican rebel group Frelimo, which in the 1970s overthrew that country’s Portuguese rulers and instituted a communist dictatorship.

Like those of a lot of children of the 1960s, Museveni’s views have migrated a great deal since those days of bet-rets and machine guns—though he would not put it exactly that way, since it is not his practice to admit he has ever been wrong about anything. “I, from the beginning, knew that aid was simply a waste of time,” he told the conference, “and that the real solution was trade.”

Under Museveni, who led a rebel army to power in 1986, Uganda has made great economic strides. The growth rate is high. Shiny skyscrapers and shopping malls have gone up around Kampala. But Museveni argues that much of the progress is illusory because it depends on a constant stream of foreign aid. Roughly half of Uganda’s budget came from foreign donors last year. Unless Uganda industrializes and builds an economy capable of competing in global trade, it will never go anywhere, the president argues.

It is hard to dispute that foreign aid is not the answer. The country is awash with white SUVs emblazoned with capital letters: UNDP, DFID, USAID, SIDA, CARE. At night, the expat bars are full of fresh-faced aid workers armed with newly-minted master’s degrees in international relations or development studies. They have impenetrable conversations about “capacity building” and “transparency” and “civil society.” They are supposed to be fighting poverty and AIDS or promoting women’s rights and education. But they seem to spend most of their time attending workshops at Kampala hotels. Recently, the outgoing local representative of the International Monetary Fund grouched to a newspaper: “I know no other country that has more useless workshops than Uganda.”

Ugandans take it for granted that much of the foreign money goes straight into the pockets of corrupt politicians. Where the environment minister is an accused timber smuggler. This is a country where the minister of education is fired for amassing an illicit fortune—after constructing a mansion in his home village as lavish as a five-star hotel—then resurfaces a few years later to be appointed head of the health ministry, where he now has jurisdiction over the millions the government receives to fight AIDS. So, some cynicism is warranted.

Opposition politicians say foreign aid actually retards Uganda’s democratic growth, because it allows Museveni to butter his extensive patronage network, while devoting Uganda’s own money to buying guns. Donors complain that Museveni actually diverts a sub-

stantial amount of foreign-aid money to arms, too.

Museveni prefers to stake his position on higher ground. He argues that the many millions in well-meaning money create a culture of dependence among politicians and the public, a general assumption that only outsiders can solve Uganda’s problems.

This culture of dependence does indeed exist. I was once sitting with a member of parliament in the town hall of Gulu, a northern municipality hard-hit by the long-running civil war in that region. The MP was questioning a local government official about the problem of street kids in the town. Because rebels kidnap young children and conscript them into their army, rural families send their young ones to town at night for protection. They sleep on sidewalks without blankets, exposed to rain and chill.

The MP wanted to know what he could do to help the street children, but first he needed to know how many there were. The local government official said she didn’t know. She wanted to do a census, and in fact she had appealed to several aid agencies to finance one. But, she explained, there had been no response to her grant proposal so far. The MP, agitated, asked why she couldn’t just pay a couple students from the local university a few dollars to walk the streets one night with clipboards—this was an *emergency*, for God’s sake. The official just shrugged. The grant proposals were with the donors, she said. She had done what she could.

Museveni argues that once Africans learn to compete in the global economy, their economies will strengthen, they will wean themselves from foreign aid, and the cycle of poverty and dependence will be broken.

But there is a hitch. While the rich countries of the world have long lectured their poor cousins about the virtues of a liberal economy—often making their allowances dependent on the elimination of tariffs or the denationalization of state industries—they are much less enlightened when it comes to opening their own markets. In Europe, farming subsidies make it difficult for African agricultural exports to compete. America, trying to protect its textile states, for a long time subjected African clothing imports to quotas, and slapped them with prohibitively high tariffs.

AGO is supposed to right the imbalance. President Bill Clinton proposed the African Growth and Opportunity Act in his 1998 State of the Union address, saying that “trade and investment are the keys to African development.”

The bill was modest in what it promised—many of the goods covered under it already were subject only to very small tariffs, or none at all—but there was still a tough fight to get it passed. The bill’s most important measure eliminated quotas and tariffs on textiles. Tex-



At the Unyama refugee camp in northern Uganda, families displaced by the civil war in the north have built thatched huts in the ruins of an old mill. (You can see the entrance off to the right of the boy.) Uganda used to have a thriving cotton and textile industry. Then it disappeared. As usual, Idi Amin is to blame.

tile-state representatives and unions were bitterly opposed, saying American jobs were at stake. Ralph Nader and some members of the Congressional Black Caucus predicted the law would only allow rapacious multinational companies to subject African workers to sweatshop exploitation. Illinois Representative Jessie Jackson Jr. invoked a comparison to the slave trade in opposing the bill.

But Rangel, the Democratic congressman, formed an alliance with Republican free-traders and pushed the bill through. "Why don't we give the African people a chance?" Rangel asked *The Washington Post*. "They may not be in the major leagues, but by God, let them in the ballgame."

