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The First Lady Presents Legion of Merit to Nouakchott Region President



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BRITISH AMBASSADOR CELEBRATES AUTISM AWARENESS IN THE WORLD

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US Government donates \$620,000

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Nouakchott Region President in Barcelona



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Is Niger the New Destination?

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British Visas in Nouakchott

British Embassy
Nouakchott

Apply for UK VISA
in NOUAKCHOTT



If you are interested, contact us at Nouakchott.ExternalEnquiries@fco.gov.uk



The British Embassy in Mauritania is organising the first of three visits in 2022 by the UK Visa Service – to take applications here in Nouakchott, instead of Rabat or Dakar.

The Special Visa Service will take place between Monday 4 April and Friday 8 April. Please look out for further detail on the following social media platforms:

Facebook: UKinMauritania

Twitter: UKinMauritania and ColinWellsUK

British Ambassador Colin Wells said, "I hope the visits to Nouakchott by UK Visas will help improve the service to Mauritanian visitors, students, and business leaders. In August we will hold a second visit in order to help talented Mauritanian students to submit their visa applications. Please follow our social media for more detail".



Sponsor me!

The Key visited ALCAE Association on Monday, February 28th. The main goal of the visit was to shed light on this touching phenomenon.

We met with the president of ALCAE Mr. Racine Dia, and made the next report.

About ALCAE Association

ALCAE stands for Association de Lutte Contre L'abandon des Enfants; the translation would be in English: the Association of the Fight Against Children's Abandonment. ALCAE was launched in January 2018, thanks to Mr. Racine Dia. He himself was abandoned when he was a child. He never knew his biological parents. Since then it has remained active and dynamic through its volunteer members, foster families and generous donors.

ALCAE Vision

ALCAE plans to found a modern orphanage with adequate equipment and personnel to take care of abandoned and orphaned children. It hopes to provide basic facilities for their health and fulfillment dormitory, kin-

dergarten and playground. Thanks to the investment of its members and partners. ALCAE also hopes, in the years to come, to expand its activities throughout the whole country of Mauritania.

ALCAE Association Goals

- Allows the foster children to grow in health and harmony.
- Provide them with citizenship rights. Thanks to the close collaboration with local elected officials.
- Educate families around abandonment issues and the rights of children.

ALCAE Mission

ALCAE is a humanitarian organization with a social purpose, coming to the aid of any child in dress. They offer full assistance to children who have been abandoned, orphaned, abused or are in precarious situations. They provide everything a child needs: food, housing, health care, love and foster families. Furthermore, the association also distributes food kits and finances small businesses for poor families that have been identified in the precarious neighborhoods of Nouakchott.



Partnership ALCAE Story

It was founded to ensure the effectiveness of their projects. ALCAE collaborates with many partners: health facilities, Nouakchott municipalities, and NGOs working in the childhood sectors.

How to Help ALCAE

ALCAE collects donations such as medicine, infant milk, clothes, toys ...etc. As well as cash for the well-being of children. ALCAE is entirely financed by its members

and well-intentioned people. To ensure long-term commitment to abandoned and orphaned children's services.

ALCAE is looking for partners that could help finance its activities.

Contact

Alcaemairtanie@gmail.com

Phone:

00222 46944865


00222 32337191

ALCAE offers full assistance to any child in distress

Is there a significant difference between American English and British English?

What's the right context of the saying "America is the land of opportunity?"

America is indeed the land of opportunity. What makes the United States different from so many other countries is that, regardless of origin or identity, anyone who works hard enough can succeed. That success may be harder to achieve for some than others, but it is nonetheless possible for anyone with determination and a strong work ethic to find success. Therefore, when we say, "America is the land of opportunity," it is meant to say that there are innumerable opportunities to achieve there.



Ask an American

Hello! My name is Alex, and I am a college student and ESL teacher in the United States. Each month I will answer your questions about learning English and about life in the United States. Send your questions of less than 100 words to keynewspaper21@gmail.com to have your question printed and answered here in The Key.

Can we master a language without studying linguistics?

I believe that it is indeed possible to study a language without studying linguistics. I will qualify that statement, however, by saying that to understand a language and master it, you must understand the linguistics specific to that language. For example, you do not need to be knowledgeable about theories of syntax and phonology in order to master English, but you do need to know about the phonology of English in order to become fluent. For this reason, expertise in broader linguistic theory is not always necessary for mastering language.

Can you elaborate upon the First Amendment regarding the freedom of speech?

The First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prevents the government from imposing laws that prevent four things: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom to petition the government. The most discussed of these is freedom of speech, which is one of the most controversial topics in American society. Essentially, all speech in the United States is considered "protected." This means that one's right

to say something cannot be infringed upon, with very, very few exceptions. An example of exception to this rule is speech that would cause serious harm to others. A famous analogy used by a Supreme Court justice was that of a "a man falsely shouting fire in a theatre and causing a panic." The judge was implying that, by shouting "fire" in a crowded theater, the man would cause a panic that could lead to the harm of other patrons. Besides speech of this nature, however, Americans have the right to express themselves the way they want. This has led to significant debate because people often make inflammatory statements that others find offensive. A current example of this is the use of hate speech. The right to make xenophobic statements, for example, is protected under the First Amendment. Some people believe, however, that hate speech should not be protected and should be banned by the government.

