

Great story - Jamii Bora

children with HIV-AIDS, and the petty criminals who didn't have a chance in "normal" society, the mothers who have tried to endure too much poverty and now were nearly unintentionally yet for real, slouching toward suicide.

When I heard what it takes to get an African mother to start to consider suicide, I was beside myself. I thought that the journey to where they finally wound up thinking about suicide would have found me killing myself a dozen times over, at a dozen waystations along the path, at least. What I mean is that these are some of the toughest women around, and to understand what they have to endure on a regular day to day basis is to try to contemplate the incomprehensible! To endure so much and just soldier on. Like the woman who lost six of her children to HIV-AIDS.

It was some time before this, around the middle of the five day Summit that Dr. Yunus stole my heart and soul, with not only his microcredit strategies and history of success stories, of course that was enough, for sure. But what really did it was his caring. Actually a particular quality of caring.

For example, instead of hobnobbing with the big boys, the traditional development bankers who showed up to give splashy presentations, or the United Nations big shots, who were passing out brochures and money in

what seemed like a kind of PR bribe or some such creepiness, Dr. Yunus seemed to favour the profoundly dispossessed.

He had such a beautiful, spiritual side that came out during his talks and elongated press conferences. A real caring spirit, that seemed to be speaking from another planet or another dimension of reality. You couldn't detect this consciousness shift right away, I mean shifting inside of yourself in a kind of communion with Dr. Yunus, it didn't happen immediately, you couldn't just sit and share in this experience right away, especially at this Summit where there was already too much happening every second of every hour of every day. What I mean is that the feeling or sensing you could pick up on, that Dr. Yunus was on another plane of reality took some time.

But after you slowed down just a bit, in the midst of all the hustle and bustle, and quietly listened for 15 minutes or half an hour, a sensation started to come over the room, a sensation that I have heard about, and I think I've experienced during the rare moment. A spiritual energy field? I don't know. So when he asked us to really listen to the story of Jamii Bora, we were all ears, to say the least.

The Jamii Bora social workers were called into one family scene that just about tugs the heartstrings to cacaphony. One hard working mother, came

home every night with a few measly coins which was all she had to show for her long hours of toil at her tiny microbusiness. Once in the door, she was set upon by her family, wanting to steal all her money so that they could get some booze and get drunk during the evening hours. At first she resisted. So they would beat her until she relented and coughed up the cash. Then she tried hiding her money and claiming she didn't have any cash. Big mistake. Many more vicious beatings.

What the social workers finally decided to do was to separate the household. The mostly sons in the family were sent to a special place where they could contemplate their addictions, with respect to alcohol. It took a long time, but eventually they did, and began the long process of drying out and finally quitting. The woman was sent elsewhere so she could live free from the threats and violence visited her by family. An uneasy peace seemed to prevail.

Jamii Bora is famous for, among other things, the fact that it is staffed pretty much by former clients. It's work in the urban slums is nearly legendary. It includes "fast climbers" as they are called in Jamii Bora, that is the people who are hot to trot into a program and begin to reinvent and develop themselves right away, and start making great progress from day one, or soon after. Of course the "slow climbers" are the ones the staff has to be patient with. They are moving on the slomo track, but they'll get going and move on up within the program sooner or later.

The Global Microcredit Office in Washington, D.C. had this



by Bill Krampe, Vendor and Editorial Contributor

to say about Jamii Bora: "Ingrid Munro started Jamii Bora in 1999, and today it is the fastest growing microfinance institution in Kenya. Munro is from Sweden and her husband from Canada, but they have lived in Kenya for the past twenty-one years. She was formerly the head of the African Housing Fund, which works with the homeless. Munro started with a group of fifty beggars from the slums of Nairobi, and over the past seven years Jamii Bora has expanded to 61 branches, serving about a hundred and thirty thousand members; Munro aims to reach at least five hundred thousand by 2009. She says that she has stuck to

the original idea, 'that you can borrow twice as much as you've saved--which means we have a very strong foundation, because we have a lot of savings, and our members take very small risks.'



ATLANTIC NEWS

Halifax's original newsstand.

Happy 9th Birthday to our local Voice of the Poor, STREET FEAT

**Over 5200 magazine titles
Over 90 newspaper titles
Open until 10 seven days a week**

429-5468

www.atlanticnews.ns.ca
5560 Morris at Queen

Greetings from Darrell Dexter and the NDP Caucus



New Democratic Party Caucus Office
Suite 1001, Centennial Building
1660 Hollis Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 1V7

Phone: 902-424-4134
Fax: 902-424-0504
Toll Free in NS: 1-888-247-0448
Web: www.ndpcaucus.ns.ca
Email: ndpcaucus@gov.ns.ca



Peter J. Kelly
Mayor
Regional Municipality



(902) 490-4010
(902) 490-4012

Email: kellyp@halifax.ca

1749, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3A5

Leonard Preyra
Halifax Citadel MLA

Street Feat, for helping to challenge of poverty in Halifax.

(Halifax, NS)
Email: preyra@eastlink.ca

Congratulations on your 9th anniversary!

Maureen MacDonald, MLA
Halifax Needham

201-2786 Agricola St.
455-2926

mmacdonald@navnet.net

