

Why We Should Care about Kenya: Election Pandemonium

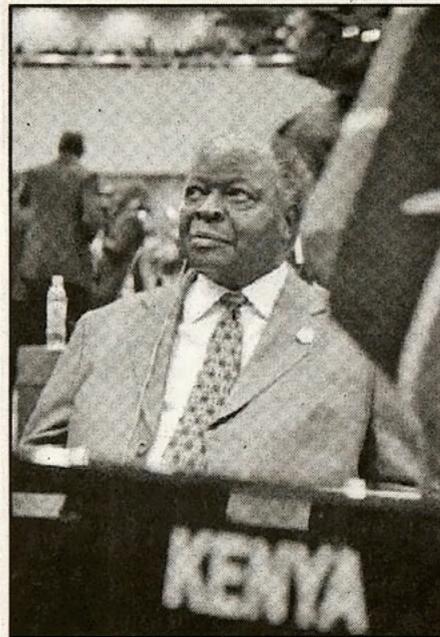
By Nikki Hertel, contributing writer

It began with an election. It transformed into bitterness and suspicion. It has ended in bloodshed and chaos. Kenya's disputed presidential election has morphed into nationwide ethnic violence and a battle between rival tribes. Newly elected president, Mwai Kibaki of the Kikuyu tribe, has been accused by the opposition of stealing or rigging the election. This has created chaos throughout Kenya and has led to the murder of more than 1,000 people. "The New York Times" September 13 article, "Rape is Weapon in Kenya," reported that over 600,000 people have fled their homes to escape the massacres and increasing occurrences of rape. Kenyans are being slaughtered daily as peace talks continue. Men, women, and children are running for their lives in the desperate attempt to find a place of safety. As a result of these horrible killings and pandemonium, this country will never be the same again.

After hearing about the horrible atrocities that are going on in Kenya, many of you may be asking yourselves, "Why should we care about Kenya? It doesn't affect us." The answer is simply this: how can you not care about what is going on in Kenya!? American society has become desensitized to the horrible violence and carnage of the world. We no longer flinch at hearing the news of thousands of people being slaughtered with machetes, or children being forcibly raped in the streets. Americans simply settle with shrugging their shoulders and going back to eating their dinners without ever giving it a second thought. Ethnic genocide and over half a million people fleeing their homes no longer registers on America's "importance scale." Our citizens are too busy listening to the latest Britney Spears gossip or finding out which celebrities are dating whom. Anything having to do with Kenya gets discarded into the "who cares" section of our lives.

It is appalling to think that Americans simply don't know and don't care about what is going on in the world. I asked a few students from Concordia what they thought about what was going on in Kenya. The freshmen man and sophomore woman, who wish to remain anonymous, replied, "What? Something is going on in Kenya?" and "Where

is Kenya again?" After hearing their statements, I was disappointed, but not surprised. It is not uncommon for



Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki attends the 10th African Union summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Photo courtesy of www.citizen.co.za

Kenya's current situation. As the political tide turned in Rwanda in 1994, over 800,000 citizens were butchered



A Kenyan man carries a sign portraying Kenyan opposition leader Raila Odinga. Photo courtesy of www.abc.net.au



A Kenyan man looks at his recently-burned house. Photo courtesy of www.abc.net.au

Americans to be ignorant of global news. It is quite disheartening, however, when people living in the most powerful nation in the world can't and won't educate themselves about the global issues, especially those concerning the murder of thousands of innocent people.

Kenya is one of many nations that have encountered a catastrophe such as the one raging as we speak. I am reminded of Rwanda when looking at

in 90 days. The whole world watched as innocent men, women, and children were slaughtered every day. The United Nations even had troops in Rwanda at the time, but nobody did anything. The nations of the world looked on as spectators as the country was destroyed and dyed red with the blood of the innocent. Will Kenya be the next Rwanda?

Americans should count themselves lucky that when the presidential elec-

tion rolls around in November, we won't have to worry about a massacre or fleeing the country for our lives. We should consider ourselves blessed that we are a country that truly embraces democracy and that we do not have to worry about such things as genocide or ethnic cleansing. You won't see American political parties taking up arms when the election results are revealed. Americans will not be running for their lives by the thousands with little hope and an uncertain future. We take these simple liberties for granted.

Kenya has been forever changed and it would seem that history continues to repeat itself. Humankind will continue to kill each other while the rest of the world watches and barely bats an eye. The situation in Kenya may worsen, but I highly doubt that any country will do anything to step in. The world will continue to sit and watch the carnage and pray that it doesn't reach their doorstep. Americans will go on as they always have, watching their television sitcoms and reading up on the latest gossip and fashion trends. Shame on you America! Meanwhile, people in Kenya will try to survive one long, sad day at a time. I hope and pray that the situation is resolved quickly before any more innocent blood can be spilt. May God be with Kenya and the Kenyan people.