Is there a significant difference between American English and British English?

You have asked me this question at a great time, because for the last two months I have been living in London,

after having spent my entire life in the United States. My answer is No and Yes.

No, because written English is almost exactly the same in the United States and the United Kingdom. Most Americans, for example, would not be able to differentiate whether a book was written by a Briton or an American, and vice versa. The only significant differences between written American and British English are the spelling of certain words – "color" in the U.S. and "colour" in the U.K. – and some grammar, such as the use of commas (look up the Oxford Comma if you want to learn more).

Spoken English in the U.S. and the U.K. vary more significantly. The extent of this difference, however, depends on the level of formality being used by a speaker. A highly-educated American speaking and a highly-educated Briton will likely use much of the same language. The most significant difference at this level is the difference pronunciation and some vocabulary. In terms of pronunciation, both are intelligible. As a student of English, you will want to choose one of the two accents/vocabularies systems and stick with it, as switching between American

and British English when speaking will sound strange to native speakers. Concerning vocabulary, there a number of differences that most native speakers will not be aware of. For example, a large, wheeled vehicle for hauling goods (a camion in French) is called a "truck" in the U.S. and a "lorry" in the U.K. Noting whether a word is used in one country or both in important, because most Americans will not know what a "lorry" means and vice versa.

At the informal spoken level, however, there is a much wider difference between the two varieties. In addition to vocabulary, many phrases and expressions used in informal conversation differ between countries. The most striking difference for me as an American in the U.K. is the expression "cheers." In the United States, "cheers" is something said after a toast at a celebration. In the U.K., however, it means "thank you." Other differences are less easy to detect for English learners. For example, saying "Are you alright?" in the U.K. is the equivalent of asking someone, "How are you?" as a greeting. In the U.S., however, "Are you alright?" is only used when asking about a person's state when they look or otherwise seem unwell. Thus, if you were to travel to the U.S. and say to someone "Are you alright?" as a greeting, they would likely be concerned that they look sick.

British slang is also very different from American slang – this has been the most difficult thing for me to get used to as an American English speaker in the U.K. If you want to learn English slang, it is very important to know which country a particular word or phrases comes from. For example, "mad" in the U.K. means "crazy," whereas in the U.S. it means "upset."

They are numerous other examples of the difference between American

and British English. My advice to anyone learning English is to familiarize themselves with both varieties in terms of spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and listening, but choose only one variety when speaking.

What's the difference between a primary and a caucus as far as American elections are concerned?

During American elections, voters from one of the two main political parties vote to elect who will represent them in the "general election." For the purposes of this column, we will discuss primaries for presidential elections. There are two main political parties in the United States, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party. Each party has millions of members, and the goal of a primary is to decide who will represent the party and serve as its candidate for president. In most states, a person who wants to run for president submits their name to the state branch of the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. These state branches then hold elections among the members of the party in that state, usually in the spring. Whoever receives the most votes from the members of the party becomes that party's candidate for president in the general election between both parties' candidates in November. This is a drastic simplification, but it highlights the basic function of the primary.

A caucus is a type of primary. Rather than being conducted at the state level, the election of a candidate is done at the local level. Caucuses are frequently carried out in more traditional forms than a simple ballot vote. In Iowa for example, people gather in a large room in their town, where they divide themselves according to which candidate they support. The candidate with the largest group of people in the room is chosen as the candidate for that locality.



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I describe Jade's autism as severe. The thing is...autism is actually a spectrum along which some individuals have very mild touches of it, and others are severe. A useful description of autism can be found



in Wikipedia....

Autism is a developmental disorder characterized by difficulties with social interaction and communication and by restricted and repetitive behavior.[3] Parents usually notice signs during the first three years of their child's life.

When she was a baby, Jade lived inside her own little world for a few years, even after we realised she had autism. She never communicated. It took a lot of effort to ease

her out of this and to be part of our world. Today, we have a very interactive and wonderful daughter, who is a pleasure to love and be with. She does not talk still, and probably never will. Autism is a long-term, indeed life-long, condition for which there is no cure and the medical world is still many years from knowing what causes it let alone how to correct it. Families can be badly affected and disrupted by autism. In addition to Jade, I had



(Jade fascinated by the passenger ships arriving at Mumbai's Gateway to India)

two children without autism. But, Jade dominated family life because she needed so much care. I often felt that others did not realise how difficult caring for Jade was, nor the impact on my other children. Other interesting things about autism. It affects predominantly boys (rough figures suggest 80% of autistic adults and children are boys).

It is not caused by the MMR jab (the combined measles, rubella and mumps injection) as once feared – we knew Jade was autistic well before she had her MMR jab. All three of my children had their MMRs. And many autistic children develop other conditions, notably epilepsy. Jade has epilepsy too – though controlled very well by pills.

