

> local events for Haiti

Pecha Kucha!

On Friday February 19th a crowd of over three hundred people gathered at the Austrian embassy to attend DC's contribution to "Pecha Kucha Global Day for Haiti", a global event aimed at raising money for Architecture for Humanity's rebuilding effort in Haiti. This was part of a "wave" of events hosted by different PechaKucha chapters worldwide, starting and ending in Tokyo, and all broadcast live on UStream. PechaKucha (Japanese for the sound of chit-chat, www.pechakucha.org) was originally devised by Astrid Klein and Mark Dytham, partners in a Tokyo-based firm, Klein Dytham Architecture. They envisioned it as a way for people in the design professions to get together and share their work in a lively and inspiring atmosphere. The format they chose is unique and concise, where each presenter is allowed 20 slides shown for 20 seconds apiece. There are now PechaKucha chapters in over 286 cities

worldwide, hosting events that often include a wide variety of topics other than architecture and design. The Washington DC chapter was started by Iranian-American sisters Bitá and Rouzita Vahhabaghá, partners in Ita Design, a multi-disciplinary design practice. AfH-DC's own Josef Fuentes was one of the 8 presenters for the evening. His presentation focused on AfH's long term goals and commitment to all the projects it undertakes. Other speakers included Lola Poisson-Joseph, the wife of the Haitian ambassador to the US and the founder of the Children and Families Global Development Fund; Karina Gomes of Al-Jazeera, just back from reporting on the earthquake in Haiti; and Aaron Banks of ONE, an organization working to persuade G8 countries to forgive Haiti's debt. Two of the other speakers, Mikael Moore (Chief of Staff to Rep. Maxine Waters) and Skyler Badenoch of buildON, presented photographs accompanied by their own journal entries. For a large part, the mood was somber, with

a lot of the slides focusing on the harsh ground realities that Haiti, an already impoverished country, is now grappling with. Happily, the evening ended with the smiles back on faces, as Bruce Macphail of Clowns without Borders demonstrated how laughter helps in relieving the suffering of people in crisis or conflict situations. At the time of wrapping up this issue of Capital Ideas, PechaKucha Global Day had succeeded in raising over \$60,000 towards AfH's Haiti rebuilding effort, with the DC event contributing over \$6000, more than any other participating city. Presentations from around the world have been archived online in an effort to keep the fundraising momentum going through the construction process as well. Such events are a great way for us to get together with fellow design professionals and other caring individuals who are motivated to enact change.

-Maya Srinivasan,
Julia Siple



Sean Quinn with a fellow DJ at the event. Photo by AfH-DC



Interior view of One Lounge. Photo by AfH-DC

Benefit at One Lounge

On February 26, 2010, Sean Quinn (of AfH-DC) and Saroj Siegler hosted a fundraiser to benefit Architecture for Humanity's reconstruction efforts in Haiti. The event was sponsored by The Princeton Club and Ivy Club Network of Washington and was held at One Lounge, a trendy new spot in the Dupont Circle neighborhood. DJs Christine Moritz of Eighteenth Street Lounge, Foday of Brownrice Collective & ESL, and Sean of textureDJs Collective spun a sampling of international tunes, while One Lounge served up delectable cocktails and eclectic fare for the 165 guests. Altogether, we raised \$2500 for Haiti Reconstruction. The feedback from the guests was extremely positive, and the event turned into an excellent networking opportunity for those interested in the relief effort. The success of this event has motivated the Ivy Club network to host a monthly series of benefits towards the relief and reconstruction of Haiti,

-Sean Quinn



Aaron Banks of One Organization, presenting at Pecha Kucha at the Austrian Embassy. Photo by Sexy Fitsum/iLLimeter (<http://illmeter.com>)

> project highlight

The Akilah Institute for Women Mbyo, Rwanda



Elizabeth Davis, Executive Director and Co-founder of the Akilah Institute with members of the 2010 Inaugural Class at the Kigali Campus (above). Photo by the Akilah Institute.

On Saturday, February 6, the inaugural class of the Akilah Institute for Women were joined by their family and friends, the Akilah team, and various supporters from around the world to celebrate the official opening of the Akilah Institute's campus in Kigali, Rwanda. The group of 50 young women, all survivors of the 1994 genocide and its aftermath, went through a rigorous selection process and will now pursue an innovative curriculum designed to position them for careers in Rwanda's burgeoning tourism industry.

Only 0.33% of the entire population of Rwanda are female University graduates.

The Kigali Campus will serve as the only campus for the institution, until the first phase of construction is completed for future flagship campus in Mbyo, Rwanda.