Museveni has repeatedly declared that he believes AGOA's enactment will prove to be one of the most important moments in the last 500 years of African history. The way he sees it, once Africans compete on a level economic playing field, foreign investors will flock to the continent, attracted by a large workforce willing to toil for low wages. Trade will increase. More Africans will be employed. Wages will rise. And that, in turn, will benefit the rich countries of the world, which would have a massive new pool of potential consumers to whom to sell their own goods—"another China," as Museveni has put it.

In a 2001 speech to the United Nations General Assembly, Museveni outlined this rosy view of Africa's free-trading future. "With more civilized aims and methods, balanced world development is possible and desirable

for everybody," he told the assembled dignitaries. Then the jovial president offered an illustration of the promise of open markets from his own experience.

"Whenever I travel abroad, I pack my own Ugandan foods," including millet, *matooke* (plantains) and fruit, he said. "The other day my pineapple stocks ran out and my staff bought pineapples from a supermarket in [England]. I just took one slice and terminated the whole exercise at once. First of all, the pineapple is hard, it is less sweet, and has got an ammonia-like pungent taste. I had had the same experience in Washington.

"Why must the citizens of the world endure these deprivations on account of policies designed to serve narrow interests?" he concluded. "I will not eat pineapple again until I go back to Uganda."

* * *

Once, I was visiting a refugee camp in northern Uganda when I came upon the ruins of a large concrete building. People had built thatch-roofed huts inside the roofless shell, and malnourished children were playing on its steps. Curious, I asked my guide through the camp what the building had once been.

"A mill," he replied.

One of the ironies of Uganda's AGOA saga is that, in trying to build a textile industry, the country was harkening as much to its past as to its future. Cotton, which was introduced by British colonialists at the beginning of the 20th Century, grows well in the north. Ginneries sprouted all over the country. In the 1950s, the British built the first spinning and weaving mill in East Africa in the town of Jinja. In the immediate post-independence era, local industrialists made big money off textiles.

The rise and fall of Uganda's textile industry was intimately tied to the fluctuating fortunes of immigrants from the Indian subcontinent, commonly called "Asians" in Uganda. Asians ran the gins, and later, they owned the textile factories. The history of their relations with black Ugandans, infused as they are with grievance, covetousness, racism, and ideological antagonism, is the backdrop for much of Uganda's economic history—as it would be for the controversy over the AGOA factory to come.

The British colonized Uganda and neighboring

Kenya. They began bringing Asians to East Africa at the end of the 19th Century. Some of them were civil servants imported by the British government because they were already educated in the ways of colonial bureaucracy. Some of them were Gurkha soldiers. But most were indentured laborers who came to work on the railroads the British were building. Brits found the poorest of the poor, the disaffected, and lured them to Africa with a promise—often a false promise—of a better future.

“They go because they are uncomfortable at home and welcome any change of circumstances,” recounts a 1910 report by the British government, cited in a study by Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan political scientist of Asian descent. “They have quarreled with their parents or their caste fellows, or they have left their homes in search of work and have been unable to find it. Many are not recruited in their own villages. The recruiters hang around bazaars and the [main streets], where they pick up loiterers and induce them to accompany them to the depots and agree to emigrate, by relieving their immediate wants and by representations, no doubt much overdrawn, of the prospects before them.”

The British looked down on the Asians. But they considered them several cuts above native Africans on the

eugenic totem pole. They made Asians the middlemen of colonial rule: The clerks, the shopkeepers. Africans were actively discouraged from going into business. This suited British interests, because it prevented the emergence of a homegrown middle class, and with it the chance of a homegrown political opposition.

The British denigrated their Asian underlings, calling them “coolies.” The Asians mistreated Africans in turn. As outsiders, they stuck together and stayed out of politics, forming “an intense racial consciousness,” Mamdani writes. Black Africans were resentful about being crowded out of business, and jealous of what the Asians owned. They seethed when Asian bosses reproached them as stupid and lazy.

From the beginning, Ugandan political parties were as concerned with redressing economic grievances against the Asians as with demanding independence from the British. Throughout the 1950s, political activists staged boycotts against Asian businesses. The boycotts often turned violent. Asian shops were burned. Asian businessmen were beaten up.

After independence, the call of “Africa for the Africans” grew louder and louder. When General Idi



Asians line up as part of a special registration exercise, a prelude to their expulsion by Idi Amin in 1972. The relationship between black Ugandans and Asians is a fraught with mutual racial prejudice. Many blacks say kicking out the Asians was the best thing Idi Amin ever did, and grouse that President Museveni should never have allowed them back. Many Asians I have met are frankly racist. Take one example: When I first arrived in Uganda, the Asian dealer from whom I bought my car warned me about duplicitous Africans. “Don’t trust any of them,” he advised me. “They don’t want to work. They just want money.” (Photo courtesy of The New Vision.)

Amin took power in Uganda in a 1971 coup, one of the first things he did was expel all but a handful of the Asians from the country, some 40,000 in all. The expulsion of the Asians won him popularity which endures to this day among many Ugandans. But it was an economic disaster. Shops closed. Factories fell into disrepair.