What can you learn about or do on World Autism Awareness Day? On Jade's behalf, may I suggest just one thing today. If you see a child or young

adult with autism or another mental health condition, think positively about them and their supporting family and friends. It really matters that people around them are not being judgemental. Being positive is the most wonderful gift you could give to any autistic person, and their family.

Nouakchott Region President in Barcelona



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October 10 and 14, 2022 in Dy Jon, North Korea. The President and her peers took up the problems of elected officials in Africa, including sustainable development goals and climate change. In addition, the participation of women and youth. During these four deliberation days, the Organization's work of 2021 was evaluated. Also, the strategic blueprint for 2022 was made. It shall take into account the development requirements for the post-pandemic Covid 19.

US Government donates \$620,000

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As was the case in 2016, when we started our first partnership for field epidemiology training, the urgency is there. In 2016, it was the fear of Ebola that mobilized Mauritania and the international community. Today, it is the challenge of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic that we must meet, together.

Minister, Ladies and gentlemen, Field epidemiology training is a powerful surveillance tool in every region of Mauritania. Properly used by expert professionals, it is proven to improve the ability of states and organizations to prevent, detect, and respond to public health



to salute the renewed commitment of the CDC, for its support to the tune of US\$620,000, for the implementation of this technical assistance. I am also honored to know that it is an African organization, in this case, the Network of African Field Epidemiologists (AFENET), which is the delegated contracting authority for this capacity building. I salute AFENET's resolute commitment.

Minister, Ladies and gentlemen, The partnership that unites us today will make it possible to train three cohorts of 75 people in frontline epidemics and responses. These

first two cohorts that we trained together from 2016 to 2017. Our hope is that this kind of capacity building will be sustained and offered to as many health actors as possible, as a solution permanent challenge to epidemiological surveillance. They are the first to respond, not only to emergencies, but also to our daily health needs.

Before concluding, I would like to express my appreciation for the excellent cooperation that exists between your Ministry and the American Embassy. It is this cooperation that has enabled the progress we celebrate today in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, among other things.



Is Niger the New Destination?

Paris is turning to Niger to be the focal point in France's new strategy for the region, instead of Chad or Mali after the end of "Operation Barkhane" in the Sahel region, based on several indicators. One of these indicators is that the military weight of French leadership in the Sahel moved from the Chadian capital, N'Djamena, to the Nigerien capital, Niamey. Operation Barkhane's headquarters had been based in N'Djamena until the operation's end on June 10 of last year, before moving to Niamey. The European Union's Operation Takuba also moved to the Nigerien capital last year.

As further evidence of this strategic shift, Nigerien president Mohamed Bazoum was the only Sahelian leader (from among Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Mauritania) to attend the Sahel Summit in Paris in-person alongside his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron. This does not appear to be coincidence, as Macron has in fact chosen Bazoum to be the region's policeman after the killing of Chadian president Idriss Déby on April 20 of last year. Besides Macron and Bazoum, Mauritanian president Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, and Burkinabe president Faso Roch Kaboré, as well as the president of the Transitional Military Council of Chad Mahamat Idriss Déby, and interim Malian president Assimi Goïta attended the summit virtually.

Extension of Operations

Last week, the office of the French president confirmed that, "we must review our military partnership with these countries" adding, "it is not about what we're doing around Mali, but rather reinforcing our operations in Niger and to continue to support the southern wing." A source close to the Élysée indicated that France promised to coordinate its withdrawal with the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali and the EU training mission there, which would continue to benefit from French aerial and medical support on the ground before these resources are transferred at a later time.

In addition to a possible reinforcement of its presence in neighboring Niger – which already hosts a French airbase and 800 soldiers – Paris intends to offer its services to other countries in West Africa to help them in preventing the spread of jihadists in the Gulf of Guinea.

Support for Democracy or Strongmen?

Macron's choice of Niger for the center of his new strategy in the Sahel raised several questions, given that Niger is neither the strongest military power in the region, nor a stronghold of the rebellion which arose in Northern Mali. The real reason is that Macron does not want to be surrounded by a group of military leaders who did not come to power democratically less than a year before key, and yet-undecided, French elections. Macron faces internal and external criticism for his support of the military council lead by Mahamat Déby, whom opposition groups accuse of seizing power after the killing of his father, and of obstructing the constitution. The success of military leaders in seizing power in Chad may have been one of the reasons that encouraged Colonel Assim Goïta in Mali to lead a second coup against then-president



Bah Ndaou in Mali on May 24 of last year and appoint himself to the presidency directly. This coup was preceded only nine months earlier by another, which aimed to topple then-president Boubacar Keïta.

This time, however, Macron refused to stand beside the coup plotters in Mali and their Russia-aligned supporters after they overthrew a president whose had close relations with Paris. In this context, the French president told the Journal du Dimanche that France will not support countries that lack legitimacy or a democratic transition to power. Macron was unable to prevent Goïta from naming himself president, despite putting pressure on the latter by threatening to withdraw French forces from the country. The later month-long suspension of military operations and the progressive withdrawal of French forces from northern Mali also failed to prevent Goïta's seizure of power.

