

DUMELA



Newsletter from Botswana Sweden Friendship Association No 1/2018

Dear BOTSFA members

I spent this year's Easter Holidays home in Eskilstuna, with family and friends. Winter is slowly but surely disappearing with its darkness and freezing cold temperatures. The spring's first beautiful flowers are starting to decorate the warm parts of the ground, but ice continues to cover other parts of the ground – soon to be melted away. Even though the winters in Sweden are very different from my normal Botswana experience, I have learned to adapt. I feel quite happy as Botswana is now enjoying the greenness from this year's late rains, cooling down the high temperatures that have become part of Botswana's feature in December/January.

BOTSFA's AGM 2018 was held in Stockholm on 24th March and attracted 52 participants. Old and new members of the association, as well as other friends of Botswana. Among us were His Excellency Ambassador (Mr. Lameck Nthekela), his family, and the Botswana Embassy staff. I felt warmly welcomed as the new BOTSFA chairperson! The meeting had a moment of silence to bid farewell to two members, Ulla Odqvist (formerly BOTSFA's chairperson) and Ove Andersson, who passed away in 2017.

Following several years as BOTSFA Board members, Birgitta Lundgren-Lindquist, Viera Larsson, Anders Hjerstrand and Julia Majaha-Jartby retired handing over to Inka Löfvenmark, Andrea Pettitt and Constance Sönnergren (will feature in next DUMELA issue). A longstanding member of the Election Committee, Birgitta Karlström-Dorph, also retired and was replaced by Per Järtby.

During early 2018, BOTSFA Board conducted a survey that should help the association's future direction (visit: www.botsfa.nu for responses).

In this DUMELA, Louise Lindquist Sassene, shares a »chapter« on her life as a child of a development worker in Botswana and the impact of the experience on her future life. Sweden's Honorary Consul, Kent Nilsson, welcomes us to his column with news of yet another peaceful presidential transition in Botswana. BOTSFA members, Per Järtby and Staffan Strand invite you to exhibitions of photographs, paintings and sculptures in Märsta and Östhammar, respectively; and member Nicky Sundgren is booked to showcase Botswana culture and cuisine in Upplands Väsby, in collaboration with the Embassy of Botswana.

I am also pleased that readers of DUMELA will continue to enjoy it, as two of our outgoing members of the Board, Viera Larsson and Julia Majaha-Jartby, will ensure its publication as the production and editorial team.

May BOTSFA and its new leadership continue to grow from strength to strength and beyond.
PULA!

Nelly Kabomo-Hogård
BOTSFA Chairperson



Welcome to BOTSFA!

MEMBERSHIP FEES

• Individual: SEK 175 • Family: SEK 300 (incl. children up to 15) • Student: SEK 100 • Institution: SEK 500
Plusgiro 85 10 39-8, or Bankgiro 428-6472

visit us on www.botsfa.nu

A STORY OF MY LIFE

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY Louise Lindquist Sassene

I usually say that Africa has three chapters in my life: my early adolescence, my coming of age and my parenthood. But the more I think of it I think it is the story of my life.



With daughter Akiba and son Thibo

My experiences in Africa have profoundly changed me, my core values and the course of my life. Because of it and the people I have met and the friends I have made over there, I am what I am and my life is what it is.

In the late 1980s I was living in Gothenburg with my divorced mother. We had a big house and my life was quite simple. Africa and Botswana were unknown territories. I, like most peers of my age, dreamed of going to the United States and liked shopping with my friends. My mother on the other hand had just experienced the passing of two close friends – both had been terminally ill with cancer. With the insight of how fragile and short life is, she decided to pursue her lifelong dream to work in Africa. She signed up with the red Cross. I had no say. It was her dream and I hated it.

On 13th February in 1989, we moved to Gaborone. I still remember what music they played on the aircraft, the heat that hit us when we first stopped in Lusaka and the smell of burnt grass at Sir Seretse Khama airport. I had seen the movie »Out of Africa« with Meryl Streep but Botswana was nothing like it. I was in chock and for six long months I wanted to go home every day. Phoning Sweden was impossible as fees per minute were appallingly high and letters back and forth to Europe took forever.

At the time, more than 250 Swedes resided in Botswana and there was even a Swedish telephone directory. Eventually I made friends, all white of Nordic origin. The world at that time was indeed a different place. Mugabe had not been in power that long, Mandela was still in prison, the cold war was still on and parallel to that a new right-wing party had become popular in Sweden. At the Swedish school, many kids were just like me – unhappy to be in Africa and missing home. Whilst our parents pursued the dreams of making the world a better place or worked with city planning and infrastructure development, we tried to

stay the same, unwilling to adapt, enjoy and learn from the world around us. Anything new was an unwanted threat.

Around Christmas that year I came home from school telling racist jokes I had learned at school, jokes so appalling I will not ever recite them though I remember and regret. My mother was in turmoil. In January the following year, she inscribed me in form one at Maru a Pula (MAP) Secondary School. I was one of 33 with European descent. I had to wear a uniform and get used to addressing all teachers by Mr., Mrs., Ms. or Miss. All very unlike the Swedish liberal school system and I hated it. However, in due course it humbled me. I was still a privileged young teenager but for the very first time I learnt what it's like to be a minority. I didn't understand Setswana and I knew nothing of Botswana and I realized it was my own fault.

