



# Weekly Special Report



Produced by the Public Affairs Section

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## Obama Administration Seeks Greater Involvement with U.N.

By Jane Morse  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — The Obama administration is “deeply committed to international human rights issues and to the United States being an active player in advancing universal standards,” said Esther Brimmer, President Obama’s newly appointed assistant secretary for the State Department’s Bureau of International Organization Affairs.



Assistant Secretary of State for International Organizations Esther Brimmer

Speaking to America.gov, Brimmer said the Obama administration is seeking a seat on the U.N. Human Rights Council while being aware that critics of the council believe it has been ineffective.

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## United States Remembers 1994 Rwandan Genocide

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr.  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — President Obama says the 15th anniversary of the 1994 Rwandan genocide is a somber occasion to reflect on the deaths of more than 800,000 people killed “simply because of their ethnicity or their political beliefs.”



A candlelight display, seen from the air, marks the 15th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

“The memory of these events also deepens our commitment to act when faced with genocide and to work with partners around the world to prevent future atrocities. The figure of 800,000 is so enormous, so daunting, that it runs the risk of

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## Obama Administration Seeks Greater Involvement with U.N. . . .

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"The council has been troubled during its history," Brimmer said, "but the best way to really try to grapple [with] serious problems on the council is from the inside as a member."

The Human Rights Council is an intergovernmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 elected members whose mission is to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights globally. Seats on the council are held for three years and are distributed among the United Nations regional groups: 13 seats for Africa; 13 for Asia; six for Eastern Europe; eight for Latin America and the Caribbean; and seven for Western Europe and other states (including those from North America.)

Some of the current and past members — China and Cuba, for example — have weak records for protecting human rights in their own countries.

In addition, there have been concerns over how the council deals with Israel. Between 2006 and 2008, for example, Israel was condemned 15 times.

"There has been a serious problem in the council in that it has been obsessed with Israel, and that is unfair, and we do not think that one country should be singled out separate from all of the others," Brimmer said. "Unfortunately, there are several countries with serious human rights issues. Those should be looked at, and we shouldn't just focus on just one country."

"We very much want to encourage

fairness and balance in our approach in the council," Brimmer said. "But it's important to be there to make that case, rather than allow many others who are not trying to be fair and balanced [to] seize the agenda."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice announced March 31 that the United States will seek a seat on the council this year, saying the decision is in keeping with the Obama administration's "new era of engagement" with other nations to advance American security interests and to meet the global challenges of the 21st century.

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the announcement. "Full U.S. engagement on human rights issues is an important step toward realizing the goal of an inclusive and vibrant intergovernmental process to protect human rights around the globe," the secretary-general said.

The United States has been a leader on human rights issues, Brimmer said. It is a priority for the Obama administration, she said, "that in addition to the work we do bilaterally, that there's an important multi-lateral component — and the United Nations is the center of the component."

Brimmer added, "It is also important that the United States be active across the U.N. system, and there are many different parts of the U.N. system active on human rights. . . . The United States wants to behave creatively about all these different mechanisms, but we need to be involved in all of the major methods, and that includes the council."

Brimmer said the Obama administration is not hesitant about taking on tough issues, noting President Obama's decision during his first days in office to begin the process of closing the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Brimmer comes to the State Department from Johns Hopkins University, where she served as deputy director and director of research at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, part of the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies. She previously worked for the State Department from 1999 to 2001 as a member of the Office of Policy Planning working on European Union, Western Europe, U.N. and multilateral security issues.

She served on the U.S. delegation to the United Nations on human rights in 2000. From 1993 to 1995, she served as special assistant to the under secretary of state for political affairs, where she worked on U.N., peacekeeping, human rights and political-military issues.

For more, see "U.S. to Run for Election to the U.N. Human Rights Council ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/April/20090401120727eaifas4.264468e-02.html&distid=ucs> )" and the State Department's Bureau of International Organization Affairs ( <http://www.state.gov/p/io/> ) Web site.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

## United States Remembers 1994 Rwandan Genocide . . .

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becoming a statistic," the president said in a statement April 7.

Between April and June 1994, an estimated 800,000 Rwandan men, women and children were killed in 100 days. Those killed included Tutsis and some moderate Hutus. The genocide was sparked by the death of Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana, a Hutu, when his airplane was shot down flying above the Kigali airport on April 6, 1994.

"As we mourn their senseless passing, we must also acknowledge the courageous men and women who survived the genocide and have since demonstrated remarkable strength and generosity in forgiving those who committed these heinous acts," Obama said.

The United States has partnered with Rwanda to promote sustainable development, respect for human rights and lasting peace in Rwanda.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said Rwandans "have worked heroically over the past 15 years to repair their lives and move forward. We are inspired by their example and offer our support in their extraordinary political, economic and social rebuilding."

Susan Rice, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, reflected on her own memories of the genocide. She was a staff member on President Clinton's National Security Council when she visited Rwanda six months after the ethnic cleansing.

"For me, the memory of stepping around and over those corpses will

remain the most searing reminder imaginable of what our work here must aim to prevent," Rice said at the special commemorative event at the United Nations April 7 in New York.

unfolding evil."

The full text of Obama's statement ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/April/20090407152908eaifa0.2365076.html&distid=ucs> ), the full



The Rwanda Genocide Memorial

"Rwanda holds its own tragic place in the 20th century's grim litany of mass murder," Rice said.

Rice said Rwanda did not suffer from "ancient hatreds" between Hutu killers and Tutsi victims. "It suffered from modern demagogues, from the ex-FAR [Forces Armées Rwandaises], from the Interahamwe, from Radio Mille Collines. It suffered from those who were willing to kill in the warped name of ethnic difference, from those who saw division and death as a path to power."