After Museveni's rebel army marched into Kampala in 1986, one of the first things the new president did was encourage Asians to return. Some 15,000 have since settled in Uganda. It is estimated that they have invested \$1 billion in the economy.

But Uganda's textile industry has never recovered. Many of the factories moved to Kenya during the Amin era and have never returned. Meanwhile, the north's cotton fields have disappeared because of ongoing civil war.

Along came AGOA. Despite Museveni's cheer-leading, the law didn't immediately do much for Uganda. Agricultural products like coffee and vanilla made up the bulk of the country's piddling \$18 million in exports to America in 2001, the first year AGOA was in effect. And those products were already tariff-free under America's pre-AGOA trade rules.

If Uganda was going to seize some of the AGOA windfall its president had promised, it was going to have to rebuild its textile industry—and quickly.

There was a problem, though. Textile entrepreneurs weren't exactly beating down the doors. Uganda is a landlocked country with a reputation for political instability. Its eastern neighbor Kenya had ports, and it already possessed a decent-sized textile industry. So did the Indian-Ocean island nation of Mauritius. Southern Africa had better infrastructure.

In 2001, the first year the law was in effect, Uganda exported just \$12,975 worth of women's dresses to America—not enough to buy a new Toyota, let alone cure all its society's ills. By contrast, Lesotho, a tiny country entirely surrounded by South Africa, was already fast on its way to becoming the continent's Singapore. It exported \$130 million worth of garments to America in 2001. The number would more than double, to \$317 million, the next year.

Museveni wanted to keep up with the Lesothos. He was desperate to find someone, *anyone* willing to invest in his vision of a textile-exporting Uganda. And, in an echo of Uganda's history, an Asian businessman appeared to answer his pleas. He was Sri Lankan, and his name was Velupillai Kananathan.

* * *

Kananathan's office at Apparels Tri Star textile plant is adjacent to the factory floor. From his window, hundreds of young women can be seen sitting in neat rows,

hunched over sewing machines. As I sat waiting to meet him one November afternoon—he was nearly an hour late for our interview—I read over and over again the strangely-worded motivational banners that hung from the plant's ceiling:

“Future Depends On Quality And Efficiency”

“Efficient And Dedicated Person Could Be Fruitful Person.”

Finally, I heard a loud voice behind me.

“Put it in an e-mail!” the managing director barked into his cell phone as he bounded through the doorway.

A compact man, with skin the color of lacquered wood, Kananathan moved with jumpy energy. Taking a seat behind his austere metal desk, in front of his laptop computer and his calculator, he folded his hands and placed them in front of him on the desk. He wore four gold rings on his fingers.

Kananathan spoke rapidly, with a clipped syntax that suggested he might have dictated the plant's motivational banners himself. “The [economic] climate in Uganda is very good,” he told me. “The government and the president really assist investors.”

In the days after the AGOA Girls' strike, Kananathan was painted as the villain. In part, this was because he could readily be identified—justifiably or not—as a character-type recognizable the world over: the cruel factory owner, the globalizing profiteer. However, some of the animosity, the immediate willingness of the public and politicians alike to believe the worst about him, had peculiarly Ugandan roots. The



Velupillai Kananathan was painted the villain in the entire AGOA Girls affair, in part because his behavior—actual and alleged—conformed so neatly to Ugandans' stereotypes about Asian businessmen.

workers' allegations of mistreatment at his hands echoed deep-seated prejudices Ugandans hold about Asians: they are gruff bigots and beastly bosses who will do anything for a shilling.

It must be said that Kananathan's supercilious behavior did little to undermine the stereotype. He sounded patronizing, and seemed profit-driven and a tad shady. He boasted to other businessmen about his close relationship with the president. When the strike occurred, he told government officials that he would negotiate only with Museveni himself. He issued a brusque statement defending the firing of 300 supposed ringleaders of the strike. "We are not a charitable institution," it read in part. "We are running a business."

"Let me put it this way," said Geoffrey Onegi Obel, a senior presidential adviser on AGOA and trade. "No human being is perfect. In certain specific areas, Kananathan lacks some skill sets."

Many Ugandan government officials were nervous about Kananathan from the beginning. He had a checkered business past. He moved to Uganda in 1987 with the first wave of Asians to return after Museveni came to power. Those were cowboy days, and Kananathan developed a reputation as a wheeler-dealer.

One Asian businessman told me that Kananathan used to introduce himself to potential business partners as the Sri Lankan ambassador to Uganda. (He wasn't). In 1999, some angry former business partners complained to police about Kananathan, claiming the ersatz ambassador had swindled them out of about \$5,000. He was arrested for fraud but acquitted at trial. Kananathan now says the ambassador stories are "totally wrong."