France, which used to produce presidents in French Africa, now finds itself powerless before an army colonel who has lost numerous battles against multiple armed groups, notably on the northern and southern fronts. Nigerien president Bazoum, whom Paris has sought to market as a model for prosperous democracies in the Sahel, won the presidency last February with 56% of the vote, despite belonging to an Arab minority that represents less than 1% of the country's population. Last April, Bazoum also played a role in besieging Chadian rebels who had entered his country's borders to escape attacks by the Chadian army. It is for these reasons that Macron welcomed Bazoum to Paris for the Sahel summit without any other regional leaders.

The younger Déby, however, is still a key player despite lacking the constitutional or popular legitimacy that his father had. The Chadian army remains the only force among the Sahel states capable of providing support beyond their frontiers and of effectively fighting Islamist groups in the Sahara and the Lake Chad Basin. As such, Déby had been welcomed to Paris by Macron four days before the Sahel Summit.

Conflict between Two Neighboring Yet Different Systems

"The military should not be allowed to take power because they failed on the frontlines where they were supposed to be. And if the colonels become ministers and heads of state, who will go to war in their place?" This statement was made by President Bazoum during a press conference in Paris, in response to a question about the situation in Mali, where Colonel Goïta led two coups in less than a year. The Nigerien president sharpened his tone, adding that "It will be easy each time an army in our countries fails for them to seize power. This is what happened in Mali: in 2012 the military failed so they carried out a coup. And they did the same thing again in 2020. This is unacceptable."

Bazoum's position aligns with Macron's statements, although his tone is more severe than the latter's, which prompted the transitional authorities in Mali to summon the Nigerien ambassador to Bamako. There, they presented him with a "strong protest" after expressing their surprise at the Nigerien president's statements, according to local media. Bazoum's pointed stance on the coup in Mali arises not only from his support for the French position, but also from the fact that Bazoum himself almost fell victim to a coup in March 2021, two days before being sworn in.

Niger and Mali, in addition to Burkina Faso, form the tri-border region, which has witnessed the most violent Islamist operations against civilians and security forces. Niger and Mali's differences will weaken the fragile coalition of regional states.

Seeking Algerian Support

Four days after his visit to France, the Nigerien president went with a delegation to Algeria. Security concerns were at the top of the agenda for the meeting with his Algerian counterpart, Abdelmadjid Tebboune. Little was revealed about what was discussed – and what messages Bazoum brought from France to Algeria – but it is clear that the Nigerien president went to discuss the implications of the withdrawal of French forces

from northern Mali. The visit coincided with the reopening of lines of communication between Paris and Algiers, after having been interrupted for approximately six months, according to the Algerian newspaper Echorouk. France seeks to convince Algeria to fill the security vacuum that will be left by its withdrawal from northern Mali during the second half of 2021 and the beginning of 2022. President Abdelmadjid Tebboune has rejected doing so in previous statements, even before the end of Operation Barkhane. It is possible for Niger to play a role in persuading Algeria to provide greater support to Sahel countries and to prevent the collapse of the security equation in the region, which would affect the stability of neighboring countries as a whole.

The most prominent success achieved by Bazoum in his visit to Algeria was the latter's announcement of its agreement to opening the border between the two countries, which will end the isolation of northern Niger, a region inhabited by Tuareg and Arab tribes.

Niger is located between the jaws of Islamist organizations, with the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara in the west of the region and Boko Haram active in the east. For this reason, foreign military support plays a key role in preventing the fall of Sahelian states at the hands of these extremist groups. Niger's democracy is also located between two countries under military rule – Mali to the west, Chad to the east – and therefore presents its alliance with Algeria as having "similar democratic systems" that aim to counter the expansion of military regimes in the region. Bazoum's battle is not only against Islamist groups, but also against coups in a region with turbulent security dynamics, where military leaders rarely leave government except to return to it later. France therefore seeks to develop a security strategy for the Sahel that relies on democratic regimes, after repeated accusations of supporting military regimes in the region at the expense of its people's ambitions.

Larbi Sidi Mahmoud
Journalist Specializing in Sahel Affairs

Mauritania:

Social Entrepreneurship as a Catalyst for Social Change

“Social entrepreneurship is the process by which individuals, startups and entrepreneurs develop and fund solutions that directly address social issues. A social entrepreneur, therefore, is a person who explores business opportunities that have a positive impact on their community, society or the world.” A successful social entrepreneur is one who has had ideas, started businesses, and made money from it. Specifically, a social entrepreneur is a person who sets out on an entrepreneurial venture with the ambition of changing social mindsets and impacting social conditions in the lives of others. These businesses can be of different types: for-profit, non-profit, or hybrid.

