Dear Friends of the Samuel Huntington Award,

It is always a pleasure, and with pride, that I write about our current and former winners and their achievements. This year, however, the story of two of our former winners: Sadiqa Basiri and Abraham Awolich, from Afghanistan and South Sudan respectively, is very different. Each of them has become a victim of the repressive governments now in control of their countries, and each has been forced to flee for their lives. I am thankful to report that both Sadiqa and Abraham have now escaped to safety. Each of them has given me permission to use their names in this newsletter.

I should add that when we interview candidates for the Samuel Huntington Award, we often ask ourselves about the potential dangers of the project and/or the country where the candidate hopes to work. When we made the awards to Sadiqa and Abraham, the kinds of problems that exist today in those countries were not on the horizon, so we thought it was safe to support the projects, geared to education and medical needs. Conditions have regrettably deteriorated badly since then.

These brave young people used the Samuel Huntington Award money to help make life better for the young people of their countries, giving them hope and a future. In spite of their amazing work, they are now in grave danger. Each of them hopes to continue their work despite the dangers and the almost insurmountable obstacles. Each has a family still in their own countries, and that is a source of deep concern for them.

Abraham, one of the famous “Lost Boys”, graduated from the University of Vermont in 2007, won the Samuel Huntington Award, and returned to South Sudan to use the money to start a school for boys and girls with a medical facility attached in the village of Kalthok. Following that enterprise, Abraham co-founded the SUDD Institute with the aim of supporting the government of South Sudan in building a just democratic society. The SUDD Institute has been recognized as one of the premiered think tanks in Africa today. However, the results of their grassroots efforts and its recommendations have caused the government to order the arrest of its officers and has threatened them with death.

Sadiqa, after graduating from Mount Holyoke in 2009, returned to Afghanistan and, with the Samuel Huntington Award, started a two-year community college for girls, teaching them basic skills like English, computer literacy and advocacy. Courses were added to the curriculum, which was built by

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Jennifer Huntington Chair

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TRIBE: High School Education in Liberia

Liberia’s school system is crippled by fourteen years of civil war and an outdated curriculum. Only 20 percent of high school students reach twelfth grade.

After graduating from Lynn University, Wainright Acquoi aims to change those conditions. Through partnerships with schools, his organization, TRIBE, will add entrepreneurship and digital literacy courses, implement an internship program for top performing students, and help students apply to college after high school graduation. In the first year of the internship program, he plans to recruit 50 top performing students, place at least 80 percent of them with internships, and of those, have 70 percent continue working with the employer. Wainright is already finding partner schools and businesses, training fifteen high school administrators, and designing the new curriculum. He is hoping to build “a sustainable education venture to reimagine secondary school education across Liberia.” The Award will allow him to take the first concrete steps toward his goal.

Project Hope: Aiding Reentry for Those Incarcerated in Philadelphia

Many legal and social services provide help and resources to support defendants in court before incarceration and to help socialize them after release from prison. Elizabeth “Carson” Eckard, a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, recognized the need to provide help to people while they are incarcerated.

Through her Project HOPE, Carson will provide two key services for people in Philadelphia’s city jails, which do not now exist. The first focuses on the wrongly incarcerated, which is a problem in Philadelphia as a result of past practices. Project HOPE will review cases that may involve wrongful incarceration, match clients with pro-bono representation, and support any resulting litigation. She hopes to work with the Liberation Foundation, which she helped create while an undergraduate at Penn, to provide this service.

The second service centers on reentry. Working with SCI Coal Township and the Riverside Correctional Facility, Project HOPE will facilitate twenty bi-weekly work shops with financial, employment, and mental health professionals to develop a personal “reentry plan” for the first six months after each prisoner’s release. The reentry preparation program will also connect prisoners with educational resources and job training, greatly aiding the reentry process. As Elizabeth explains, this training and access will “create a smoother transition to home for incarcerated Pennsylvanians while filling an important gap in the current local reentry model.”

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Odoolowu Health Center: Primary Care in Lagos State, Nigeria

Tolani Yesufu's project grew out of a personal tragedy. Her father suffered a heart attack in her home in the Odoolowu District of Lagos, Nigeria, and the nearest hospital was about two hours away. Odoolowu has a population of 150,000 without a single health center.

Upon graduation from Cornell, Tolani’s project will change that situation. She is pairing up with local government to develop and implement a local health care center. The government has agreed to provide a building and three certified nurses seven times a week. Tolani will renovate and upgrade the building, using local vendors and small businesses. She will also provide necessary equipment and prescriptions, and pay the nurses’ salaries during one year with the Huntington Award. After that, the local government will assume ongoing costs of the health center, and pay the nurses’ salaries.

Tolani’s project represents a practical and workable solution to a critical problem. Her partnership with the community assures the commitment necessary to support the long term success of the new health care center. As she concludes, “this project will immensely improve the quality of life of Odoolowu residents and also provide much needed economic relief and opportunity to offset the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic for low income workers within the community.”

Prior Winners Face Real Challenges, continued

teachers, and, by the end of 2014, not only did 514 students graduate, but the community college transitioned to Afghanistan’s first and only non-profit social enterprise university, Oruj. Since then, the university has added courses in law, economics and management, and has admitted male students. In 2018 Oruj was proudly self-sustaining! Most of the graduates have gone on to get jobs in government and non-profit international organizations such as UNICEF, Red Cross etc. Many alumnae were active in social change forums focusing on issues of violence against women, social justice etc. The Taliban is allowing private universities to resume, but fewer than 200 students have been attending classes.

Over the past thirty years, the Samuel Huntington Award, with your generous support, has made it possible for young social entrepreneurs to set up a wide array of public service projects, including gender equity, improved education, a more sustainable environment, better health care, and a future with hope to literally tens of thousands of people in the USA and across the globe. We continue to stay in touch with many of them, and learn what they are doing, sometimes despite very difficult conditions. Thank you for your very generous donations that make it possible for us to continue doing this work.
Thank you to our Supporters!

The Samuel Huntington Fund was established in 1989 and, thanks to you, has now granted 83 Public Service Awards. Please keep the Fund in mind as you make your year-end charitable donations. You can make a tax deductible contribution at any time by visiting our website (www.samuelhuntingtonaward.org), our Facebook page (www.facebook.com/SamuelHuntingtonFund/) or sending a check to:

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c/o Ms. Amy Stacy  
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For your convenience, a pre-addressed envelope is enclosed with this newsletter. In addition, you can now also support the Huntington Fund through PayPal partners including: eBay, GoFundMe, Humble Bundle, Airbnb, Nextdoor, ShoppingGives, and Zakatify. Thank you for your consideration!