

Lois Ann Gregory-Wood

From: Joanne Kempf [jkempf@ala.org]
Sent: Monday, December 20, 2010 4:54 PM
To: honorary@ala.org
Subject: [honorary] Honorary Member Nominee
Attachments: Gebregeorgis.pdf

Please read to the bottom of this message to see the nominees for election to ALA Honorary Membership in 2011.

At the 2006 Midwinter Meeting, the ALA Executive Board approved a revised procedure that provides more time between the announcement to Council of the names of nominees for ALA Honorary Membership and the actual Council vote.

In accordance with this procedure, each year the Executive Board will release the names of its nominee(s) for ALA Honorary Membership to the ALA Council via a special electronic discussion list created solely for the purpose of disseminating these names. The announcement will be made two weeks before the start of the ALA Midwinter Meeting. A document summarizing each nominee's contributions and accomplishments, prepared by ALA Librarian/Knowledge Manager Karen Muller, will be included with the announcement. Councilors who have any additional information that could be pertinent to the nomination are asked to send the information directly to the Director of the Office of ALA Governance at jkempf@ala.org.

** It is important that Councilors respect the privacy of the nominees. Please do not use the Council electronic discussion list to debate these nominations. The list at which you are receiving this message was created solely for the purpose of disseminating the names of the nominees. The only individuals subscribed to this list are current Councilors; there are no "lurkers." Opportunity for discussion will be provided on the Council floor as indicated below. **

Should additional information relating to a nomination for Honorary Membership be received that suggests the need for further research, staff will research the matter to the best of their ability in the time available. Staff will report any results of their research in Executive Session at the first Board session at the Midwinter Meeting, and the Executive Board will determine at that time whether to reconsider the nomination.

Presentation to the ALA Council of nominees for Honorary Membership by the Immediate Past President on behalf of the Executive Board will occur at either Council II or Council III at the Midwinter Meeting.

Council will be asked to vote on each nominee in turn. Prior to calling for the vote, the presiding officer will offer Council the opportunity to discuss each nomination. If Council indicates that they wish to hold a debate on the merits of any candidate, Council will move into closed session in accordance with ALA Open Meetings Policy 7.4.4, which stipulates that discussion of matters affecting the privacy of individuals be held in closed session.

Honorary Membership is considered to be ALA's highest honor. Honorary membership may be conferred on a living citizen of any country whose contributions to librarianship or a closely related field is so outstanding that it is of lasting importance to the advancement of the whole field of library service. It is intended to reflect honor upon the ALA as well as upon the individual.

Additional information about Honorary Membership, including a listing of past honorees, can be found at

<http://www.ala.org/ala/awardsgrants/awardsrecords/honorarymembership/honorarymembership.cfm>

I am very pleased to announce that the Executive Board is recommending that Council elect one distinguished individual as ALA Honorary Member in 2011. The nominee is:

Yohannes Gebregeorgis, librarian and author, is nominated in recognition of his founding of Ethiopia Reads, a nonprofit organization that is establishing children's libraries in Ethiopia and publishing bilingual and trilingual children's books, thereby providing the children an opportunity to learn the love of reading, and increasing literacy in an entire nation.

A biographical summary of the nominee is attached.

Council will be asked to vote on this nomination at ALA Council II, which will be held Monday, January 10 from 10:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. in the San Diego Convention Center, Ballroom A/B.

If elected by the ALA Council at the Midwinter Meeting, Dr. Gebregeorgis will be honored at the Opening General Session of the 2011 ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans, LA.

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**ALA Executive Board
2010 Fall Meeting**

TOPIC: **Honorary Member Nomination**

DATE: **October 5, 2010**

PREPARED BY: **Karen Muller, ALA Librarian**

BACKGROUND:

At the 2006 Midwinter Meeting, the Executive Board approved a revised procedure for electing ALA Honorary Members. As part of this procedure, "The Librarian/Knowledge Manager will use appropriate information sources to gather information substantiating (or not) and complementing the information provided by the nominators. This information will be summarized in a confidential report on each nominee."

Pursuant to this directive, Library staff conducted an informational search on the nominee for recognition as Honorary Member of the American Library Association.

We checked the following resources, as appropriate:

- Biographical dictionaries (online)
- OCCLC WorldCat, FirstSearch
- Library Literature, Information Science & Technology Abstracts
- Google searching
- ALA's member database, iMIS
- Guidestar
- Facebook

The following summary includes a brief sketch of the nominee's career and a career resume structured in the same way as past years, using the nominee's own resume as a starting point. Professional activities and honors were sampled for accuracy; career and education details, publications and speeches have all been independently verified

All backup material has been deposited with the ALA Executive Office.

