

Building a Library Is Just the Beginning

Zachary Kaufman is the kind of person you can't help but admire, even while the green-eyed monster within you snarls and bares its fangs.

After all, it's easy to like the second-year **Yale Law School** student, whose warm personality works to further draw you into his ever-widening circle of friends. But because of Kaufman's growing list of accolades, it's also equally easy to be jealous of him, taking small comfort in his self-claimed lack of culinary or multilingual skills.

So he can't say or cook *foie gras*. A lack of prowess in the kitchen or with foreign languages does not detract from his impressive background.

Kaufman graduated in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in political science from **Yale University**, where he was the student body president, cocaptain of the Yale wrestling team, and an All-American and runner-up national champion in the National Collegiate Wrestling Association.

Armed with an Ivy League education, Kaufman turned his attention to his first job at the U.S. Department of Justice on criminal justice issues in Africa and the Middle East. For one assignment, he was sent to Rwanda to assess the U.S. program, led by a U.S. resident legal advisor, assisting the Rwandan government to address its past. In meetings with the minister of justice, the prosecutor general, and other Rwandan officials, they developed practical aids, such as creating a case management database and providing office supplies to the prosecutors' offices for processing the genocide cases.

While in Rwanda, Kaufman met some of the victims and sus-

pects of the 1994 genocide that claimed the lives of approximately 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu people.

"During my first trip to Rwanda, Ancilla, the housekeeper of the home at which I was staying was a genocide survivor," remembers Kaufman. "One day in 1994, *Interahamwe* [mobile killing group] attacked Ancilla and her family, hacking them all with machetes—Ancilla has several deep scars on her back—before throwing them all into a pit. Only she survived, her children having died on top of her. She crawled out of the pit after a couple of days and fled to the marshes, where she remained until the genocide was over. She currently lives in a village with some of the people who killed her family and left her for dead.

"I was stunned at Ancilla's courage and optimism and, indeed, of the entire Rwandan nation, and felt compelled to help in some small way if I could," says Kaufman.

One of the "small" ways Kaufman decided to help was, upon his return home, founding a nonprofit organization, the American Friends of the Kigali Public Library, which partnered with the Rotary Club of Kigali-Virunga, Rwanda, to build the nation's first public library, the Kigali Public Library.

"It shocked me that there was a country anywhere in the world in the modern day that did not have a public library, and the consequences of an absence of open access to accurate information in Rwanda had been particularly tragic," he says.

While many would be content with accomplishing that much,



Zachary Kaufman works at the future site of the Kigali Public Library in Rwanda.

Kaufman went on to earn his master's degree in international relations as a Marshall scholar at **Oxford University**, where he is finishing his doctorate in the same subject, and to become a fellow at **Stanford University's** Center on Democracy, Development, and the Rule of Law.

Kaufman's interest in international justice stems from having been one of the few Jewish residents in Morgantown, West Virginia, where he was the target of several acts of anti-Semitism. He was spit on and verbally and physically attacked by some of his classmates, one of whom picked him up, turned him over, and rammed his head into a rock.

Rather than react with violence or contempt, Kaufman used the experience to learn a hard lesson early. "You could choose to hate in response, but it's just not constructive or productive," says Kaufman, who has since befriended and forgiven many of his childhood foes.

"It's not only, or even primarily, the people who commit the acts that are the problem. It's the people who direct them. In some instances, it was actually parents and religious leaders who taught

these children how to feel and act toward Jews. It was because of these experiences that I learned early in life that innocents can sometimes suffer discrimination, which can be manifested violently, and that many people, even those with the power to help or who are in positions of authority, will unfortunately remain bystanders or even initiate or exacerbate these problems."

At just 28, Kaufman has a lifetime to continue his work in international justice. He admits to not having a 10-year plan.

"Professionally, the truth is that I really don't know where I see myself in 10 years," Kaufman says. "There are many challenging problems facing humanity today, and I aim to work on helping to address some of them if I can. Whether I will do so in academia, the public sector, the private sector, or some combination, I do not know yet.

"I will apply myself to whatever critical needs exist for which I feel I can be most useful." •

Genevieve Suzuki

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