“The work of social entrepreneurship has a honeymoon phase, during which sheer optimism can go a long way in weathering the ups and downs, leaps and failures. Progressing past the turning point from honeymoon to ‘real life’ does not lessen the appeal of a career dedicated to social change, but it is not for the fainthearted. It takes time. There will be setbacks. But that doesn’t mean the journey has to be draining. Going up against dead ends, rejection, failure, and setbacks requires a solid dose of courage.” (Excerpt from Manifesto for a Moral Revolution by Jacqueline Novogratz, CEO and Founder of Acumen)

What is a Social Enterprise?

A social enterprise and a traditional business are not the same thing. The difference is in the motivation of the entrepreneur. The traditional entrepreneur is driven by the desire to make money or profit, whereas the social entrepreneur wants to find an impactful solution to a given social problem. Nevertheless, a social enterprise can be profitable as well if it focuses on both social and economic profitability, while not making profit maximization the number one priority.

Substantively, “social entrepreneurship adds much-needed independence to social businesses as they are no longer able to rely exclusively on external funding like grants and donations”. Instead, through the use of entrepreneurial strategies, social entrepreneurs can create their own business model for social impact and be profitable at the same time. To engage in social entrepreneurship, one must identify a social need or problem that they are passionate about solving. In this way, one’s capacity is aimed at transforming people’s lived surroundings while using all the tools that capitalism provides.

What Makes a Social Entrepreneur?

Social entrepreneurship is in the DNA of Muhammad Yunus, No-



bel Peace Prize winner and founder of Grameen Bank, a Bangladesh-based institution that provides small loans to those living in poverty. 97% of their borrowers are women – and these same women pay their loans back at a rate of 97%. The bank has managed a net yearly income of \$10 million, has 2,568 branches, and covers 93% of villages in Bangladesh.

But anyone, from anywhere, devoted and committed to creating change is considered a social entrepreneur as they bring new businesses to the market by developing new ideas, goods and services. In Mauritania there are iconic social entrepreneurs such as Mohamed Ould Bouamatou, a businessman who has launched several corporations across the country, especially his foundation’s Ophthalmologic Hospital that has been covering patients’ medical expenses for about 20 years. Another, Mohamed Ould Noueiguett, launched the National Bank of Mauritania, which has become a key component of the country’s economy.

In Mauritania today, entrepreneurship has become a source of employment and income. Many young startups and businessmen invest in different fields to contribute to social change and the ab-

sorption of unemployment in areas such as educational access, agriculture, telecommunications, livestock, real-estate, food conservation and transformation, automobiles, money transfers, oil and mining, small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), hospitality, NGOs, micro-finance, schooling, transportation, fisheries, commerce and trading, poverty reduction, women’s empowerment, healthcare access, community development, etc.

How do Mauritians Embrace Entrepreneurship?

Mauritanian soil is unquestionably rich in raw materials and natural resources: iron, gold, phosphates, copper, fish, and rainfall make this country potentially one of the richest countries of west Africa. But political leaders have been unable find a way to take advantage of this natural wealth because of corruption, favoritism, tribalism, clientelism nurtured by bad governance, and a lack of transparency in the management of resources. For these reasons, a small handful is getting richer and richer with each generation as a large part of the population suffers from hunger, unemployment, poverty, insecurity, and a lack of commodities and basic infrastructure.

Furthermore, most people, such as local merchants and the diaspora, make passive investments: real estate, luxury cars, informal SMEs, shops, or groceries. In addition, people often provide services in the same area as their competitors, which eliminates opportunities for profit. Things would be different if they were investing actively in job-creating industries with more income and social impact in urban areas than in the rural ones such as building eolian dams, solar energy electrification, intensive livestock, irrigation, extractive factories, fish product transformation units, etc. To put it simply, Mauritania is full of riches but is left far behind because of a lack of good governance and targeted initiatives for social change. Mauritania has not yet met the requirements of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals.

According to the UN Development Program, “Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations in 2015 as a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The creativity, knowhow, technology and financial resources from all of society is necessary to achieve the SDGs in

every context.”

Entrepreneurial Challenges in Bringing about Social Change

1). In Mauritania, it’s quite complex for expatriots to launch registered businesses: expats working and living in the country should be able to have their own businesses in order to attract more investors from abroad. It’s high time for dual citizenship to be officially recognized by the laws and regulations of the country. A great number of dual-citizen Mauritians are seeking to return and invest in their home country. Some of them are victims of the new biometric census that deprive them from most of their home duties.

2). Young startups must be able to get loans from banks and local agencies to extend their businesses. They must receive regular coaching, monitoring, and evaluation from local entities. If not, lack of subsequent funding or assistance prevents startups from resisting shocks, as they have no way to weather market downturns on their own.

3). The Mauritanian diaspora should invest mainly in sustainable and community development projects to (i) boost local capacity building, (ii) make a profit, (iii) provide decent jobs for youths, (iv) foster applicants with soft skills trainings, and (v) eradicate illegal migration by land or sea.

4). Mauritania should increase safety measures to attract more investors and benefactors. Westerners are still wary of visiting the country because of security recommendations from their countries.