Yohannes Gebregeorgis

Summary: Founder of Ethiopia reads, a literacy organization

Biography: Ethiopia, ca. 1952

Education: [Pharmacology, Ethiopia]; BA. English literature and journalism, University of Buffalo, 1989; MLS, University of Texas, 1991

Career: Pharmacist, Ministry of Health, Ethiopia, -1981; Political refugee, 1982; [college library in Texas]; San Francisco Public Library, Children's Library, 1985-1998; Ethiopia Reads, 1998-

Memberships in (at various points in career): .
[none found]

Leadership positions: Established Ethiopian Books for Children and Educational Foundation (EBCEF), 1999 as 501(c)3 organization. EBCEF is based in both the U.S. (Denver) and Ethiopia, and is also known as Ethiopia Reads.

Publications:

With Robert Gutierrez. *ABGD: Ethiopian Alphabet : Amharic-English for Beginners.* Oakland, CA: African Sun Pub, 1997.

Silly Mammo = Kilu Mammo : an Ethiopian tale. [Oakland, Calif.]: African Sun Pub, for Ethiopian Books for Children & Educational Foundation, 2002.

With Jane Kurtz. *The lion's tail.* Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Ethiopian Books for Children and Educational Foundation, 2006.

Reviewer for *School Library Journal*, 1996-1998.

Major speeches:

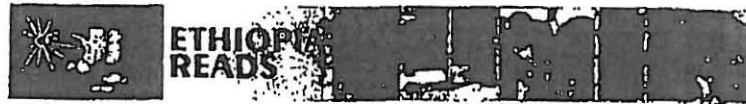
President's Program, ALA Midwinter Meeting, January 17, 2010
Commencement address, Regis College, June

Honors:

CNN Hero, May 2008,
<http://edition.cnn.com/2008/WORLD/africa/04/30/heroes.ethiopia/index.html>

CNN's Top 10 Heroes of the Year, 2008

ALA Presidential Citation for Innovative International Library Projects/IRRT, 2008
Honorary Doctorate in Public Service, Regis University in Denver, Colorado
<http://www.regis.edu/regis.asp?sctn=news&p1=conrel&p2=honorary>



ETHIOPIA READS

Ethiopia Reads' mission is to build a reading culture in Ethiopia by connecting children with books. We do this by building libraries for children, publishing books in English as well as local Ethiopian languages, and training teachers and librarians to cultivate a culture of reading among children.

Summary of Accomplishments in 2008:

1. Published three books in English and Amharic. Published a dual-volume collection of Ethiopian folk tales, for distribution throughout Ethiopia. Printed two trilingual books. One book in Amharic won the Golden Kuraz award.
2. Provided training in library skills, literacy and reading to library workers, school directors, teachers and administrators who work in our school partnership network.
3. Maintained the daily operations of the Shola Children's Library, Awassa Reading Center, 18 school libraries and four donkey mobile libraries.
4. Recorded more than 90,000 visits from children at Shola Children's Library.
5. Partnered with other non-profit and NGO organizations in the U.S. and Ethiopia to expand literacy programs.
6. Secured a grant from Rotary International for planting 12 libraries and American Jewish World Service for expansion of Awassa Rural Libraries and Literacy Development Program.
7. Brought Ethiopian Executive Director to the U.S. for fundraising and strategic development in 10 states.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

Located in the capital city of Addis Ababa, Shola Children's Library is the first free public library for children in Ethiopia. Founded in 2003, the library serves children between the ages of 3 and 18, providing a safe, quiet and inviting environment in which to read, study and connect with learning. The library houses a collection of more than 20,000 books and is open six days a week. In 2008, Shola staff recorded more than 90,000 visits from children.

The Rural Libraries and Literacy Development Program connects children in rural areas of southern Ethiopia with book and literacy programs. The RLLD program encompasses a free public reading center in the city of Awassa, as well as four Donkey Mobile Libraries that transports books to children in rural villages.