At the time he proposed the textile plant deal, Kananathan was working as a top executive in the business empire of another Asian businessman, Karim Hirji. A retired racecar driver, Hirji made his fortune as an importer. Today, he is one of Uganda's most prominent tycoons, with holdings that include four luxury hotels, a car dealership and numerous shops. Ugandans whisper that he also has an interest in some less savory trades. In 2000, a commission investigating corruption in the police force labeled Hirji the "prime suspect" in the unsolved murder of a business partner. He has never been charged.

Today, Kananathan remains executive director of Hirji's hotel company, even as he runs the garment factory. He denies Hirji has any ownership interest in the factory. But government officials suspect that Hirji is a silent partner in the enterprise.

All of this was enough to make the Uganda Investment Authority, the government agency that is supposed to attract and vet foreign investors, leery about cutting a deal. "The UIA from the beginning did not think that these were bona fide investors," said one gov-

ernment official involved in trade issues.

But Kananathan knew how to get business done in Kampala, and knew that when it came to dealing with the government, President Museveni was the arbiter of first and last resort.

Uganda's president has many fine qualities: He is an intelligent man, a canny political tactician, a charming interlocutor, an eloquent public speaker. He is not, however, very good at delegating authority. Museveni is surrounded by a huge coterie of advisers—the cabinet alone comprises more than 70 ministers—whose main apparent function is to serve as foils for the president's periodic harangues about the lazy, incompetent people who work for him. No political or policy debate, from a corruption scandal in the electoral commission to a controversy over the legality of nude dancing, is settled until *mzee* wades into it himself. And no one who wants to keep his job dares cross or disappoint him.

So, if *mzee* wanted Uganda to stitch shirts, Uganda was going to stitch shirts—whatever the cost.

Kananathan didn't have any substantial experience in the garment industry, but his business partner did. Kumar Dewapura owned a company called Tri Star Apparel Exports. Tri Star owned 30 textile factories in Sri Lanka, and claimed to be the largest garment manufacturer in South Asia.

In early 2002, Dewapura traveled to Uganda and met with Museveni and other top government officials. Dewapura emerged from his meetings to tell the local press he and the president had worked out a deal. He would renovate the old government-owned coffee market, turning it into a textile plant. If all went well with the pilot project, he said, he would open many more plants across the country. He predicted the deal would create 300,000 jobs within two years.

Many government officials were privately skeptical. "There was a general fear that this was not something we could do right away," one government official said. But, he added, the word had come down from on high: "We need to be seen as benefiting from AGOA."

The Tri Star plant would become Museveni's pet project, an model he could show the world. *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* would both visit and write front-page articles about the factory.

The way Museveni saw it, the factory would be a great piece of public relations. Potential foreign investors could see hard proof that they too could do business in Uganda. Ugandans could see a concrete demonstration of the ways the president's free-trade initiatives would benefit them by bringing money and jobs to Uganda. To underscore the point, Museveni came up with the idea of recruiting young women from all over the

country to work at the plant—the AGOA Girls.

Only after the strike, when *The Monitor*, an independent newspaper, began digging into the details, did Ugandans learn how much their model factory had cost them.

In addition to giving Kananathan and his partner free use of the coffee-market property, the government put up nearly \$8 million in the form of subsidies and loan guarantees. The factory was also exempted from some taxes. The government handed Tri Star big contracts to make uniforms for soldiers, police and prison guards. Documents presented to a parliamentary committee indicated that the government even paid the AGOA Girls' salaries.

The agreement Museveni cut with the Sri Lankan investors was so lopsided that some Ugandan politicians accused the president of having a secret ownership stake in the plant. A parliamentary inquiry convened to investigate the deal looked into the allegations, but found no evidence to substantiate them.

As it happened, Kananathan had testified before the committee earlier in the day that I met him. Under questioning, he had admitted—after much whispering back and forth with his lawyers—that his and his partner's investment in the factory amounted only to "technical expertise."

"We didn't bring in any cash at all," he told the committee.

* * *

In 2002, as Christmas neared, Yoweri Museveni returned to the Tri Star plant to give a ceremonial sendoff to its first shipment of clothes bound for America. As the American ambassador, the Sri Lankan factory owners, various government officials and several hundred employees of the factory looked on, the president loaded a cardboard box containing 12 pairs of seaweed-and-stone-colored shorts onto a truck.

Later, a BBC radio reporter asked Museveni what his thoughts were as he saw off the \$200,000 clothes shipment. "This is the biggest event after independence," the president replied. "That's how I felt."

Amid the celebrations that day, however, he had some harsh words for people he claimed were attempting to sabotage the good work going on at the textile plant. He singled out a junior official at the finance ministry for failing to move along a construction project at the plant, suggesting—presumably in jest—that such lousers-up deserved the ultimate punishment. "If someone kills jobs for 1,000 people, why shouldn't he be hanged?" he asked the crowd, according to newspaper reports.

And he had a warning for the AGOA Girls, too. He had heard that some of them were grumbling about their pay and working conditions. "You are on the frontline of

proving industrial discipline," he lectured them. "Don't disrupt production, because if you do, these investors will reject us."