5). Mauritians should learn how to invest positively not negatively. Sending boys and girls abroad with trafficked visas is expensive. Instead, this money should be invested in small businesses such as local NGOs, agriculture cooperatives, or health and sanitation associations.

6). Being an college graduate with job skills must be sufficient for being hired. Instead, hiring decisions are often made without consideration of any competence-based requirements.

7). Entrepreneurs’ talents and performances deserve to be recognized nationally by media coverage via print, press, TV, or radio. This will encourage others to continue striving and attract new challengers.

8). It’s time to boost local communities with development projects so that people continue to play a role in their own social change. Helping populations with donations is not impactful in the long run.

Makha Korera
 Consultant Freelancer
 Curriculum developer
 Soft skills trainer (Learnlight)
 Korera.makha@gmail.com





Behind The Lens:

Exclusive Interview with Professional Photographer Chevie Baba

By: Varha Abd Selam
Professor at Lebanese International University
M.A in Mass Communication

Chevie Baba is a professional photographer, founder of LINCmedia, and official photographer at La Vision. He has demonstrated an exceptional talent in his work since 2013. It is a great pleasure to feature an interview with one of Mauritania's most talented photographers.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



The Key: Hello, Chevie and thank you for doing this interview. Could you first introduce yourself to our readers? Who is Chevie and what does he do?

Chevie Baba: My name's Chevie Baba, also known as Linc, and I'm a professional photographer.

T.K.: Where did the nickname "Linc" come from?

C.B.: The nickname Linc comes from the 2005 TV show Prison Break. My friends called me Linc after Lincoln Burrows, a character in that show.

T.K.: When did your passion for photography start?

C.B.: At the beginning, I was more passionate about cinema. But with time, I discovered I had stronger feelings when taking a photo, almost as if I was making a swift visit to those I'm photographing. It was as if I was a tourist unveiling new little worlds. The first camera I used was an analog camera in 2004. Afterwards, I started working on my talent until 2013, when I noticed that those around me really loved my photos.

T.K.: Have you ever had formal photography training?

C.B.: At first, when it was just a hobby, I didn't study it. I was around a bunch of very talented young people in the field, and I learned a lot from them. After a while, I started studying online through Coursera, Lynda, and such. I bought courses and studied them. The courses weren't very expensive, they were affordable. I used to buy a photography course and study it, then apply it since I was around professionals. At another point, I took one or two local photography training sessions. However, most of what I have acquired was from those online courses. They are the ones that I learned from the most. The training sessions I had here on the field did nothing for me. On the contrary, I was – as I believe – better than those providing the training sessions. Everything I have learned about photography, most of it was from Coursera and Lynda.com.

T.K.: Have you ever thought about creating your own photography training sessions at a professional level?

C.B.: I've always thought about that. I want to start a training session with all the lessons I've learned from those courses that I've taken online. I would like to target the voiceless classes, the youth living in the countryside. If trained right, they could produce beautiful photos of their cities, and also produce good photos for news websites, and that might be good for them. I think about it a lot and I will do something about it soon. Mohamed Ould Salahi at the premier of the movie The Mauritanian. (Photo by Chevie Baba)

T.K.: What types of photography do you do?

C.B.: I do many types of photography. I do portraits, mostly photojournalism because most of the jobs I get involve photojournalism, like news coverage, social activities, and so on. Sometimes when I'm outside the city I do landscape, and I even do street photography occasionally. But most of the time I do photojournalism.

T.K.: Do people on the street stare at you when you're carrying around your camera or doing street photography? How do you deal with their stares?

C.B.: People's stares have never mattered to me. I don't even pay any attention to them because what matters to me is the way I look at myself. We've also come to a point where people have become more progressive, and technology has advanced. Social media also helped in that people now have a different outlook than those before. On the contrary, at first, they looked at you as if you were being a bit weird but with time, they've grown to like it, to like having their photos taken and some even cooperate. And as I've become more known with time, some love to have their photos taken by me.

T.K.: This is a personal nightmare of mine and why I stopped doing street photography once I came back, but have you ever feared your camera getting stolen, or people making fun of you while on the street doing street photography?

C.B.: I never feared my camera to get stolen because I always have it around my neck when I'm on the street. As for people making fun of me, it has happened to me before. Back in the day when I said that I'd get into this field, my friends made fun of me, and now they've all become fans. Now they'd do anything for me to carry my camera around and photograph them. Now they all want me to teach them photography.

T.K.: What was your first official job as a photographer?



C.B.: My first official job as a photographer was at Zein Production, with Aly Barick. I also did a lot of administrative work there at the same time. It gave me the opportunity — as they had cameras and such — to do photography and to find some freelance work. So, you could say that the first official job for me in this field was through Zein Production.

T.K.: In your opinion, how hard is it to get a job as a photographer?