"And it suffered from an international community, international institutions, and individual governments — including my own — that failed to act in the face of a vast,

text of Rice's statement ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/April/20090407170213eaifas0.53323.html&distid=ucs> ) and the full text of Clinton's statement ( <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2009/April/20090407170425eaifas0.9950678.html&distid=ucs> ) are available on America.gov.

What foreign affairs decisions should President Obama consider? Comment on America.gov's blog. ( <http://blogs.america.gov/campaign/2009/01/21/day-2-what-should-obama%e2%80%99s-top-priorities-be/> ) ♦

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## Veteran Reporter Outlines Challenges of Reporting from Zimbabwe

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

**Washington**— Reporting from political hot spots is not a glamorous job, veteran journalist Peta Thornycroft warns. To be successful, you need a logical and methodical way of working, including meticulous planning for transportation, shelter and even having “cover stories” if you are questioned by those who do not support press freedom.

Thornycroft, who covered South Africa’s violent transition from apartheid in the early 1990s and gave up her British citizenship in 2002 so she could continue reporting from Zimbabwe, takes risks and endures hazardous living situations, including detention by Zimbabwean police in March 2002. In 2007, she was honored by the International Women’s Media Foundation with its lifetime achievement award. America.gov asked why, after more than 35 years as a journalist, she continues to put herself in danger. “I can’t rush off and be an electrician or do something else. I don’t know how to do anything else,” she joked.

In a more serious vein, Thornycroft said she feels a commitment to report what is happening in Zimbabwe, but calls it a “hideous assignment.” She added that she worries that her years watching patterns of repression and despair under the rule of President Robert Mugabe and his Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have made her grow “quite blunted” emotionally. She also has grown tired of constantly living out of suitcases and hiding her identity.

“Technically, as a freelance journalist working for yourself, it’s grueling. It’s not just worrying about whether you’re going to be arrested



*Journalist Peta Thornycroft of Zimbabwe*

or not being able to get comments,” she said.

### THE VALUE OF A LOW PROFILE

Her years reporting from places like Zimbabwe and South Africa have taught her lessons she can pass along to others assigned to cover global hot spots. Her first advice is to remain calm and composed while on the job, with the goal of maintaining a low profile.

“Blend in, if possible, without having a notebook in your hand so you don’t look like a journalist,” she counsels. She advises learning the local circumstances, culture and some of the language before the

assignment — and developing a heightened awareness of potential dangers. “One develops a sixth sense,” she says, comparing the relative ease of veteran Zimbabwean journalists in avoiding trouble, as opposed to newly arrived reporters who tend to “get chopped the first.”

Thornycroft admits to having become an “extremely efficient liar” when confronted by Zimbabwean authorities or other suspicious people. Because she is white and unknown outside of Harare, she meticulously plans her cover stories for anyone who asks what she is doing. “I never, ever admit I’m a journalist,” she said. She is also very careful about where she goes. In some parts of Zimbabwe, “I just know it would be the end of me in 10 minutes!”

She supports the idea of journalists covering a country for no longer than three years and then moving on because longer stays increase the risk of crossing the line between journalism and activism. Activism not only threatens a reporter’s balance, but also can be dangerous, according to Thornycroft, because “you will do things you would not do if you were just involved professionally.”

Thornycroft said her experiences in Zimbabwe led her to depend on sources much more than during her

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## Grandeur of U.S. Vision, Monuments Impresses African Visitor

By *Jim Fisher-Thompson*  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — “Americans think large as well as build large,” mused Eric Adja Houdjihoude as he rode into the nation’s capital from Dulles Airport in Virginia after flying to the United States from his home in Cotonou, Benin.

Passing the white-columned Lincoln Memorial and the towering obelisk that is the Washington Monument, Houdjihoude, the communications adviser and spokesman for Benin President Thomas Yayi Boni, said he was struck by “the large roads, huge monuments and government buildings” that adorn Washington.

“You [Americans] construct monuments to last, but your thinking and vision are also large and long-range,” Houdjihoude told America.gov March 20 at the National Press Club.

“So much of African history is oral and therefore limited,” he said, adding, “Our leaders have to start thinking long-range so they can build for future generations.”

Houdjihoude, who holds a doctorate degree in linguistics from the University of Paris, also studied in Belgium and Switzerland. He has been the principal spokesman and communications director for Boni for two years.

The official was in a group of 20 communication professionals from 16 African nations that took a three-week tour to examine transparency and good governance in U.S. communities. The March 16-April 3 visit was part of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) of the State Department’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

### NEW APPRECIATION FOR AMERICA’S HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Houdjihoude said he felt “privileged to be chosen for the visit by the U.S. Embassy in Cotonou” to learn not only how the U.S. government deals with good governance, ethics and transparency but also “to find out more about America.”

“Your history may not be as old as Europe’s, but there is a historical perspective and spirit here that involves not only a link with the past but also with the future. We see this in the new election of

President Obama who, as a black man, connects America’s past with a new, open racial attitude that is almost unique.

“This is what makes America a great nation, a nation with roots in the past but with big branches reaching out to the future,” the African official said.

### ETHICS IN U.S. GOVERNMENT

Before departing for visits to North Carolina, Michigan, Louisiana and Oregon, the IVLP group talked with representatives from several U.S. government agencies, including the State Department’s Africa Bureau, the Commerce Department’s International Trade Administration and the Office of Government Ethics.

Dan Whitman, deputy director of the Africa Bureau’s Office of Public

Diplomacy and Public Affairs, told the group no country can “afford corruption and the luxury of seeing money disappear into overseas bank accounts. Examples of transparency and good governance are the most important themes you will deal with on this visit.”