Dissension at the plant had been mounting for months. Some of the young women, particularly the ones from remote areas, were homesick for their villages. In July, *The Monitor* reported that a group of about 25 had deserted the program. Some of them apparently believed their dormitory was haunted by spectral beings called night dancers.

The government allotted each young woman a bed, a mattress, bed sheets, blankets, soap, a plastic washbasin, a toothbrush, toothpaste, and Vaseline. They were not given any money, however, and they were not allowed off the factory grounds, which were surrounded by a high concrete wall topped by barbed wire. Sri Lankan matrons kept a close eye on them, to make sure they didn't dally with any of the men passing through the factory. The girls were all adults, but the treatment made them feel "like students," one employee would later complain.

So many young women had clamored to get into the training program that the government had nearly doubled its size. Now it was becoming clear that there wouldn't be enough jobs to go around. After three months, all but 640 of the recruits were told to go home. The cast-offs were told they would be recalled if the factory expanded, or if a new factory opened. But they left embittered and complaining of favoritism.

The training dragged on. Everyone wanted to know when they were going to start being paid. Finally, in December, as they were about to begin producing the factory's first clothes order, the management announced that the AGOA Girls had now graduated from trainees to employees. Henceforth, they would be paid some \$40 a month.

The salary wasn't atrociously bad by Ugandan standards, especially considering that all their living expenses were taken care of. But the young women were bitterly disappointed. The recruiters who had come to their villages had led them to believe that they were bound for big jobs "in trade," working for the president. Milly Nabula, an orphan who was supporting her brothers and sisters, had quit a teaching job that paid much more to join the training program. Doreen Abalo's family back at the refugee camp was expecting her to send money home.

The AGOA Girls staged a sick-out to protest their pay. Some of them also called *The Monitor* to air their complaints anonymously. They demanded an audience with President Museveni.

The unrest spurred a visit by Susan Muhwezi, a presidential adviser on AGOA. Muhwezi gave the AGOA Girls a tongue-lashing. She said they shouldn't be complaining about \$40 a month; it was about the same as a housekeeper's

salary. The young women, some of whom held university degrees, were not amused by the comparison.

According to the workers, as business picked up at the factory, things got worse. When there was a big order to fill, they claimed they would be forced to work 18 hours or more a day without overtime pay. Managers set a target for each worker, a number of pieces she was required to stitch in an hour. In practice, workers claimed, the targets were almost impossible to meet. To fill their quotas they had to stay later and later.

The workers' immediate overseers were a group of managers, most of them of Sri Lankan women, whom they called "madams." The madams ruled the factory floor like homeroom teachers. If a worker had to go to the bathroom, she had to get a pass. If she was sick, she had to get the madam's permission to leave, which wasn't always forthcoming. "They told us, 'Ugandan girls are sick all the time. Sick, sick, sick,'" Bagonza said. The workers claimed that the managers locked the factory's fire escapes to keep them from slipping out.

Some of the madams were kind, others were abusive. The bad ones ridiculed the young women, saying they "looked like monkeys," Bagonza said, and derided those who failed to meet their quotas as "inefficient" and "bigheaded." They pulled or boxed the workers' ears if they were not working hard enough.

There were some male managers, too. They weren't much better, the workers claimed. Some of them tried to seduce their employees, promising favorable treatment in return.

This went on for months, the workers said. Meanwhile, some of them were beginning to whisper among themselves about forming a union. It was no longer impossible to get off the grounds of the plant; workers could request gate passes if they had a reason to go into town. Labor union organizers, who had heard about the dissatisfaction at the plant, were hanging around outside the gates. They pulled the workers aside and explained what a union was.

The young women, intrigued, held a series of covert



After their strike was broken up by police, the AGOA Girls marched to parliament, where they stayed for eight days. Members of parliament complained that the strikers undermined the dignity of parliament by leaving their laundry out to dry on the lawn. "We are disgusted by the fact that we are sharing facilities with them," a parliamentary public relations officer told The New Vision. But they had no place else to go.

meetings in their cafeteria. Then a delegation went to the factory's managers, saying that 90 percent of the workers backed the union. Ugandan law recognizes the right of workers' to organize, at least in theory, so the managers said they would negotiate the issue. They told the workers to form a committee. Rebecca Bagonza was elected to head it.

But in mid-October, the workers started hearing ominous whispers. Management had drawn up a list of 50 employees—the union agitators, as identified by coworkers—who were to be fired. Meanwhile, the factory was rushing to meet its deadline to fill a particularly large order. Everyone was under intense pressure. There was an incident. Accounts of what happened are fuzzy and conflicting, but it seems that one of the Sri Lankan managers badly beat one of the workers, a woman who was popular with the rest of the seamstresses.

The next day, the AGOA Girls went on strike.

They barricaded themselves in their dormitory, using wires to fasten their windows shut, and putting a padlock on the door. They had prepared by stocking up on donuts and other junk food at the factory commissary. They drank water from a fire hose. The painted pro-union messages on their bed sheets and hung them from the building. According to press reports, some of the girls threatened to burn down the dormitory if Kananathan did not meet their demands for

higher pay and better working conditions.