By the time we left Gaborone, I had made many good friends, both expatriates and Batswana. I'd like to say that they changed me. That my experience at MAP altered me. Changing schools was my salvation and it made the rest of our stay in Botswana a good one. An experience from which I learned that, being open and non-prejudice and exposing yourself to the unknown, opens doors to a more vivid and true life.

After almost three years we moved back to Sweden and nothing would ever be the same. Somehow our experience in Africa had uprooted me and altered my core. I know I am not alone in feeling this. We are many children who grew up partly in Botswana and who share this experience, not by own choice but that of our parents. Some of us could embrace and enjoy it and some became unhappy drifters, always feeling alienated and not truly belonging anywhere.

As a young adult, I returned to Africa. This time to Uganda during an exchange at Makerere University. I had a very strong urge to experience this huge continent on

my own, by my own choice and to see it from the back of a boda-boda or a local bus rather than an air-conditioned SUV. Working in the urban slums of Kampala later inspired me to do my diploma research in rural Burkina Faso. I had received a scholarship to do a minor field study in a small village close to Mali. It was mind-blowing. The countryside reminded me of childhood days in Botswana. However, it was, and still is, amongst the poorest countries in Africa.

In Burkina Faso, I fell in love with the man who would be the father of my two children. He was born and raised in Paris by Cameroonian parents and had, just like me, grown up partly in Europe and partly in Africa. I thought we were a match made in heaven and naively imagined that we would be able to conquer the world together with our profound understandings of both continents and cultural heritage. But being white in many parts of Africa is not the same as being African in Europe. Not now. Not ever. There is exposure to structural racism all day, every day. It eventually killed our marriage. The wall around Europe excludes and isolates. The paperwork required for a simple tourist visa for any relative or friend from Africa shames me. This is racism of today.

I refer to my children as afro-swedes. They call themselves »brown«. Before 2016 we had never been to Africa. But then the same disease that led my mother to take her leap to Botswana found its way into my life. I got sick. I nearly died. I contracted Cancer. Again, life would never be the same and ironically the first thought I got when I had recovered was the urge to return to Botswana with my mother and my children. And, so, we did. I can tell you that when that smell of burnt grass hit my nostrils at Sir Seretse Khama airport it was true happiness.

Botswana has changed but my beloved friends remain the same and my children adored it. They ask me every day to return. In April, we'll receive my old friend from MAP, Osego Garebamono and his wife and kids. We are so excited. And I have started to write about my African experiences. I am thinking that the story of us children who grew up in Botswana in the 1980s has never been told. Us children who just tagged along and had to try to make the best of a life we had not chosen.



My mother, Birgitta, with her friend, Nnuu Phaphe and my children

Dumelang dear Botsfa members!



As you all probably know by now, we have a new President in Botswana. After 10 years as President, Ian Khama has stepped down as per the Botswana constitution. He was automatically succeeded by Mokgweetsi E. K. Masisi who has been Vice President since the last elections in 2014. President Masisi will lead the Government until the next elections, which are due in October 2019. The inauguration was blessed by a mighty thunderstorm that caused a bit of a challenge in the early morning of April 1st, resulting in the swearing in being conducted in the National Assembly instead of, as earlier planned, in the open.

There has been a lot of guessing and speculations as to who would be the next Vice President. Slumber Tsogwane, a long serving MP and a close ally of Masisi was first presented as the new BDP Chairman and then a few days later as our new VP. To most people, he is fairly unknown. It is believed that he will only serve until the upcoming elections. This week the President also presented his new Cabinet, with no big changes. Vincent T. Seretse becomes the new Minister of International Affairs and Cooperation and, on a very positive note, Ms Bogolo Kenewendo, a young talented and ambitious economist, is our new Minister of Investment, Trade and Communications.

President Masisi has a number of big challenges to deal with. Many, in Botswana, now see corruption as a big problem especially after the P250 million National Petroleum Fund money laundering scandal that surfaced a few months ago. The President announced that he now wants to introduce a Declaration of Assets Law to create more transparency. Another big challenge is high unemployment, especially amongst the youth. This in combination with the struggling education system needs to be addressed. Last year's secondary school leavers had a staggering 72% failure rate.

Botswana is now very green after lots of rain in March. At Sanitas we have received just above 600mm this summer, compared to the average +/- 500mm. More than half of the rain arrived in the last six weeks.

... And I'm now heading to Åre to enjoy the last leg of winter. PULA!

*Kent Nilsson
Swedish Honorary Consul*

Glimpses from AGM 2018



Ambassador Nthekela



Participants

AGM thanks the retiring BOARD-members:



Birgitta Lundgren-Lindquist



Anders Hjerstrand



Viera Larsson



Julia Majaha-Jartby

Welcome to a Botswana cultural day and exhibitions by BOTSFA members!



Staffan Strand invites you to the exhibition

»Nordic Wildlife Art«

with paintings and sculptures from the NATURE
in Järnboden, Hargs Bruk, 10 km south of Östhammar, road 76

OPENING 1st July 2018 at 11:00 – OPEN until 5th August

PRODUCTION – Publishing Agents & Editors:

Julia Majaha-Jartby, TEL: +46 (0)73 842 74 22, E-MAIL: julia@jartby.com • Viera Larsson, Visual Communication AB, TEL: +46 (0)70 823 91 14, E-MAIL: viera.larsson@visual.se

WEBMASTER: Per Järtby

BOTSFA MEMBERSHIP FEES: Individual: SEK 175 • Family SEK: 300 • Student: SEK 100 • Institution: SEK 500 • Plusgiro Account: 851039-8 • Bankgiro Account: 428-6472