Jane Ley, deputy director of the 80-person Office of Government Ethics, told the visitors her agency was

established in 1978 to prevent conflicts of interest by government employees and to resolve any conflicts that do occur. “OGE fosters high ethical standards for employees and hopes to strengthen the public’s confidence that the government’s business is conducted with impartiality and integrity,” she said.



*Visitors from 16 African nations gather at the State Department before embarking on a U.S. tour highlighting good governance.*

The Africans learned that 270,000 officials in the executive branch of the U.S. government must file some form of financial disclosure statement on a regular basis and the U.S. president may not accept a personal gift worth more than \$335 from another head of state. All gifts worth more must be given to a federal agency for disposition.

Ley explained that ethics offices are located in all federal agencies and that approximately 6,000 executive-branch employees are involved in carrying out the ethics program, including providing training and advice on the standards of conduct.

Houdjihoude, calling President Obama a man “who has dedicated himself to change and more ethical politics,” said that is why he “has captured the imagination of people

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## Summit of the Americas: An Introduction

Washington — The fifth Summit of the Americas in April will promote human prosperity, energy security, environmental sustainability, public security and democratic governance. All 34 democratically elected heads of state are gathering in Port of Spain, the capital city of Trinidad and Tobago, for three days of meetings and talks on the future of the Western Hemisphere and to examine political, social and economic issues confronting the region.

The overarching goal of the summit is to improve the lives and livelihoods of all residents of the Americas.

It is also President Obama's first meeting with all the leaders of Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada at the same time. The president has met separately with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. There will be no representative from Cuba at the conference.

### FIRST SUMMIT IN 1994

Since the early 1990s and after decades of civil strife and military rule in some countries of the region, 34 of the 35 governments in the Western Hemisphere now have elected democracies. And nearly all have moved from state-run, central economies to economic liberalization and free trade, according to Peter Meyer, a Latin American affairs analyst with the U.S. Congressional Research Service.

"In order to build on these values shared by the United States and Latin America as well as develop an agenda for the hemisphere's future, President Clinton organized the first modern Summit of the Americas,"

Meyer said in a recent report for the U.S. Congress.

The first summit was held in 1994 in Miami. There have been three Summits of the Americas since then — Santiago, Chile, in 1998, Quebec City, Canada, in 2001, and Mar del Plata, Argentina, in 2005 — plus two Special Summits of the Americas and a number of ministerial-level summits. One special summit on sustainable development was held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in 1996, and a second in 2004 produced the Declaration of Nuevo León in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2004. Previously, hemispheric leaders met in 1967.

Meyer said in his report that some observers believe one of the greatest accomplishments of the summit process has been the Inter-American Democratic Charter at the Quebec City summit, in which the Americas committed to a democracy clause. The clause led to the Inter-American Democratic Charter in September 2001. "The charter affirms the peoples of the Americas' universal right to democracy and asserts that the governments of the region have an obligation to promote and defend democracy," Meyer said.

Another example of achievements is the plan of action that was developed at the last Summit of the Americas in 2005 in which the countries of the region agreed to act in solidarity with the Haitian people to improve democracy in the island nation.

### 2009 SUMMIT

The 2009 summit's theme is "Securing our citizens' future by promoting human prosperity, energy

security and environmental sustainability." The draft declaration of commitment of this summit combines the traditional summit declaration and plan of action into one document that proposes 65 commitments under broad themes: human prosperity, energy security, environmental sustainability, public security and democratic governance.

During a recent visit to Chile and Costa Rica, Vice President Biden said he was there to consult and listen to the needs of the people of the hemisphere. Biden said in an article placed in Latin American newspapers that he was also helping prepare the president for his first hemispheric summit.

"These meetings are an important first step toward a new day in relations and building partnerships with and among the countries and people of the hemisphere," Biden said. "The president and I understand that only by working together can our countries overcome the challenges we face. Today, we are more than just independent nations who happen to be on the same side of the globe. In today's interconnected world, we are all neighbors who face many common concerns."

*(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

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## Home Gardens on the Rise as White House Plants Kitchen Garden

**By Carolee Walker**  
**Staff Writer**

**Washington** — Planting a garden is an inexpensive way to help children understand that they need fruits and vegetables in their diets, says first lady Michelle Obama.

Fruits and vegetables are brain food, said Mrs. Obama, who hosted students from Bancroft Elementary School in Washington on April 9 to help her plant the first seeds in the White House kitchen garden.

White House assistant chef Sam Kass organized the students in groups, partnering two girls to work with Mrs. Obama. As the students looked for their assigned garden patch, they were thrilled with the orderly layout. "Look! I can read the signs! Here's spinach!" a boy exclaimed. White House grounds crew from the National Park Service and the White House kitchen staff, wearing towering chef hats and white aprons, helped Mrs. Obama and Kass with the planting.

"Everyone is excited about the garden," Kass said, "and everyone wants to help out."

"It's a great lesson," said Tom Vilsack, U.S. secretary of agriculture, who joined Mrs. Obama at the planting. "One of the boys in my group said, 'This is hard work, my back hurts,' and they realize this is what farmers do every day."

"It's great for young people to re-

connect with the land and appreciate where food comes from," said Vilsack, who grew up in Iowa and helped his family tend a butterfly garden.

The White House kitchen garden, which measures about 102 square meters and is located on the west side of the South Lawn, is visible from the street and has southern

include brown Dutch and tennis ball lettuce, savoy cabbage and prickly seed spinach, all reportedly favorites of Jefferson. A large fig plant — the Marseille fig — will be planted on a bed of mint.

Baby lettuce and spinach will be the first crops harvested, Kass said, but he is most excited about the blueberries he expects to pick in June.



*First lady Michelle Obama and students from Bancroft Elementary School plant herbs in the White House kitchen garden.*

exposure, Kass said. The soil is newly enriched with lime rock dust, green sand, crab meal from the Chesapeake Bay, and White House compost — biodegradable waste composed of food and paper that is widely considered a soil conditioner.