Bagonza denied there was any talk of destroying the factory. "We never wanted to put the premises ablaze," she said. "We just wanted to use the strike to ... raise concerns about our problems."

The first day of the strike, Martin Wandera, a workers' member of parliament (under the country's constitution, several interest groups, including labor unions, women and the handicapped, are allotted automatic parliamentary representation), came to the factory to talk to management on the strikers' behalf. Kananathan barred him from the grounds. The next day, Kananathan did attend a meeting with Wandera and other government officials, including the country's labor commissioner.



Emily Akatwijuka, 25, at her sewing machine at the Tri Star factory. Kananathan said that apart from a few troublemakers who spurred the strike, the vast majority of his employees were happy in their jobs. "They get everything for free," a Tri Star manager told me. "They don't have to go out for anything."

"At the end of the meeting, Mr. Kananathan said he had nothing to negotiate," Wandera told me. "He said he would just explain it to the president." (Kananathan told me the allegation that he said he would negotiate only with the president, which was widely reported in the newspapers, was "rubbish.")

That morning riot police had come and surrounded the dormitory. The chief of the Ugandan police force tried to convince the strikers to come out peacefully, saying the factory owners were willing to negotiate. The strikers were divided. Some wanted to stay until they got concrete concessions. Others were tired and hungry and wanted to come out. Eventually, the AGOA Girls opened the doors.

The next morning, they prepared to go to work as usual. But management had barred the doors to the factory. One manager read out a list of names. The workers on the list, the union agitators, were to be fired. The police moved in again to make sure there was no trouble.

The fired strikers made a break out the factory gates. They marched downtown to parliament.

When I met them on a Sunday afternoon, the 300 fired AGOA Girls had been living inside the parliament building for several days. A judge had ruled that their firing was illegal. Kananathan simply ignored the ruling. Now, sympathetic government officials were talking to the factory owner. There wasn't much hope of getting the AGOA Girls' jobs back—not that they really wanted them any more. They were just hop-

ing to for a decent severance package.

The Parliament administration had agreed to let them stay while a settlement was worked out. During the day, the AGOA Girls lolled around on the Parliament lawn. At night, they slept on the floors inside. They were rapidly wearing out their welcome—one MP was particularly chagrined to see young women washing and laying their underwear out to dry on the parliament lawn. But there wasn't much else they could do. They were out of jobs, penniless, and had no money to get back to their home villages.

Rebecca Bagonza, Milly Nabula and Doreen Abalo sat cross-legged on the lawn, brushing each others' hair, chatting on their cell phones with coworkers who had kept their jobs at the factory, and waiting to hear what would happen.

"Where do we go next?" Abalo asked. "We feel the government betrayed us, what we expected."

* * *

At the Tri Star factory, work went on. Young women bent over their sewing machines, pushing scraps of cloth with their spread fingers, stitching collars and cuffs. There was no conversation, just the sound of the clatter and hum of their labor echoing off the plant's high ceiling.

"They did not even know what is a sewing machine before," Veluppillai Kananathan said with a paternal air.

Kananathan said that all of the strikers' complaints were "wrong allegations," lodged by a few troublemakers who didn't want to work. He wasn't averse to a union, he claimed. He just wanted the workers to understand that union dues came out of their paychecks. He refused to be drawn into any discussion of his ethnicity, and the role it played in the controversy. He was just a businessman, he said, acting as businessmen do.

"There were some unproductive, indisciplined workers, and we had to get rid of them," Kananathan said. "All the bad people, we have gotten rid of them, and since the strike efficiency and productivity have gone up, in fact. Discipline has gone up. People are very serious."

Kananathan had one of his Sri Lankan foremen take me around the plant. I had to admit, it certainly didn't look like the dismal sweatshop the strikers' descriptions had conjured in my mind. The place had a capacious feel, like an airplane hangar. Large windows let in natural light.

There are more than 50 steps in the process of turning raw cloth into a garment, the foreman told me, and the plant was divided into specialized sections. In a far room, a few young women used a computerized contraption to cut bolts of cloth from huge rolls. At another machine, the bolts were cut further into forms, scraps hardly recognizable as a sleeve or a pant leg. Like puzzle pieces, these scraps would eventually be fitted together to make the finished item of clothing. That happened on the factory floor. There, the seamstresses were divided into sections according to which piece of the garment they were stitching. At the front of each section stood a dry-erase board where overseers kept track of their progress toward the daily work quota.

At the back end of the plant, another group of workers inspected the final products and put them into boxes to be shipped. On the day I visited, they were making camouflage shorts bound for The Children's Place, an American retail chain.

Kananathan insisted that business was brisk despite the strike. Tri Star had sold more than \$2 million worth of clothes since it began production in December 2002, he claimed. The factory had contracts to supply clothes to stores like Target and J.C. Penney's, and a deal with Wal-Mart was in the works.

"Every week, shipments are going out," he said.

