

## Mont Alto Student Seeking Support for Burundi English Project to Help Others Like Herself

Aline Niyonkuru

My name is Aline Niyonkuru, and I am a second year student at Penn State Mont Alto. I am from Burundi, a small country in Central Africa, one of Africa's most densely populated nations. Burundi is landlocked, situated a few miles south of the equator, a French speaking country, and its national language is Kirundi. Ninety percent of the population lives from agricultural crops they grow on their ancestral land. Students walk about five miles each day to get to school because schools are too few and too far apart. Most women are not educated because their parents keep them at home to help them with chores and to feed and nurture the family. Moreover, parents believe that it's not important for women to walk such a long distance just for school, and they don't believe school is as necessary as

providing for the family's day to day needs for food. Students don't start learning English until the ninth grade, and very few are able to speak English. This is my third year in the United States, and I only learned how to speak English when I arrived.

The purpose of writing this letter is to ask you for an opportunity to raise awareness about Burundi, and to ask for your help to raise money for a Burundi English Project (BEP) to enhance spoken and written English as well as to expose American culture to Burundian university students.

It was October 21, 2001, when I arrived in the United States from Burundi.

Although, it was a time of fear and mourning for Americans because of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it was time of hope for me. Many people are aware of the genocide

mother, and her children are like my brothers and sisters now because we grew up together. After tenth grade, my other aunt, who lived here in the United

States, brought me over to live with her and keep me safe. advantage of speaking English will create a better relationship and understanding between Burundians and other English speaking countries. Burundi is surrounded by English speaking countries: Congo, Rwanda, and Tanzania; that is why I believe that Burundians need to be able to write and speak English so they can communicate with foreigners in a better way.

Being able to speak English will also allow Burundian students to have education opportunities in other African countries and any other English speaking countries. I want to sharpen my English skills while teaching others what I have learned. Then, I would like the Burundian university students to do the same by teaching Burundian high school youth in return.

To accomplish this project, I need to raise funds or find sponsors who will support the Burundi English Project. The project will require approximately \$8,500 this summer of 2005 (the budget will vary for the next three summers) to cover my travel expenses from the US to Burundi and the cost of equipment and materials. Harambee-In-Progress, a non-profit organization based in the US, will provide guidance, supervision and evaluation of the project. If you could help me fundraise for this project to accomplish it, I would be most appreciative.

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that happened in Rwanda and the war in Congo; little do they know that the same thing happened in Burundi. About 600,000 people were killed, including some of my family members. I endured a civil war for nine years. During those years, I was afraid that I could die any day. When I arrived here, I finally felt secure and hopeful about my future. I am thankful that I survived the war after spending many days and nights in the bushes, hiding from the rebels, and I thank God for the gift of families who cared enough to give me an opportunity of a lifetime.

Before the war, I lived in the village with my family. When the war intensified, however, my little sister, brother, and I moved in town to live with my youngest aunt. People in the villages could no longer sleep in their houses because of the constant night attacks. My family was lucky because my generous aunt took three of us to live with her despite the fact that she had two young children of her own. I stayed with her for almost six years; she became like my

States, brought me over to live with her and keep me safe.

From the time when I arrived here, I have learned how to speak English and have been immersed in American culture. I am thankful that I have had this opportunity to be safe and get a good education. My mission is to do something productive for the community back home in Burundi.

Starting in the summer of 2005, I would like to dedicate four summers to a Burundi English Project (BEP). Each summer for the next four years, I would like to spend eight weeks in Burundi conducting the BEP. To accomplish this project, I need help raising funds to expose Burundian university students to spoken and written English as well as American culture. Burundian students need to learn English in order to develop their country.

From my experience, I believe English is an important language widely used all around the world. Consequently, it is a real academic and social handicap not to speak the English language. The

### Book Review: Truth or Fiction? You Decide

#### The DaVinci Code

Dan Brown



Jeremy Naugle

The Da Vinci Code, a novel by Dan Brown, takes 2000 years of religious history and leaves you with an I-cannot-believe-I-missed-that type of shock. The novel is so skillfully rendered that it leaves the reader guessing as to what is truly fact versus fiction.

The Da Vinci Code is a quest for the "Holy Grail" - only the grail may not be what you would expect. We start off in Paris at the Louvre with the murder of a curator, who is also the grandmaster of a secret society. The race begins when the curator leaves a hidden message for his granddaughter, French

cryptologist Sophia Neveu, to find a Harvard symbolist named Robert Langdon. Neveu and Langdon share in the adventure to find the truth behind her grandfather's messages and uncover secrets that have been hidden for hundreds of years. Every turn has them escaping near capture and death. Different groups, all with the hope of controlling the truth about the "Holy Grail," are after them. The one who finds the truth will change history forever.

Brown uses his vast knowledge of secret societies, religion, and the quest for answers in this exciting thriller that will leave you wanting more. Brown, who is the author of other works such as "Angels and Demons," allows readers to make their own decisions about the truth behind the secrets and he offers an alternative to what is widely accepted through faith.