C.B.: I believe that finding a job is getting easier. Because there are now a number of online [news] platforms, the demand for photographers has never been higher. It also helps that the profession now has a name and is developing. There is also a desire for growth. For example, I aspire to open up the first professional studio in Mauritania. That might allow me to provide job opportunities for young people, to train others, and so on. Every person who graduates from my studio who had learned photography and all of its aspects, I could suggest them [as employees] to the [online news] platforms that I work with and introduce them [the photographers] to those platforms. I see that the first stage already happened. There are a number of good photographers working for [online] platforms, and the platforms are more than [just] photographers, meaning that the demand for photographers is multiplying, and that's important.

T.K.: You've mentioned that the first camera you had was an analog camera, what kind of camera was it?

C.B.: It wasn't the first camera I had but the first I've used. I don't remember the brand, but I believe it was a Fujifilm camera. I went to a guy to develop the film and only 6 or 7 photos worked. The first digital camera I used was a Canon rebel. I don't remember the model. The first camera I owned was also a

T.K.: What's your favorite lens?

C.B.: It depends, for portraits, I like using 50mm and 80mm. For street photography and events, I prefer to shoot in a wide angle like the 24-70mm or the ones I talked about before like the 128mm and the 70-300mm because you can zoom.

T.K.: Where does Chevie see himself in 10 years?

C.B.: I see myself in 10 years as the owner of a big professional studio. I'll have opened a photography teaching center and I'll have been able to bring in professional trainers from abroad. I would have made wide connections abroad and would have helped young people to learn good photography and content creation. This is where I see myself in 10 years. I am one of the few people who have decided to not leave and become an immigrant somewhere abroad. I believe my struggle is here in Mauritania, not abroad.

T.K.: Where do you see the profession of photography in Mauritania in 10 years?

C.B.: I see it spreading more as more influencers and magazines will arrive here soon. And online digital platforms and magazines all need photographers for events and activities. The country needs to work on its image. All this needs people who offer high quality work. I see it flourishing in 10 years. It will get to a different place.

T.K.: You mentioned that you initially started with a love for cinema and then you discovered your love for photography, do you ever see yourself a filmmaker in the future?

C.B.: I love both, but I chose to focus on this field [photography] that I've found myself in more as a creator. Whereas for cinema I see myself more as a receiver.

T.K.: What type of photography do you prefer? Your work with La Vision is mostly photojournalism, but if you could choose any other type what would it be?

C.B.: If I were to choose, photojournalism would've been the last type of work I did. For example, I would have done exhibitions and galleries, told stories, or done portraits. I would have focused more on the creative side of photography.

T.K.: Any advice for young amateur photographers out there?

C.B.: They should be disciplined in their transactions and always work on learning and developing themselves. They must respect the profession. These are some of the most important things that help create an honorable professional career.

Canon, it was a 700D and that was the first camera I bought that was mine. Though now I don't use Canon anymore except rarely. I mainly use Nikon cameras now.

T.K.: What is your current camera and what lenses do you use?

C.B.: Currently, I'm using a Nikon D850. I use 50mm, 24-70mm, and I don't remember the other one if it's a 28-128 or something like that.



Regions of America: The South

The United States is a massive, diverse country spanning the entirety of the North American continent and touching four different seas. Owing to this geographic breadth and the country's rich history, the United States is made up of many unique geographic and cultural regions. For the next few months, I will be writing about the most well-known of these regions here in The Key. Each month, I will discuss the geography, history, and culture of one region. This month's focus will be the Southern United States, commonly known as "the South."

Geography

The South covers approximately 500,000 square miles of the contiguous United States, an area slightly larger than Mauritania. While there is no one definition of what makes up the South, it is generally considered to be made up of the states along the East and Gulf Coasts below the Mason-Dixon Line, as well as some inland states such as Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and West Virginia. The Mason-Dixon Line runs along the southern border of Pennsylvania, a state in the Northeastern United States, which marks the cultural and geographic boundary between the Northern and South United States. Prior to the Civil War, states north of the line forbid slavery, while (most) of those below it allowed for slavery. Today, the only difference between those north and south of the line is their culture.

Along the Atlantic coast, the region is marked by low plains and rolling hills. Long barrier islands run directly along the coast, composed of tidal marshes or beaches. Further inland lay the Appalachian Mountains, which travel from Georgia north to West Virginia before continuing into the Northeast. The Gulf Coast, which sits on the Gulf of Mexico, has a similar geography, with the exception of the Mississippi Delta, which is the mouth of the Mississippi River. The climate in almost the entire region is temperate, with hot, humid summers and cool, wet winters. Florida, the southernmost state in the region, has a tropical geography and climate, with an abundance of palm trees and warm, humid weather year-round.

These geographic characteristics make the South ideal for agriculture, and it is one of the region's primary industries. Livestock; fruits and vegetables; and raw agricultural materials such as soybeans and cotton continue to be grown in large quantities in the South, owing to the conducive geography. Florida is known for its tropical agriculture, such as oranges and sugar cane. Florida oranges are a signature American agricultural export.