* * *

Ugandan government officials say that, whatever public relations damage the strike did, AGOA has been good to Uganda. Through the first nine months of 2003, exports to America amounted to \$26 million, already \$8 million more than in all of 2001. Textiles alone accounted for nearly \$1 million of the increase. And the AGOA boosters say it's impossible to measure the boost to national self-confidence that comes from knowing that clothes la-

beled "Made in Uganda" now sit on the shelves of American department stores.

However, there is no way to hide the fact that AGOA is unlikely to deliver anything remotely like the benefits President Museveni extols. Last year, African countries exported \$9 billion worth of goods to America under AGOA. But one product accounted for three-quarters of that total: oil. Only a handful of West African countries possess oil in any quantity. For the rest of the continent, the benefits are much less immediate. United Nations report published in April suggests that for most products, the elimination of tariffs offers "only a slight improvement over the status quo."

Textiles are the exception. But in 2005, American quotas and tariffs on textiles are due to be totally eliminated under World Trade Organization rules. After that, African textile imports will lose any comparative advantage over those from China or anywhere else. So the window for building a textile industry in Uganda is a short one.

Since the strike, the government has tried to distance itself from the Tri Star factory. The problems at Tri Star, they say, do not indicate that there is anything fundamentally wrong with their plan to open textile factories across the country, which they are pushing ahead. "To me, that situation was just a result of poor management," said Geoffrey Onegi Obel, the presidential trade adviser. Kananathan may have once had a tight relationship with Museveni, the presidential adviser admitted. "Well, I don't think [Kananathan] can call him now," he said.

An investment banker and founder of Uganda's stock



Geoffrey Onegi Obel, a senior presidential adviser on AGOA and trade, in his office, located in one of Kampala's sleek new skyscrapers. "Most people don't understand what AGOA is," said Onegi Obel, an investment banker. "Most people think Tri Star is AGOA."

exchange, Onegi Obel told me that the problems at the Tri Star factory had been blown out of proportion by the public and the press. Museveni believes that building an industrial economy in Uganda would be a 20-year process, his adviser said. Whatever the law's shortcomings, AGOA will prove to be the crucial catalyst in getting that process started.

"Before the AGOA dispensation, social and economic transformation was a remote possibility—if we struck oil," Onegi Obel told me. "What the AGOA dispensation has done is basically tell us, 'Look guys, you've been complaining and whining all these years. Now we dare you to transform your economy. We dare you to produce world-class products, and we will buy them.' What was a remote possibility ... [AGOA] has made a distinct possibility."

The key word, of course, is "possibility." For Uganda, the benefits about AGOA have never been strictly about realities, but also about perceptions—intangibles like pride and self-confidence and entrepreneurial spirit. And whatever his aides may say now, the Tri Star factory wasn't intended to be just another business. It was supposed to be a symbol. President Museveni hoped foreign investors would see Ugandans churning out shirts and shorts and would come flocking to his country. He hoped Ugandans would see the AGOA Girls happily at work, and realize that his AGOA-boosting wasn't empty hoopla.

The irony is that Museveni's pet project ended up instead as a symbol of something else entirely—a cautionary monument to the pitfalls of trying to do too much too fast.

Investors can't look at Tri Star and feel encouraged about Uganda's business climate. Despite all the government support—and despite the sunny picture Kananathan portrayed to me—there are indications that Tri Star is not doing well financially. Testifying before the parliamentary committee, Kananathan had admitted that Tri Star was not paying off its government-backed loan payments.

"We are not making any money," he said.

It is too early to say whether or not the Tri Star factory will prove to be a business success. Few start-ups make money right away. The disappointment among the AGOA Girls, however, is real and permanent.

"The thinking was let us get girls from the rural areas," said Martin Wandera, the workers' MP. "Desperate people who would be ready to settle for anything. People who do not know anything about labor rights. But they forgot something.... Human beings are not static."

The way the young women were recruited, and all Museveni's talk about the special role they were playing in Uganda's future, emboldened them to think they were

less dispensable than they really were. "They expected upward mobility," Onegi Obel said. "But you and I know it doesn't happen that fast." When it came to a showdown between Museveni's "daughters" and his favored investor, there was never much doubt about who would win out. In the end, the AGOA Girls had discovered they were just glorified seamstresses.

Since the strike, Ugandans in general have become more cynical about AGOA, and doubtful of their president's vision of prosperity through free trade. To many, globalization seems just another high-minded western visitor, like colonialism and liberal democracy and communism before it, which arrives in Africa as a savior, and settles in to exploit.

African history is oral history, and Ugandans often use little stories— anecdotes and proverbs—to tell big ones. This is a story that Ugandans tell about AGOA, an initiative that promised so much until they read the fine print.

A Ugandan businesswoman heard President Museveni rhapsodizing about the benefits of AGOA. She was so excited to discover that the gates to American commerce had been thrown wide open that she bought up a bunch of juicy Ugandan pineapples and shipped them to America. Now, 1,800 categories of goods, from red wine to South African-made BMWs, are covered under the law. But pineapples are not among them.