The Library Development Program is an initiative to plant libraries for children throughout the city of Addis Ababa and Awassa by partnering with public schools as well as NGOs and other organizations that work to create educational opportunities for children. By the end of 2008,

Series), charts, illus., bibliog., index. CIP. Greenhaven, 1997. PLB \$20.96. ISBN 1-56510-673-3; pap. \$12.96. ISBN 1-56510-672-5. LC 97-19698. Gr 9 Up—Is the Earth on the verge of environmental destruction and ecological collapse or are such claims greatly exaggerated? Will this planet be able to continue to sustain growing populations? The many nuances of these questions are explored regarding human consumption in relation to agriculture, livestock, and energy. This anthology of previously published essays and articles includes informed opinions from a wide range of sources. For example, Lee Raymond of

regarding its use. Throughout the book, opposing viewpoints are expressed on all of the critical issues surrounding the use of nuclear power—in particular, pollution, safety, and waste disposal. Resources to contact for additional information are included. The photographs and graphs, many of which are in full color, serve to further explain and/or illustrate these opposing viewpoints. With the depletion of coal and fossil fuels, and the continued increase in energy consumption and demand, humankind must find a substitute energy source. Should that decision lead to a resurgence of nuclear power plants? While not giving a

County Public Schools, VA
DUDLEY, Karen. *Great African Americans in Government.* ISBN 0-86505-806-7; ISBN 0-86505-820-2. LC 96-35446.
HACKER, Carlotta. *Great African Americans in History.* reprints. ISBN 0-86505-805-9; ISBN 0-86505-819-9. LC 96-38690.
 ea vol: 64p. (Outstanding African Americans Series). photos, chron. index. CIP. Crabtree, 1997. PLB \$15.96; pap. \$8.00. Gr. 5-8—These clearly written introductions describe the struggle and achievements of African Americans past and pre-

122 School Library Journal/January 1998

Book Review/Grades

sent. *Government* focuses on 13 men and women with distinguished careers in public service, including Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Ralph Bunche, Shirley Chisholm, and Colin Powell, in addition to less widely known notables such as Yvonne Brathwaite Burke and Carol Moseley-Braun. The second title profiles 13 historical greats such as Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, W.E.B. Du Bois, Mary McLeod Bethune, and George Washington Carver. Each person is covered in a separate chapter that is divided into sections examining different periods of the subjects' lives. A photograph or art reproduction of the person profiled accompanies the text on almost every page (most photographs are in color in *Government*; black-and-white illustrations appear in *History*). "Personality profiles" (a summary of important facts), a dateline of the individual's most significant accomplishments, and a brief description of special interests appear in boxed insets. Regardless of the privileged backgrounds of many of these people, accomplished prominence through hard work and perseverance. Reading about their distinguished lives will give young people hope and models for their own journeys into the future.—*Gebregorgis Yohannes, San Francisco Public Library, CA*

1997. RTE \$19.95. ISBN 81323-6. LC 96-29721. Gr 5 Up—In this lively account incorporates some new material brings the exciting, often d history of the search for oil up-to-date. Drawing clear c between, for instance, the of of the ancients as refined Brahe, the last of the great nat traioners, and the work of Kepler, and later searchers, also shows how doctrine, and concern for professional i often delayed discoveries (search astray. He brings his an 20th century by interview Tomblugh (shortly before Ti death in 1997), the discover Percival Lowell dubbed "I which was later named "Plei reports on newly discovered biting distant pulsars that Dr. szeczan and others have det eloses with a discussion of th cons of a 10th planet in our system. Despite occasional ov eation, and an anticlerical, t production that results in m and-white illustrations, plus a via "color insert," this ove hunt as old as any human ent be an asset to most collectio

[http://www.facebook.com/pages/Yohannes-Gebregorgis/38777207917#!/?v=info](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Yohannes-Gebregorgis/38777207917#!/)

ALA HONORARY MEMBER NOMINATION FORM

WHAT IS ALA HONORARY MEMBERSHIP?

Honorary Membership is considered to be ALA's highest honor. Honorary membership may be conferred on a living citizen of any country whose contribution to librarianship or a closely related field is so outstanding that it is of lasting importance to the advancement of the whole field of library service. It is intended to reflect honor upon the ALA as well as upon the individual.

NOMINATIONS PROCEDURE:

Any ALA personal member (except current members of the ALA Executive Board) may nominate an individual for Honorary Membership. The nominee need not be a member of ALA.

The nominations packet must contain this completed form; the nominee's resume, curriculum vitae and/or biographical statement; and no fewer than three letters of recommendation. Other documentation as available and appropriate may be submitted.

Posthumous nominations are not eligible for consideration.

Submit the completed nomination packet to:

Honorary Membership
Executive Board Secretariat
American Library Association
50 East Huron Street,
Chicago, IL 60611.

The completed packet must be received by September 1 to be eligible for consideration.
Late nominations will not be considered.

PLEASE COMPLETE ALL SECTIONS BELOW AND ATTACH ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION AS OUTLINED IN SECTIONS V, VI AND VII OF THIS FORM

I. NOMINEE INFORMATION:

Provide CURRENT contact information for the nominee to be used by staff in the event that this nominee is elected to Honorary Membership.