The four-season herb, fruit and vegetable garden will feature 25 varieties of heirloom, or nonhybrid, seeds planted in raised beds. Some of the seeds and sprouts originated in the garden of Thomas Jefferson, the nation's third president, and were donated by the Thomas Jefferson Foundation. These plantings

though the garden is not certified as organic, Kass said those who tend the garden will use only organic fertilizers and insect repellents. Lady bugs and praying mantises will control other insect populations. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), before a product can be labeled as organic in the United States, a government-approved certifier must inspect the farm where the food is grown. A honey bee hive set up near the garden will yield honey available to the White House chefs, said Kass, who will tend the garden with Dale

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## Home Gardens on the Rise as White House Plants Kitchen Garden . . .

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Haney, grounds superintendent for the White House, and the students.

Gardening “shouldn’t be overly complicated,” said Jocelyn Frye, Mrs. Obama’s policy director. “This is something that a lot of families can do across the country.”

### HOME FARMING ON THE RISE

According to the National Gardening Association, 37 percent of all U.S. households, or about 43 million families, plan to grow vegetables, fruit, berries or herbs in 2009. That’s up 19 percent from 36 million families in 2008.

In a survey of households planting vegetables, 54 percent say they are growing their own food to save money. According to the seed company Burpee, its kit for first-time gardeners, which sells for \$50, can produce \$1,250 worth of groceries.

The cost for the seeds and soil improvements for the White House

kitchen garden totaled \$200, Mrs. Obama said.

### NICHE CROPS LATEST TREND IN SMALL FARMING

Small farming is on the rise in the United States, and USDA estimates that there are more than 300,000 new farms in the United States since 2002, many run by younger people.

“As we are seeing a huge increase in diverse populations moving into parts of Maryland and across the United States, people are expressing an interest in growing crops native to their countries of origin,” said Berran L. Rogers Jr., who handles small-farm outreach for the Maryland Cooperative Extension program at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

“Many small farmers are planting nontraditional crops — or niche crops — such as shiitake mushrooms and Asian melons,” said Rogers. Small farmers often have limited resources so they farm on a

smaller scale. Such popular niche crops as heirloom tomatoes can be harvested on less than two hectares of land, Rogers said.

In addition to niche crops, small farmers are realizing that people want local, fresh, organic produce, said Rogers, who spent summers harvesting vegetables on his grandfather’s farm on Virginia’s Eastern Shore.

Rogers’ outreach program at the University of Maryland targets socially disadvantaged and limited-resource farmers by advising on record keeping and financial analysis and making them aware of USDA programs.

“More people want to work the earth,” Rogers said. “I think it could be an even stronger trend in the coming years as a way to cut costs.” ♦

## Grandeur of U.S. Vision, Monuments Impresses African Visitor . . .

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in my country and elsewhere. Not because he is a black man, but because he represents this American spirit of practical optimism. He is bridging to a brighter future and focused less on the past.”

“The main lesson I have learned from the various presentations is that good governance is not just a moral recipe, but is a win-win process, which profits both people and their leaders, whereas corruption

profits only a limited category of people,” Houdijhonde said.

“I have seen that Americans have made great progress as far as transparency is concerned and I have some ideas about how to adapt examples I’ve seen into our local context” in Benin, he said.

Crediting the visits with broadening his perspective, Houdijhonde said he has set himself a new goal.

“As I noticed the great number of

memorials in Washington, it gave me the idea that the greatness of America is all about the depth of its roots. I’ll therefore try to foster reconciliation of the past and the future of Benin, a nation with very important historical roots that could become a solid anchor to our leaders facing current and future challenges,” he said.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

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## Relief Workers May Suffer From Undiagnosed Trauma

By Stephen Kaufman  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Relief workers draw admiration as they help communities recover from natural disasters and violence, but beneath the surface of charitable work are stress and trauma that afflict workers as they experience tragic situations, confront their own limitations and then disengage when their mission ends.

Long hours of dedicated work can cause relief workers to ignore signs that they need to address their own problems, but caring for themselves is a key component of effective relief work, according to Nancy Good Sider, associate professor of trauma and conflict studies at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Good Sider recently visited relief workers in countries affected by the December 26, 2004, tsunami to promote staff wellness, with an eye on the end of relief efforts in 2010.

"If you want to help other people, you need to first help yourself," she told America.gov. To illustrate this point, she asked relief workers to describe the tools they use in their jobs that need to be kept in good shape. Responses ranged from computers to hammers and other tools. "Nobody in the workshop ever said themselves. They are the main instrument," she said.

### AID WORKERS SUBJECT TO "SECONDARY TRAUMA"

Exposed to disasters, relief workers sometimes fall victim to what Good Sider calls "secondary trauma," which can cause depression, stress and other symptoms. "The more



*Aid workers in Calang, Indonesia, use a drawing to show where stress affects them in a program to help them deal with secondary trauma.*

empathic and caring we are, the more susceptible we are to possible symptoms of burnout and secondary trauma," she explained. "Relief staff responds to the need," but the positive differences they are making often get subsumed by the tendency to focus on inconveniences, criticisms and limitations.

There is a need to "come to terms with doing the best you can and be OK when things aren't perfect," she said. "And stress is a normal part of relief work. ... The time is short with so much disaster, sometimes in the midst of a violent conflict. It can lead to depression, nightmares, and get turned inward to yourself as anger, or projected to those close to you." Acknowledging the need to step back "doesn't mean that they're weak, selfish or crazy.

... You need to give to yourself so you can give to others."

Good Sider's work ties into other trauma-healing programs offered at EMU's Center for Justice and Peacebuilding. (See "University Offers New Approach to Trauma Healing ( <http://www.america.gov/st/democracy-english/2009/March/20090319115407esnamfua k0.2055933.html&distid=ucs> ).")