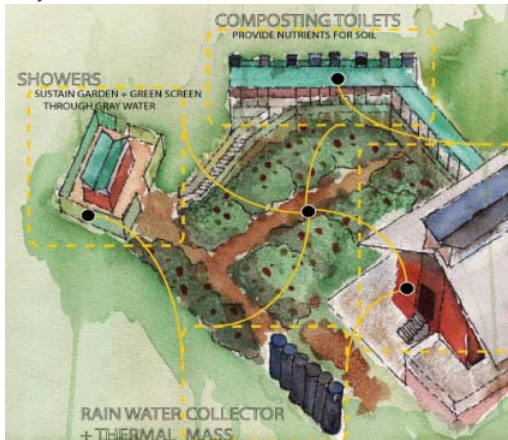


Diagram of sustainable systems for the proposed dormitory.



Interior view of proposed Kitchen/Culinary Classroom, utilizing modern equipment and recycled local wood.



Overall Proposed Master Plan, showing Phase(s) One in red, Two in light tan, and Three in brown.

All images courtesy of AfH-DC and the Akilah Institute.

AfH-DC is proud to be part of collaborative effort to realize Akilah's vision for its permanent campus in Mbyo, planned to accommodate 200 students. Four team members visited the proposed site in November 2008 to conduct a survey and connect with the community. They were immediately enamored with the site, which offered the Akilah team a defunct primary school campus of approximately 14 buildings, originally constructed in the 1940's by a group of Italian missionaries. The team also recognized how surrounding agricultural fields, and gently sloping topography leading to Lake Cyohoha provided for a unique and special site. After the visit, AfH-DC maintained a design team through 2009 that worked closely with the Akilah team, Pannotia (Design and Construction), Engineers Without Borders, and other partners to develop a phased master plan, and schematic drawing set for phase one of construction for the school. The collaborative process identified re-use of existing structures, innovative learning spaces, community integration, and sustainability as key elements for final designs.

The overall master plan is divided into 3 phases. Phase One, planned to accommodate 75 students, seeks to revitalize existing buildings and replace the current infrastructure of the existing campus with sustainable systems such as solar power, composting toilets, and safe water collection. The architectural design set developed by AfH-DC and its partners used low impact yet creative design concepts such as addition of porch areas, landscaping elements, and utilization of passive design, to help Akilah plan for a efficient yet sensitive activation of the existing campus.

In addition to rethinking classrooms and office spaces, the AfH-DC team consulted with professionals to develop a culinary classroom within the existing kitchen. Sustainable materials such as cob, recycled sails, and natural plaster are utilized in the design. The existing dormitory, currently used for agricultural storage, was also re-invented by design features such as water collection, an agricultural plot, and composting toilet facilities.

Phase Two begins campus expansion by focusing on classroom and dormitory growth integrated

with active and robust outdoor spaces. The expansion increases the student population to 200. Phase Three adds programmatic elements such as a restaurant, community center, lake observatory and new library to the unique spirit of the campus. Perhaps the most compelling addition is the guesthouse overlooking the lake, planned to be staffed by the students as part of their training. Agricultural fields planned for Phases Two and Three could also offer a way for the community to integrate itself with campus functions.

In November 2009, the AfH design team submitted a complete design package, including master plan documents, Phase One architectural drawings, and supporting materials, to Pannotia (Collaborative Design and Construction). Currently Pannotia is working with a local architect to develop the drawings to a Construction Document level. For further information please visit (<http://akilahinstitute.org>) and (<http://www.pannotia.org/>).

The Akilah Institute for Women is a shining example of the importance of sustained and long-term humanitarian efforts in areas of disaster.

While removed from the 1994 genocide by over a decade and a half, the Institute addresses its sociological aftermath by providing opportunities to bright yet needy young women, many of whom are orphans, heads of their households, and all of whom are survivors. In the wake of terrible recent tragedies such as those in Haiti and Chile, the work of the Akilah Institute and their partners sheds light on the how the devastating effects of disasters reach far past the relatively brief news coverage given to them, and demand an honest, well coordinated, and lasting strategy by the international community.

-Shurid Rahman



Skyler Badenoch in Mwanandini, Malawi.

>discussion with Skyler Badenoch

Skyler Badenoch, who manages buildOn's international programs, had the crowd at PechaKucha night riveted with compelling photographs and journal entries from Haiti following the earthquake. Maya Srinivasan of Capital Ideas caught up with him to learn more about his work at buildOn, a nonprofit organization that has been empowering remote communities in developing countries through building schools.

CI: Tell us a bit about your background and how you got involved with buildOn.

SB: My international experience really started as a Peace Corps volunteer in Cote d'Ivoire. I then came to DC to do a master's in International Development at GWU. When I was graduating, my current boss called me up to see if I wanted to join buildOn to start their Haiti program, as well as oversee the Monitoring and Evaluation for the programs in five other countries. I started their Haiti program – hired and trained local staff, and began building schools – in 2006.