NAME OF NOMINEE:	
Yohannes Gebregeorgis	
TITLE:	TELEPHONE:
Executive Director, Ethiopia Reads	
PROFESSIONAL ADDRESS:	FAX:
Ato Yohannes Gebregeorgis Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
PREFERRED ADDRESS:	E-MAIL:
Ato Yohannes Gebregeorgis	

II. NOMINATED BY:

Provide CURRENT contact information for the person responsible for compiling the nominations packet. Any questions about the nominations packet will be directed to this individual.

NAME:	
Janet Lee	
TITLE:	TELEPHONE:
Technical Services Librarian	
PROFESSIONAL ADDRESS:	FAX:
Denver, CO 80221	
PREFERRED ADDRESS:	E-MAIL:

III. STATEMENT OF ACHIEVEMENT

Provide a concise statement of why the nominee should be considered for Honorary Membership.

Yohannes Gebregeorgis is being nominated in recognition of:

founding Ethiopia Reads, a nonprofit organization that is establishing children's libraries in Ethiopia and publishing bilingual and trilingual children's books thereby giving children the opportunity to learn to love to read and increasing literacy in an entire nation.

IV. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

1. To be eligible for honorary membership, a person should be so outstanding that there can be no question about his/her suitability.
2. The designation should recognize the contribution of an individual per se, rather than that of an individual representing the accomplishments of many.
3. The person elected to honorary membership should be of such caliber as to reflect honor upon ALA by this designation.
4. Honorary membership should be conferred because of a contribution of more than passing interest and of more than local or regional achievement. The contribution may be to librarianship or to a closely related field.
5. The recipient may be a librarian or a person in a related field.

Please enumerate the ways in which the nominee meets the criteria for selection. Be specific. Attach additional sheets as needed.

Ato Yohannes Gebregeorgis has been called a "story book hero" and a "pied piper of children" for the work that he has accomplished by bringing libraries and literacy to the children of Ethiopia. By no means has his life been a fairy tale, but rather one of simplicity, hardship, sacrifice, and determination. Born in a small town in southern Ethiopia, he faced the same challenges of all children in Ethiopia at that time. He walked a great distance to school where he was taught by teachers whose education was not much more extensive than his, but dedicated teachers nonetheless. He was also taught by the occasional U.S. Peace Corps volunteer who tried to introduce materials other than the limited number of textbooks that were available and shared among the students. At the age of 19, he chanced upon a novel, "Love Kitten," and for the first time read a book for pleasure, a book that was not a required text and it changed his life.

His life took many twists and turns. He was a student revolutionary, did a stint in the Ethiopian navy, served as a pharmacist in a northern city in Ethiopia, actively opposed the military government, fled the country and took refuge in a camp in Sudan, and ultimately gained asylum in the U.S. as a political refugee. He followed his newfound love for literature and obtained a Bachelors degree at the University of Buffalo, and then a Masters degree in Library Science at the University of Texas under the tutelage of Dr. Loriene Roy. Although his interest was in pursuing an academic library career, he chanced upon a position as a children's librarian at the San Francisco Public Library, a calling that would change his destiny and the lives of thousands of children in Ethiopia.

As a children's librarian at the San Francisco Public Library, he was surrounded by children who loved to read and by more books than he could have ever imagined growing up in his native Ethiopia. Because SFPL had children's books in over 75 languages, the collection development librarian approached him with a small sum of money to purchase books in his native language, Amharic. Finding none, he took it upon himself to write "Silly Mamo" a bilingual book based upon an Ethiopian folktale. Although by now a U.S. citizen, Ato Yohannes (Ethiopians refer to themselves by their given name) longed to return back home to share with the children of Ethiopia his love for reading and for literature. The political climate in Ethiopia had changed allowing him to return. He set up a non-profit organization, Ethiopian Books for Children Educational Foundation, more commonly known as Ethiopia Reads. He took the proceeds from the sale of "Silly Mammoo," sold his house, packed up his sons, left the security of his job at the SFPL, and returned to Ethiopia to set up the first children's library in the first floor of his home. It was no easy task facing the bureaucracy of the government, but he persevered and can now boast of having set up two public children's libraries, over forty school library partnerships, and five donkey mobile libraries.

In addition to the aforementioned libraries, Yohannes has established Ethiopian Children's Book Week, an annual event that is in its seventh year of celebration. Each year a theme is chosen and books (and a loaf of bread) are freely distributed during Bread and Books Day. There is a short parade and many festivities. But most importantly children are introduced to the joy of reading. Each year a colorful poster is designed to announce the event.