She tells relief workers there are three parts to managing stress and building staff wellness: "Nancy's ABCs" of awareness, balance and choice.

Awareness means recognizing the symptoms that show you are suffering from stress or trauma. For example, Good Sider said, she has

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## Relief Workers May Suffer From Undiagnosed Trauma . . .

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learned to recognize muscular tension at the back of her neck as an alarm sign.

Balance involves recognizing the burdens stress imposes. Good Sider said she will hold up a mug of coffee and ask the relief workers at different times of the day how much they think it weighs. The idea of carrying it around, she said, is "not so much if I have stress, but what I'm doing with it, noticing how it weighs me down over time. And it's also the reality that I'm not just holding this coffee but I'm also picking this up, and carrying this, and something else is cluttering on. And that's how we go."

Additionally, part of seeing balance is appreciating the post-traumatic growth that people experience, such as newfound strengths and discoveries about themselves, factors that can offset some of the negative effects of trauma.

Choice involves a conscious decision to deal with stress, to avoid going down a destructive track. "The stress needs to be engaged, released and worked through, rather than something that is ignored."

She gathers workers together and asks them to complete the sen-

tence: "I could take care of myself, but ..." and explain their rationale. This helps them to identify the barriers that hinder everyday self care. The next question asks for a description of one strategy they currently use to stay resilient.

### ENDINGS CAN CAUSE STAFF ANXIETY

Because many tsunami relief efforts will be ending in 2010, Good Sider encouraged leaders to start talking and planning for the upcoming changes. "Any change creates stress, and an ending particularly," she said. It is more than losing close relationships. "You know what you're saying goodbye to but you don't know what's out there that you're moving toward, and it's very uncomfortable. It really kicks up everybody's anxiety." The workers need not only to know it is coming, but the range of feelings they can expect. Endings and transitions stir up the entire organization's stress, and it's helpful to know that this is entirely "normal and natural" and to make some healthy care choices.

Relief workers are often people "who feel quite called" to the job. "They really want to make a differ-



*Nancy Good Sider says aid workers need to use awareness, balance and choice to confront stress and trauma in their jobs.*

ence," she said. But they need to be better prepared for what awaits them in the field.

Firefighters are not sent into a burning building with only advice on how to use their equipment. They receive plenty of training and information on the ways to do their job and not get injured or fa-

tigued. But that is not the case for those being sent to conflict and disaster areas, Good Sider said.

"I don't think we're doing our jobs if we're sending people out to do this really important work and are only training them on things like how to work with building houses and acquiring clean water and sanitation. We need to alert workers to a basic knowledge and skills for stress management, trauma healing and resilience," she said.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

# Students Sell Organic Seedlings to Aid School, Community Center

By Carolee Walker  
Staff Writer

**Bethesda, Maryland** — Students at a public middle school outside Washington are seeing the results of their efforts to grow seedlings along the windowsills of their science classrooms. The potted plants are ready to be sold to local gardeners, with all proceeds donated to support summer programs in a Washington neighborhood working to overcome chronic poverty.

The members of the Bay Savers Club at Westland Middle School are always trying to find ways to raise awareness about environmental issues, so when they heard that Westland's "Growing for Good" community service project was looking for help growing seedlings, or small pots of vegetable and flower plants, they joined forces with two science teachers at the school to lend a hand.

Lauren Rubenstein, a parent volunteer at Westland, and a gardener who helps people build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities through the Maryland Master Gardeners program, has worked over the past several years to raise money for the Perry School Community Services Center in Washington, which provides youth development programs, job training and social services.

Growing seedlings to raise money was Rubenstein's idea. "This year, I thought it would be fun to plant and sell seedlings," she said.

Science teachers Alison Lepard and Stephanie Lee offered to house the plants in their classroom, where students tend to the plants during class after school, and even when the school is closed for vacation.



*The Maryland students had great success growing tomatoes. (State Dept.)*

Seeds donated by area nurseries first were sown by the students in small pots formed out of biodegradable newspaper. The seedlings then were divided and transferred to plastic pots once stems began to sprout. Now that the

seedlings are fully grown, they are ready to be planted outdoors. Although about 100 pots of vegetable and flower seedlings will be sold to members of the Westland neighborhood and community, a small number of pots containing milkweed will be planted in the school's proposed butterfly garden. The seedlings include several varieties of tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, peas, cucumbers and basil.

"We had a lot of success with our tomato plants and broccoli rabe, but the dill just did not work out," said Sam Alterman, who is 12 years old. Sam said his family buys produce from local farmer's markets in the

area.

"Grocery store produce is picked from the farm at the convenience of the shipper and so it doesn't taste as fresh or good as locally grown food," Sam said. And because store-bought produce needs to be washed thoroughly, it wastes energy, he added.

Sam is not alone in his efforts to support sustainable food and choose healthy eating. Celia Ringland, 13, and Sean Jost, 12, see the connection between what they eat and how they think and feel. Sean, who plays sports, says there is no better snack than segments of a fresh orange, which provide natural sugar for energy and water for hydration. Since his parents serve a late dinner, Sean has applesauce and a cookie when he gets home from school. Celia, whose family is from Denmark,

cooks at home. Her favorite meal includes French-style green beans and couscous, a healthy grain dish.

Eight-grader Zoe Ibson, 14, takes cooking classes and this summer plans to attend a camp that is a working farm. Zoe, who has been volunteering at the Perry Center for several years, recently sold her homemade

organic lemonade and donated the profits to the center.