CI: How did the idea of buildOn come about and what are your programs?

SB: Our founder, Jim Ziolkowski, was backpacking in Nepal in 1991 when he came across a school being inaugurated in a remote area. Seeing the enormous sacrifices the community had made to achieve this had a profound impact on him. He quit his job at General Electric and started building schools, the first one was in Brazil. buildOn now has school construction programs in six countries. We build about 50 schools a year, and have built almost 350 in total. In 1999, Jim started the first after-school program here in the US, in the high school he attended in Detroit. There are now after-school programs in 6 cities in the US, focusing on inner-city kids and involving them in community service, such as working with seniors, disabled, homeless, as well as raising money for the construction of schools abroad. In 2001 we started to link these programs more significantly,

and we now send kids from the US to developing countries to work on school construction projects. For most of these kids who've never been out of their cities or neighborhoods, it's been a transformational experience, helping them gain more the world.

CI: How do you identify the communities in which to work in?

SB: We have four different ways of doing this. First, we look in remote rural areas for communities that could use our help, like villages where kids are being taught under a tree. Soon enough, once we've done projects in an area, communities start approaching us. The second way is through leveraging our partnerships with NGOs in different parts of the world, who tell us where we could be of help. The third is through our extensive local staff in each country, who help identify the places that need schools. And the fourth, which is really my favorite way of doing it, is to partner with the government, through the Ministries of Education. They let us know their needs and we are able not just to construct schools but provide teacher training as well. For example, we've had this really interesting partnership with local mayors' offices in Nicaragua. They not only identify the communities that need schools, but also take responsibility for transporting all materials out to the site. This saves us almost \$5000 per school and is a tremendous advantage.

CI: How much is the local community involved and how do you see that affecting the outcome in various projects?

SB: We've never done a project where we haven't engaged the local community. We go in and explain what we plan to do, and get them to form a committee of 6 men and 6 women to steer the project through completion. We ask them to provide 12-20 volunteers per day to work on the site. Usually we have an excess of volunteers and that's mainly thanks to the efforts of our local staff who can really mobilize their people. Community participation is central to the success of our projects.

CI: What is the design philosophy you follow when building schools?

SB: The actual design varies from country to country, depending on local materials and techniques. For instance, in Malawi, some communities make up to 70,000 bricks for us to use. We build schools that are safe and easily maintained by the communities they serve. Other than that, we like to keep the design simple enough so that any construction worker can work on it without needing too many specific skills.

CI: What is your approach to working in post-disaster or post-conflict situations, and what are you currently doing in Haiti?

SB: We don't seek out post-conflict situations, we like to go into stable countries that are willing to receive our programs. In Nicaragua, though, the program started in response to Hurricane Mitch. Though working in such a situation means having to deal with fluctuating prices, difficulty in trans-

porting materials, and communities made poorer by the circumstances, we don't change anything about the way we work. We remain focused on community development in remote rural areas. It's the same in Haiti. The day before the earthquake, I was down there to break ground on two schools. Of course, that had to be postponed, but within a few weeks the communities came back to us to ask if we would resume building. We are going to go back to the rural parts of South Haiti, where a lot of people are relocating and where the services are increasingly stretched. Our short-term goal is to build 12 schools, and the long-term goal is to build a 100 before the 10-year anniversary of the quake.

CI: What lessons have you learnt from working in impoverished countries like Haiti and Malawi?

SB: One of our underlying concepts is to give people the opportunity to change their lives. Engaging with communities that have sometimes never had any interactions with outsiders means you have to be structured and organized, and demonstrate your commitment to the project by almost being ahead of schedule on anything. It's a continuous learning process for us as well but we now have a streamlined method that allows us to complete school projects in 12 weeks on average.

CI: Where is buildOn headed, and how do you think you might engage with an organization like Architecture for Humanity?

SB: We're always looking to partner with like-minded organizations where we may mutually add value. Architecture for Humanity is definitely one of those. We're always open to ideas for how to improve our schools in any way, so we'd love to work with architects to make our schools more cost-effective, or more environmentally conscious. Our CEO met Cameron Sinclair at the TED conference, where they had a good conversation, so I think there are definitely ways to work together at a higher level too.



A buildOn school in Chitunda, Malawi.



Schoolchildren in Kambala, Malawi.

All photos courtesy of Skyler Badenoch.

