

**United States Embassy Nairobi
Public Affairs Section**

P. O. Box 606 Village Market
00621 Nairobi, Kenya
Tel: + 254-2-363-6439
Fax: +254-2-363-6353



December 28, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

In October of this year, the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi hosted New York City's Battery Dance Company for a four-day dance program, which included workshops with two groups of Nairobi dance troupes. Among the Battery Dance Company instructors was an extraordinary dancer and mentor named Bafana Solomon Matea. From day one, Bafana had tremendous enthusiasm and respect for his work and the young people with whom he engaged. He was the embodiment of the American spirit—that of a foreigner who brings with him a cherished culture while embracing and incorporating into it his American experience.

The goal of U.S. Embassy cultural programming is to promote mutual understanding between Americans and host country nationals, in this case Kenyans. We aim to share American values without hitting folks over the head with them, but rather demonstrating them through actions. Bafana's incredibly hard work engaging with the dancers, teaching them, coaching them, and encouraging them was the epitome of the positive spirit we hope to convey. He told them his own story of his youth in South Africa and the incredibly journey that eventually took him to the United States, where he was recognized for his dance talent and has spent much of his career entertaining, teaching dance, and learning and sharing American values.

There are a number of young people in Nairobi who have been forever changed by their engagement with Bafana. While admittedly, the State Department is generally a bit skeptical about bringing non-U.S. citizens on U.S. government sponsored programs, in this case we were certainly not disappointed. Bafana is a tremendous resource for the State Department, and we can only imagine he will continue to be a vibrant and upstanding member of U.S. society.

Sincerely,


Ellen Bienstock Masi