

# ★ STARLife

MARENDE'S DRIVE, VISION FOR HOUSE  
PAGE 26-27



**CHALLENGE:** Eric Silverman (L) and Aaron Bodansky outside the Stanley in Nairobi

## BIKE RIDE SHATTERS MYTHS ON AFRICA

BY PAULINE ODHIAMBO

“Some people said we’d end up getting eaten by lions or chopped up by machetes but we were determined to change some of the misconceptions that Americans have of Africa,” said 22-year-old Aaron Bodansky a day after completing a two-man 5,000km bicycle trip from Cape Town to Nairobi.

“We have very educated friends and family who are still very uneducated about Africa,” adds Aaron who together with 22-year-old Eric Silverman began a bike tour from South Africa to Kenya after completing a student exchange programme at the University of Cape Town.

“Before I got here (Africa), I was told that to travel in Africa we’d have to move around in armoured vehicles with soldiers carrying machine guns and I was surprised because the people who were telling me this had never set foot on Africa,” remarks Eric, a third year history student at Skidmore College, New York.

The two American students first met at the University of Cape Town where they decided to form a non-profit

organisation named Cycle for Understanding in an effort to dispel some of the negative ideas westerners have of Africa.

After informing their families on their decision to bike across the continent, Eric’s mother got on the next flight to Cape Town to find out exactly how the boys planned on accomplishing the biking expedition which they had estimated would end after 70 days.

“Initially, the idea was to travel on motor bikes but Eric’s mum was against that so we opted for bikes instead,” says Aaron who is a third year medical student at Washington University, St. Louis.

“Throughout the journey we realized that the people are not violent as we’d been led to believe but actually quite hospitable”.

The pair spent a night in a remote village in Zambia where the local women offered them a maize meal similar to the Kenyan ugali.

Carrying about 50 kilogrammes worth of luggage the bulk of which made for bike spare parts, Aaron and Eric also carried along with them an HD Camera and tripod to record the whole journey. From Cape Town, the pair cycled to Gaborone, Francistown, Lusaka, Lilongwe, Dodoma

and finally into Kajiado in Kenya before finally making their way into Nairobi.

Eric says: “We ate nuts, soy beans, energy bars and drank lots of water to keep us going but at some point we both got sick from drinking water from some of the wells we came across”.

“I kept stopping to run behind a bush after a bad case of the runs but that was the only hitch in the trip,” adds Aaron whose major highlight of the

*Initially, the idea was to travel on motor bikes but Eric’s mum was against that*

journey was waking up in Tanzania to find their tent surrounded by a group of curious Maasai men.

He says, “Cycling right next giraffes, elephants and impalas was great but those Maasai men the trip very interesting. They were quite hospitable.”

The only downside is that we didn’t get to see any lions even though we cycled through plenty of lion country”. Many of the local people in the various countries they cycled

through advised them to keep close to the villages to keep from getting attacked.

At the start of the journey in mid May, the pair were optimistic they would conclude their journey by August but were unsure on how best to finance the trip.

“We asked our friends and family to donate some money for the whole project but they were sceptical and many of them told us that they weren’t going to help us get ourselves killed in Africa,” Eric says smiling at the memory of how those concerned about him first reacted to news of their cycling expedition.

“There’s crime and violence everywhere in the world even in America. I chose to go ahead with the bike ride because the reality of the matter is that every country in the world has its good and bad elements. It’s not only in Africa where bad things happen”.

To create awareness for their cause the students created a website and loaded photos of the places and people they encountered. “More people began to support us once they saw the images of Africa we recorded were quite contrary to what the western media had led them to believe.”

Not every African country is war-torn or full of pirates. We’ve met some of the most hospitable people in the countries we’ve been to and we plan to make a documentary out of the footage we have so that we can show people more positive images of Africa,” remarks Eric, adding that he will resume school in September for his final year of college. On August 20, Aaron and Eric arrived safely in Nairobi.

In their website, blog and on Facebook, the Cycle for Understanding is garnering support of people from across the globe and Aaron is hopeful that the documentary once edited will help create more positive perceptions of the African continent.

“We are to resume school in September but I’m taking a break to edit the documentary and create networks in the American media where it can be aired,” says Aaron, adding that plans to finish his neuroscience major will be put in the back burner to give him more time to put the final touches to the documentary.



**WOMEN PRIESTS:** Quotes used to justify anything

## TOP 10 WORST BIBLE VERSES

BY JACK MALVERN

Biblical verses apparently endorsing sexism, genocide and the slaughter of sorceresses have been identified by readers of a Christian website as the least endearing parts of the holy book.

The online survey by shipoffools.com, a humorous online magazine, lists the ten verses people would rather have been left out of the Bible, in an attempt to show the dangers of quoting scripture selectively.

St Paul’s advice about whether women are allowed to teach men in church came top of the “Worst Verse” poll, which received more than 1,000 responses.

The results were discussed last week by a panel of theologians at the Greenbelt Festival in Cheltenham. In 1 Timothy ii, 12, St Paul is quoted thus: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”

The verse has been used by some conservative Christians to justify opposition to women priests. In second place is the order by Samuel, one of the early leaders of the Israelites, for his people to commit genocide: “This is what the Lord Almighty says ... ‘Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.’” (1 Samuel xv, 3).

Moses’s indictment of witchcraft, in Exodus xxii, 18 came third: “Do not allow a sorceress to live.” Other disliked verses include Psalm 137, which features a line that is rarely spoken in church: “Happy is he who repays you for what you have done to us / He who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks.”

Another distasteful set of verses features in Judges xix, 20-25, when a man is trapped in his house by a hostile crowd and sends out his concubine to placate them. She is raped “throughout the night” and eventually returns to the house to collapse in the doorway. His response is simply to tell her to get up. “But there was no answer. Then the man put her on his donkey and set out for home.”

St Paul’s condemnation of homosexuality in Romans i, 27 is highlighted: “In the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”

The list also includes stories of parents, such as Abraham, undertaking to sacrifice their children in the name of God, along with the endorsement of female subservience in Ephesians v, 22 which states, “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord,” and questionable advice to slaves in 1 Peter ii, 18: “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the cruel.”

Simon Jenkins, editor of shipoffools.com, said: “It doesn’t have to be a textbook of infallible information and unbreakable laws to be God’s book. And it doesn’t have to be one big pile of lies because of its dodgy bits. In Chapter and Worse we are attempting to rescue it from rival takeover bids.”