When the businesswoman's pineapples reached their destination, they were impounded and incinerated.

* * *

A few days after I met the AGOA Girls, Kananathan gave in to government pressure and offered them severance packages. Depending on a variety of factors, they ranged from around \$50 to \$125 per worker—not bad, ordinary Ugandans thought. The strikers quit their occupation of parliament and dispersed across Uganda.

I lost track of them afterwards. I talked to Rebecca Bagonza on the phone the other day, and she told me she had gone back east. She had found a job working for a company that makes sheet metal.

Milly Nabula also headed back home. She told me she was going try to get her old teaching job back. She had brothers and sisters to support.

Doreen Abalo told me she would probably go back to the refugee camp where her family lives. But I later heard she had stayed in Kampala and had gone back to school. It made sense. She had told me she wanted to earn a college degree and then get involved in union organizing.

Work remains hard to come by in Uganda. The news that 300 workers jobs were open at the Tri Star factory brought thousands of job-seekers out of the woodwork.

After the strike, they literally lined up outside the door of the Tri Star factory.

The afternoon I visited the Tri Star, I passed a group of these job-seekers, about six young men and women sitting on sheets of cardboard in the hot sun, as I was let in the gates. After I parked my car, I walked back outside to talk to them.

A shabbily-dressed young man named Ofwono Sil-

ver introduced himself to me. Silver, 23, said he was out of work. He and the rest of the group had been waiting since morning, vainly hoping that someone from the factory would let them inside to talk about jobs.

I asked Silver if the \$40 a month the AGOA Girls were making sounded like enough to him. He nodded, as did the rest.

“I want to sew,” he said.

□

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INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

Fellows and their Activities

Alexander Brenner (June 2003 - 2005) • CHINA

With a B.A. in History from Yale in 1998 and a Master's degree in China Studies and International Economics from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, Alex in China, focuses on the impact of a new government and a new membership in the World Trade Organization on Chinese citizens, institutions and regions both inside and far from the capital.

Cristina Merrill (2004 - 2006) • ROMANIA

Born in Bucharest, Cristina moved from Romania to the United States with her mother and father when she was 14. Learning English (but retaining her Romanian), she majored in American History at Harvard College and there became captain of the women's tennis team. She received a Master's degree in Journalism from New York University in 1994, worked for several U.S. publications from *Adweek* to the *New York Times*, and will now spend two years in Romania watching it emerge from the darkness of the Ceauscescu regime into the presumed light of membership in the European Union and NATO.

Andrew Rice (May 2002 - 2004) • UGANDA

A former staff writer for the *New York Observer* and a reporter for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the Washington Bureau of *Newsday*, Andrew is spending two years in east-central Africa, watching, waiting and reporting the possibility that the much-anticipated "African Renaissance" might begin with the administration of President Yoweri Museveni. Andrew won a B.A. in Government from Georgetown (minor: Theology) in 1997 after having spent a semester at Charles University in Prague, where he served as an intern for *Velvet* magazine and later traveled, experienced and wrote about the conflict in the Balkans.

Matthew Rudolph (March 2004-2006) • INDIA

Having completed a Cornell Ph.D. in International Relations, Matt is spending two years as a Phillips Talbot South Asia Fellow looking into the securitization and development of the Indian economy.

Matthew Z. Wheeler (October 2002-2004) • SOUTHEAST ASIA

A former research assistant for the Rand Corporation, Matt is spending two years looking into proposals, plans and realities of regional integration (and disintegration) along the Mekong River, from China to the sea at Vietnam. With a B.A. in liberal arts from Sarah Lawrence and an M.A. from Harvard in East Asian studies (as well as a year-long Blakemore Fellowship in Thai language studies) Matt is also examining long- and short-term conflicts in Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia.

Jill Winder (July 2004 - 2006) • GERMANY

With a B.A. in politics from Whitman College in Walla Walla, WA and a Master's degree in Art Curating from Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, NY, Jill is an ICWA Donors' Fellow looking at Germany through the work, ideas and viewpoints of its contemporary artists. Before six months of intensive study of the German language in Berlin, she was a Thomas J. Watson Fellow looking at post-communist art practice and the cultural politics of transition in the former Soviet bloc (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Hungary, Latvia, Romania, Slovenia and Ukraine).

James G. Workman (January 2002 - 2004) • SOUTHERN AFRICA

A policy strategist on national restoration initiatives for Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt from 1998 to 2000, Jamie is an ICWA Donors' Fellow looking at southern African nations (South Africa, Botswana, Mozambique, Zambia and, maybe, Zimbabwe) through their utilization and conservation of fresh-water supplies. A Yale graduate (History; 1990) who spent his junior year at Oxford, Jamie won a journalism fellowship at the Poynter Institute for Media Studies and wrote for the *New Republic* and *Washington Business Journal* before his years with Babbitt. Since then he has served as a Senior Advisor for the World Commission on Dams in Cape Town, South Africa.

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