Most of the Westland plants were grown from organic seeds using a special soilless seed-starting medium. Fruits and vegetables labeled

*(Continued on page 16)*



*The seedlings are ready to be planted outdoors, says teacher Alison Lepard. (State Dept.)*

## Fine Arts Program Offers Intensive Experience, Diversity

**By Jeffrey Thomas**  
**Staff Writer**

**Washington** — Not many universities have a campus store selling the creations of its faculty and alumni — artworks, DVDs, housewares, ceramics, jewelry, fashion accessories, books and other gifts — but the Rhode Island School of Design is famous for what its faculty, students and alumni have created as artists and designers. The store's name, *risd/works*, plays on the name by which the school is familiarly known: RISD (pronounced "Rizzdee").

Founded in the 1870s, RISD offers the United States' top-ranked graduate programs in the fine arts, according to U.S. News and World Report magazine — ceramics, digital media, furniture design, glass, graphic design, industrial design, interior architecture, jewelry and metalsmithing, landscape architecture, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture and textiles.

A recent survey of 200 architecture firms by the journal *DesignIntelligence* ranks RISD at the top with four other schools when it comes to architecture as well.

Located in Providence, Rhode Island, contiguous to Brown University, one of the famed Ivy League schools, the RISD community comprises 2,200 students from around the world, including 370 graduate students, approximately 350 faculty and curators, and 400 staff members.

International students comprise a significant fraction of the RISD student body — almost 25 percent.

"RISD has provided me with all the

tools I require for any of the design fields I'd like to go into," said



*Students in RISD's annual Graduate Student Thesis Exhibition.*

Jerome Arul, a student from Singapore. "The Foundation Studies program lets me fully explore all my potential for all the areas of art before I narrow down my interests and passion for selecting a major. While you may come into RISD focused with one design career in mind, the college opens all the possible doors that provide you with so many opportunities and possibilities that you'll be overwhelmed with all the great things you wish to achieve."

Arul sees the school's diversity as the most important aspect of his experience. "RISD is an open venue to meet people from all walks of life, each of different backgrounds and traditions. It's remarkable because what brings these people together is the common language and appreciation for art and design," he said.

RISD has helped develop the talents of such well-known artists as fashion designer Nicole Miller, filmmaker Gus Van Sant, glass artist Dale Chihuly, creator of the TV show *Family Guy* Seth MacFarlane, architect/designer Preston Scott Cohen, artist/author Mark Shasha, photogra-

pher Francesca Woodman and author/illustrator Chris Van Allsburg.

At the undergraduate level, RISD offers bachelor degrees in fine arts, architecture, interior architecture, industrial design and graphic design.

"We have a full liberal arts and art history curriculum," said Claudia Ford, director of RISD's Office of International Programs. "We have a curriculum that is both steeped in the tradition of our 150-year-old school and cutting-edge and innova-

tive. All of our students are required to take an identical foundation year of classes to hone their skills in visual knowledge and production."

Providence, Ford said, is "a small, manageable city that has all the amenities of a big city and is lo-



*RISD students carry their projects to their studios.*

cated convenient to Boston and New York. We are a small school but located close to the facilities and amenities of a major university. The research opportunities are limitless."

RISD and Brown offer a dual-degree program that allows participating students to earn a bachelor of fine arts degree from RISD and a bache-

*(Continued on page 13)*

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## Fine Arts Program Offers Intensive Experience, Diversity . . .

*(Continued from page 12)*

lor of arts degree from Brown over the course of five years.

"RISD is an intense and intensive academic experience," Ford said. "We are not known as a 'party school.' Our students work long and hard hours on their classroom and studio work. We have a strong work ethic and studio-based culture where every student has their own studio space and works intensely on their projects."

Freshmen have their own drafting-table work areas in their dorm rooms in addition to shared studio space in the freshman residence hall

complex that is accessible around the clock. Graduate students have private or semi-private studio facilities with 24-hour access.

RISD has an unusually high graduation rate — on average, 90 percent of students who begin as freshmen complete their studies and receive a degree within six years.

A 2005 survey of RISD alums found 96 percent employed and 4 percent in graduate school. Of those employed, 70 percent had a job in the arts directly related to their major, while 25 percent were employed in a position indirectly related to their major. These results are typical, according to the RISD

career office.

To view photo galleries and videos of master's thesis work done by the Class of 2008, visit the RISD Web site ( [http://www.risd.edu/grad\\_gallery.cfm](http://www.risd.edu/grad_gallery.cfm) ). Work from the class of 2009 will be available for viewing online soon.

For more top schools, see Education & Youth ( <http://www.america.gov/amlife/education.html> ).

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

## Veteran Reporter Outlines Challenges of Reporting from Zimbabwe . . .

*(Continued from page 4)*

period covering South Africa's violent transition in the early 1990s from apartheid to its first democratic election in 1994.

More people died from political violence during those years than during all of the rest of the apartheid era, she said. "I could do a hard news story every day without a contact because people were being killed in front of my eyes," she recalled. Zimbabwe's struggle has been measured out in a different kind of carnage. "ZANU-PF knows that if you kill people, you get headlines in newspapers. So ... what they did was they beat people. They maimed them most dreadfully," she said, with as many as 30 percent of the more than 3,000 injured during the 2008 political violence left with lifelong disabilities.

In its annual report on human

rights, the U.S. State Department concluded that during 2008, along with the injured and more than 30,000 people displaced, Mugabe's government "or its agents" had killed more than 193 citizens in political violence and engaged in "the pervasive and systematic abuse of human rights."

### ETHICAL DILEMMAS

Thanks to her sources, Thornycroft was able to write stories on election vote rigging and the Mugabe regime's premeditated campaign of violence against supporters or suspected supporters of its political opposition. But her reliance on these sources also left her with an ethical dilemma. Good reporters push very hard to get sources identified "on the record" to fully identify the origins of information in a story. But Thornycroft usually cannot reveal details that would expose her sources' identities because doing so would put them at risk.