Yohannes also established the Golden Kuraz award, a Caldecott-type award for the best illustrated book by an Ethiopian author. The kuraz is the small tin can lantern that Yohannes used as a child to study in the evening. This award is given biannually.

Additionally, mention of the Donkey Mobile Library must be made because of its ingenuity and creativeness. This illustrates the genius of Yohannes in reaching out to children. Not only is the DML useful in reaching the hinterland of the mountainous regions of Ethiopia, but it also reaches out to the hearts and minds of young children through the use of the donkey, the use of color, the tactile experience of holding a book for the first time and the aural experience of hearing a book read. Yohannes is a

masterful storyteller and has a captivating reading voice.

Yohannes long recognized the importance of the written word in local languages in developing literacy. For this reason he had "Silly Mammo" translated into Tigrigna and Afaan Oromoo. He has sought out other authors and had those books translated into Amharic as well as the other major Ethiopian languages. Finally he has encouraged local authors to publish their work in the local language only. He was instrumental in publishing and distributing two anthologies of folktales, "The Elephant and the Cock" and "The Lion and the Ostrich." These were tales that were retold by Elizabeth Laird, funded by the Christensen Fund, and distributed freely to all four corners of the country. These impressive anthologies represent the traditional cultures of all regions of Ethiopia and are illustrated by local artists.

In addition to traditional folktales, Yohannes has two stories based on real life experiences in publication, "Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda: An Ethiopian Girls' Festival" and "Under the Tamarind Tree." "Tirhas Celebrates Ashenda" describes the holiday of Ashenda, a coming of age holiday for girls focused on the end of the rainy season. "Under the Tamarind Tree" relates the activities that happened under a magnificent tree in Yohannes' village during his childhood.

Ato Yohannes is also an accomplished speaker being called upon to captivate the young and old alike. He is a favorite among American school children who learn to "whoop" like a hyena, count to five in Amharic, and chant "Queen Helina (the name of the famous donkey) bring us books." Teachers prepare for his visits by adding geography, customs, and local food to the curriculum. American and other western librarians, likewise support him as they empathize with the status of the profession, salaries, and the need for training and empowerment. He has been called up to speak in South Africa, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, and of course, the United States.

This recognition brought him international acclaim when in 2008 he was named one of thirty CNN Heroes and then later selected to be a Top 10 Hero by an acclaimed panel of judges including Jane Goodall, Deepak Chopra, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and Jeffrey Sachs.

Also in 2008 he was awarded the ALA Presidential Citation for International Innovation by ALA President, Dr. Loriene Roy. In January 2010, he was invited to deliver the keynote for the President's Program at the ALA mid-winter conference in Boston, by Dr. Camila Alire.

In May 2010, an honorary doctorate was conferred upon him by Regis University (Denver) during its graduation ceremonies in recognition of his humanitarian work in providing educational opportunities and literacy to the children of Ethiopia.

In summary, Yohannes Gebregeorgis is an ideal candidate for Honorary Membership in ALA. He is an accomplished librarian who has taken his passion for literacy to his

country of birth in order to share the joy of reading and writing to children who would not otherwise have such an opportunity. He did so at great personal sacrifice and in great humility and expected no financial gain or fame. He is a visionary as demonstrated by the Donkey Mobile Library, Ethiopian Children's Book Week, and the Golden Kuraz Award. He has traveled throughout all of the regions of Ethiopia in order to explore opportunities to provide books and libraries to all of the children of Ethiopia no matter their region or ethnic background. He is not only a CNN Hero, but has become a national hero as well.

V. LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION

The nominations packet must include no fewer than three [3] letters of recommendation. Please list the names of the people submitting letters of recommendation and indicate if the letters are enclosed or being sent under separate cover. Hard copies are preferred. All letters of recommendation must be received by September 1.

Dr. Loriene Roy, Professor, School of Information, The University of Texas at Austin
Rev. Michael J. Sheeran, S.J., President, Regis University
Dr. James F. Williams, II, Dean of Libraries, University of Colorado at Boulder
Dr. Shimelis Assefa, Professor, Library and Information Science Program, University of Denver.

VI. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Attach the nominee's current resume, curriculum vitae or biographical statement.

Attached.

VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Other documentation as available and appropriate may be submitted to assist the ALA Executive Board in reviewing this nomination. Please list items and indicate if they are enclosed with this packet or being sent under separate cover. Hard copy is preferred. All items must be received by September 1.

VIII. FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:

JoAnne Kempf
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