Capital Ideas - AfH-DC

> march-april calendar

(Events with AfH-DC member participation or AfH-DC related are highlighted in orange)

- **Sat. March 27th - Sun. March 28th Structures for Inclusion Conference**
Howard University.
www.designcorps.org
- **Tues. April 6th 5:30 pm Catholic University Lecture Series.:** Nimish Patel
Relevance of Traditional Materials, Technology and Craftsmanship in Contemporary Architecture and Interior Design. Location: Embassy of India, 2107 Massachusetts Avenue NW
- **Tues. April 10th AfH-DC Shalom House Volunteer Event.** See more information in the Opportunities section.
- **Fri. April 16th - June Exhibition of Rachel Schmidt** (of AfH-DC).
Arlington Arts Center. The event will be a solo show of Rachel's work. A site specific installation about parasitic memories and half-fictional narratives will be showcased. Visit (<https://www.arlingtonartscenter.org/exhibitions>) for more information.
- **Sat. April 24th AfH-DC Spring Benefit Concert.** District Canon will be headlining, along with Achtung Panda at O'Shaughnessy's Pub (King St. Metro, Blue Line). Visit (www.myspace.com/oshughnessypub) for more details.
- **Sun. April 25th Off Ramp Exhibition.** See more information in the Upcoming Events section.
- **Thurs. April 29th 6:30 pm National Building Museum Lecture Series.** Sustainable Schools.

> ideas?

We welcome ideas and contributions!
send to: newsletter@afh-dc.org

Opportunities to join the team are coming this summer (see the Marketing Committee Opportunities to the right).

The Capital Ideas Newsletter Team is:
Maya Srinivasan, Julia Siple, Shurid Rahman.

Thank you to everyone else who helped and contributed!

> upcoming events

Onsite Architecture Lecture

Architecture for Humanity-DC and Icon Studio are proud to present a lecture by On-site Architecture. The principals, Keith and Marie Zawistowski, are lecturers at Virginia Tech and have been featured at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City, as well as in several English and French-language publications. They will discuss their practices in the design and construction of ecologically sensitive building types. This evening promises to have drinks, snacks and all the tasty ideas you can handle.



Where: ICON Studio, 1821 14th Street NW, DC 20009 (Metro – U Street/ Cardozo)
When: April 9th, 6:00pm to 8:30pm

> opportunities

The AfH-DC Member Meeting of February 22nd, 2010, held at RTKL's DC office, saw an excellent turnout of new and already active members alike. The newly formed committees were introduced and their respective heads outlined the goals and needs of each one. The following outlines our current opportunities.

AfH-DC Event Opportunities:
(opportunities are pro-bono)

- **Onsite Architecture Lecture (see above):**
On April 9th, volunteers are needed to help distribute flyers, and set up and clean up the venue of this event. Contact Michelle Bove at michelle@afh-dc.org for details.
- **Shalom House:**
On April 10th, a group volunteering event is planned to complete landscaping work. Contact Sean King at outreach@afh-dc.org or seank@afh-dc.org for details.

AfH Project and Committee Opportunities:
(all positions and opportunities are pro-bono)

- **Cardozo High School (new project):**
AfH-DC and 21CSF are collaborating to develop design solutions that improve the learning environment in DC's public schools. Contact Dawn Hyman & Krupa Patel at cardozo@afh-dc.org.
- **Outreach Committee:**
Project Seekers are needed for research and development of new group volunteering opportunities for AfH-DC members. Contact Sean King at outreach@afh-dc.org

**Off Ramp Exhibition:
presented by AfH-DC and The Dunes**

The DC Chapter of Architecture for Humanity and The Dunes, an event concept company, are teaming up to present "Off Ramp". This single-day exhibition is co-curated by AfH-DC's Rachel Schmidt and Michelle Bove. The focus will be on illustrating the scope of Architecture for Humanity, what we do and how we are making a difference locally and globally.

**Where: Longview Gallery
1234 9th Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
(Metro: Mt. Vernon Square – Convention Center)**
**When: April 25th 2010, 3:00pm to 9:00pm
(The exhibition runs only one day)**

(Project and Committee Opportunities cont'd)

- **Marketing Committee:**
This committee is currently identifying ways to develop a brand marketing strategy for the DC Chapter. Various interests/experiences in areas are needed, including but not limited to: website design/ content development, public relations and media strategy, graphic design, strategic messaging and promotional writing, and strategy pertaining to thought leadership, social media and collaborating with other organizations. Committee Co-Chair and Fundraising Liaison positions are currently available. Positions for the newsletter team will be available in the summer. Contact Leighton Haynes at marketing@afh-dc.org for more information.
- **Fundraising Committee:**
This committee is developing the fundraising capabilities of the chapter. Skills in written communication, grant-writing and fundraising experience for non-profits or research projects are needed.
- **Project Development Committee:**
Volunteers are needed to document projects and track their status, develop a file organization system, design a template to archive projects, and to conduct project team surveys. Contact Sarah Mehaffey at project@afh-dc.org.