"You can't tell it all, can you? Because it may lead to them being identified, and that is just hideous," she said. "It really dilutes your story. But you've just got to do it."

Thornycroft said she cannot get comments from the government to try to balance her articles. "I phone up ZANU-PF and they hang up on me. They still do it."

"They're going to have to realize that politicians are still politicians. And if they were the good guys yesterday, they may not always be the good guys, and they must keep their eyes open," she said.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦

## Scientists Find Humans Grow New Heart Muscle

By Daniel Gorelick  
Staff Writer

**Washington** — Scientists are using measurements of the radioactive carbon produced by Cold War-era nuclear bomb tests to prove adult humans replace heart muscle.

The findings, published in the April 3 issue of *Science* magazine, address the long-standing question of whether heart muscle cells divide after birth and suggest that stimulating heart muscle regeneration is a viable strategy for combating heart disease.

“The loss of heart cells after, say, a heart attack often leads to impaired cardiac function,” said study leader Jonas Frisén of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. “This new finding that heart cells can be replaced motivates further research into ways of stimulating the renewal mechanism to replace the cells that have been lost.”

Globally, heart disease is the leading cause of death, representing 30 percent of all deaths in 2005, according to the World Health Organization. More than a third of those deaths were caused by heart attacks.

Frisén and colleagues estimate that about 1 percent of heart muscle cells divide annually at age 25, dropping to less than half that amount at age 75.

### MEASURING CARBON IN DNA

Above-ground tests of nuclear weapons during the Cold War caused a sharp increase in atmospheric concentrations of carbon-14, a form of carbon that is normally present in trace amounts, according

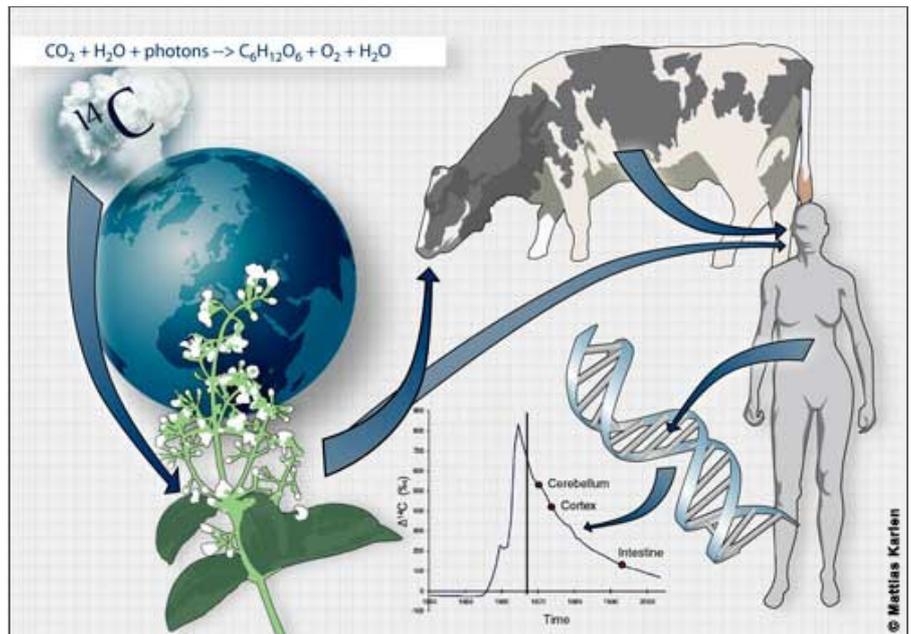
to the study. (The number 14 refers to the mass of this form of carbon atom; carbon-12 accounts for about 99 percent of all carbon.)

Even though tests were usually conducted in remote locations, the fallout spread around the world.

Carbon-14 diffused out of the atmosphere.

Carbon-14 ultimately wound up in human DNA, which remains intact after a cell divides.

By measuring the amount of car-



*Carbon-14 from nuclear tests is taken up by plants and animals, eaten by humans and incorporated into DNA.*

Carbon-14, like carbon-12, reacts with oxygen to form carbon dioxide, which is incorporated into plants by photosynthesis.

“Humans eat plants and animals that live off plants, so the carbon-14 concentration in the human body mirrors that in the atmosphere at any given time,” the authors wrote.

The worldwide spike in carbon-14 ended in 1963, when the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty prohibited nuclear explosions in the atmosphere, underwater or in outer space. Atmospheric carbon-14 levels dropped exponentially as car-

bon-14 incorporated into DNA and comparing that with the amount of carbon-14 in the atmosphere, scientists were able to determine the age of heart cells and show that a small percentage was younger than the age of the human.

Study co-author Bruce Buchholz, a physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, used a technique called mass spectrometry to determine carbon-14 levels in human tissue. Mass spectrometry is able to distinguish the small difference in mass between carbon-14 and other forms of carbon, such as carbon-12.

*(Continued on page 16)*

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## Small Towns Line Up for \$7.2 Billion in High-Speed Internet Funds

**By Judi Hasson**  
**Special Correspondent**

**Washington** — Cook County in Minnesota is a pristine wilderness area along the Canadian border. While its residents enjoy canoeing, hiking and spotting moose and other wildlife, they lack access to broadband Internet service.

Bob Fenwick, a county commissioner, hopes that will change soon. The county will seek a grant from the \$787 billion economic stimulus plan, officially called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Signed into law by President Obama in February, the plan designates \$7.2 billion for broadband services in unserved and underserved communities across the country.

The stimulus package was designed to jump-start the U.S. economy. It puts emphasis on local "shovel-ready projects," such as repairing and building bridges and roads. The portion of funds available for broadband development may offer even greater promise of economic benefits than those that simply create short-term construction jobs. By bringing communities into the 21st century with modern technology, building Internet infrastructure may spur job growth in high-tech and service businesses.