History

Although most major settlements during the colonial period and early United States were located in the North, the first European settlements in what would become the United States was in the South. First came the Spanish, who established a colony along what is now the coast of Florida and Georgia. These settlements were followed soon after by the foundation of English settlements in what is now Virginia. These settlements gradually expanded, and with time the South came to be controlled by three European powers: the Spanish in Florida (Florida's name comes from the Spanish word for "flowered"), the French in Louisiana, and the English along the Atlantic coast north of Flori-



da. Traces of Spanish and French settlement can still be seen today. Florida is dotted with a number of Spanish forts and place names. The French Quarter of New Orleans, Louisiana's capital, looks like many French colonies of the 18th century.

By the 19th century, all of the South had come under American control. The region's economy was dominated by agriculture, the products of which would primarily be sent north to the country's industrial center. A prime example of this was the cotton industry. Cotton was grown on large plantations in the South using slave labor. This cotton would then travel north to places such as New England, where it would be transformed into textiles. This system, and the broader economy of the South, was based on the widespread use of slave labor. When the status of slavery in the country came to be challenged in the mid-19th century, Civil War broke out. Many Southern states broke away from the rest of the United States and formed the Confederate States of America. The Confederacy, as it was known, fought against the North to preserve Southern society, which was in large part based on the exploitation of slave labor. The Confederacy lost.

Although slavery was abolished, the racism that allowed for slavery in the first place continued on after the war. The most concrete manifestation of this racism was the enactment of Jim Crow laws. These laws enforced racial segregation in the South, relegating former slaves and their descendants to second class status in society. These laws and the racist system they produced led to two events that had a profound impact on the United States as a whole. First was the "Great Migration" that saw millions of African Americans, who had previously made up a significant portion of the South's population, move North to cities such as Chicago and New York. Their move introduced the broader American population to African American culture in a way that is still evident today. Jazz, for example, became popular when African Americans fleeing discrimination in the South moved north, where their music spread to the rest of the United States and the world.

The second was the Civil Rights Movement. During the middle part of the 20th century, African Americans living in the South increasingly spoke out against their racist treatment at the hands of white Southerners. This movement, which came to be led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., culminated in the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which prohibited any form of discrimination by the government and protected

universal suffrage.

Culture

Southern culture is unlike any other regional culture found in the United States. The people of the South are marked by distinctive dialect, music, cuisine, and religion, among numerous others.

The most notable part of the culture of the South is the accent. While most regional variations of English spoken in the United States consist of small changes in pronunciation, the Southern dialect is highly distinctive. It sounds unlike any other English accent in the world, and Southerners are often very proud of their accent. Whereas in most parts of the country young people are slowly

losing their regional accents, the Southern accent has remained strong even among the youth. A notable feature of the Southern accent is the use of "y'all" (a contraction of "you all") for the second-person-plural pronoun.

The South also has its own genres of music. Jazz and the Blues were born in New Orleans, and they remain popular in areas that were formerly under French control and among African American communities. Also popular in the South is country music, a genre of music sung in the Southern accent that focuses on rural life and traditional Southern values. Nashville, Tennessee is known as the home of country music. The cuisine of the South is heavily influenced by cuisines of West Africa, from where most of the slaves in the South originated, and by the cuisines of Native Americans, with whom early settlers had extensive contact. An example of Southern cuisine originating with West African slaves is gumbo, a thick meat and vegetable stew originally eaten by slaves. Cornbread, a type of bread made with cornmeal commonly served alongside a main meal, was originally eaten by the Cherokee Native American tribe that inhabited part of the region prior to European arrival.

As for religion, part of the South is known as the "Bible Belt" because of the high rates of church attendance. Many Southerners are evangelical Protestant Christians. Evangelical Christians are often more conservative than other Christian sects in the United States, and this conservatism is often reflected in the political makeup of the South, where laws tend to be more conservative than in the Northeast and the West.

When the United States is presented in popular media abroad, audiences are frequently shown depictions of the culture of the North and West of the country. The lack of depiction of the South makes it appear as though the region has less culture influence on American society. This, however, is far from the truth. As the oldest settled region in the United States, the South has played an integral role in the formation of America as it is today. Southern food, music, and political movements have influenced those in other regions to an immeasurable extent. The South has one of the fastest growing populations in the United States. And the South's agricultural and industrial output powers the American economy. Anyone wishing to understand the United States as it is today must look to the South.

Alex DiCenso
Intern, U.S. Embassy Nouakchott

The Publisher:

Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Sidi Ely

The Key Staff

Editor In Chief:

Mr. Abdrehim Lekh'Deyem

Editor

Alex DiCenso

Columnist

Makha KORERA

Columnist

Varha Abd Selam

Press Advisor:

El Arby O. El Arby

Designer:

El hadrami Ahmedou
47 00 00 55

Marketing:

N'Demba Fall Baye Fall
Moulay Ahmed Ahmed Cherif

Printing:

The National Printing Press

Email: keynewspaper21@gmail.com

B P : 6917

Commercial Board
22225350 – 46304776

Email: keynewspaper21@gmail.com

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I +222 45 29 85 04
 I +222 32 04 66 24
 I dg@access.mr
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I MD B N 252, Tavrigh Zeina
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