"If we were going to give people a reason to live in Cook County, we have to have a reason for them to be here and work. That can work with high-speed broadband," Fenwick said. Cook County fits the criteria set forth in the stimulus plan. With a population of 5,500, the county depends on satellite dishes for television signals and has little else to offer residents in terms of technology. Although vacationers swell the county's population by 20,000 in the summer and create

jobs for tourism-related businesses, the local economy doesn't have much in the way of year-round industry.

Cook County wants \$12 million in grant money to lay down hundreds of kilometers of fiber cable and hook the county up to high-speed Internet service. February's unemployment rate reached 9.4 percent in the county, and broadband could bring jobs, officials believe. There's a small hospital in the county that does not offer surgery or some other services, with some patients being flown to Duluth, Minnesota, for care. Broadband would lead the way to using the Internet to diagnose health problems with help from a larger hospital 160 kilometers away. Broadband access also would make it possible for people to earn a living through home-based businesses or by telecommuting. It would even be a boon for tourism: Many Americans want to take holidays in the region but stay connected to work via e-mail.

### **BIG CITY, BUT FALLING BEHIND**

A recent report by the Communications Workers of America found that roughly 60 percent of urban and suburban households have access to broadband Internet, but only 38 percent of rural households do. As communities seek federal money, the U.S. federal government will determine what constitutes "unserved" and "underserved" communities. Two agencies in charge of awarding the broadband money are trying to come up with definitions to determine what kind of communities will qualify.

It's going to be important to some big-city mayors too; small communities aren't the only ones seeking the grants. Akron, Ohio, for instance, has its eye on a piece of the

\$787 billion in economic stimulus. So do dozens of other cities across America that hope this one-time bonanza will help extend services, create jobs and attract businesses.

Akron, with a population of more than 200,000 and an unemployment rate close to 10 percent, wants \$7 million in stimulus money to bring wireless into every home and business within the city limits. "There are certainly going to be jobs created around this project," said Dave Lieberth, Akron's deputy mayor of administration. "It would be a tool for work force development. It holds a lot of promise for those who need to improve their skills."

Investment of every \$1 billion would create 57,000 jobs, both direct (construction) and indirect (Internet network-related), according to Mark Arisboury, chief technology officer of the Knight Center of Digital Excellence, located in Akron. "People don't really realize that there are significant [Internet] deserts in every urban area," Arisboury said. "What often happens is that there are blighted areas, blighted housing, 'dead zones,' and a lot of communities don't have a way to change what's around them."

One big city that fits this category is Miami, with a population of 440,000. Peter Korinis, a top technology adviser for the city, said there are "hot spots" of broadband, but penetration is not universal. The city is seeking \$150 million to \$200 million in stimulus funds to build broadband networks throughout the 88-square-kilometer city. "We are losing our competitive edge," he said. "[Citizens] are losing out." ♦

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Telling America's story

## **Scientists Find Humans Grow New Heart Muscle . . .**

*(Continued from page 14)*

Frisén and Australian scientist Kirsty L. Spalding first used carbon-14 levels to date human tissue in 2005. Since then, their method has been used to measure the age of cells throughout the body. A 2008 study showed the number of fat cells remains relatively constant in adults, suggesting that increasing fat mass is due to increases in the size, not the number, of fat cells.

### **A HEART DIVIDED**

Muscle cells in the heart divide before birth. Other types of cells continue to divide after birth, but muscle cell division slows dramatically. Most of the subsequent increase in heart size comes from an increase in muscle cell size, not in the number of cells.

To complicate matters, the DNA in heart muscle cells often replicates in

the absence of cell division, leading to cells that contain multiple copies of DNA. Frisén and colleagues painstakingly sorted heart muscle and identified cells containing the normal amount of DNA, ensuring the accuracy of their carbon-14 analysis.

After a heart attack, heart muscle is lost and replaced by scar tissue. Frisén and colleagues hope that their study will spur efforts to increase the rate of cell division.

Whether cell division occurs in response to injury is unknown. The source of the new heart muscle cells also remains a mystery. Do they arise from old muscle cells that suddenly divide, or from an undiscovered population of stem cells in or near the heart?

Answering these questions could bring researchers one step closer to mitigating the effects of heart failure. ♦

## **Students Sell Organic Seedlings to Aid School, Community Center . . .**

*(Continued from page 11)*

"organic" are produced free of bio-engineering or ionizing radiation and without the use of pesticides or fertilizers that are made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge.

### **LEARNING BY DOING**

Around the United States, the Chez Panisse Foundation in Berkeley, California, sponsors Edible Schoolyards, organic garden and kitchen classrooms, at public schools as part of a larger movement to teach children healthy eating by getting them out of the classroom and into the garden. Fifth-grade students from Bancroft Elementary School in Washington, who plant and harvest fruits and

vegetables in the school's garden, have been helping first lady Michelle Obama tend to the new White House kitchen garden.

Lisa K. Alexander, director of environmental education at the Audubon Naturalist Society, is working to develop Web-based garden templates that will make it easier for schools to plan and implement successful gardens on school grounds.

### **CONNECTING THE DOTS**

Growing seedlings to support the work of the Perry Center is teaching children how to "connect the dots," said Perry Center board member Susan Baron.

The students are building a conscience of social justice, Baron said. "They are beginning to understand that those with more can do things for people with less and that they can do this easily."

More information on the Maryland Master Gardener program ( <http://mastergardener.umd.edu/> ) is available on a University of Maryland Web site.

Additional information on the Perry School Community Services Center ( <http://www.perryschool.org> ) can be found on the center's Web site.

*(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://www.america.gov>)* ♦