



1. *Tout de Suite*
2. *What You Didn't See in the News: Myanmar*

Tout de Suite

By CLAIRE ANASTASIA KITZ
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

A handwritten letter on crisp sheets of heavy stock paper is an uncommon and cherished possession in this day and age, a tangible sentiment, a time capsule. It is a substantial artifact to be kept near at hand: in a nightstand drawer, folded in a book, stored in a collection, held in a box with other pieces of a treasure trove, hidden in plain sight in one's personal "Room of Requirement," or under a floorboard. It is only to be brought out once in a while, to recall a poignant memory or valuable confirmation. Letters we write and receive change our story; they penetrate our surface existence and reveal our identity, what we love and what we scorn.

There are few opportunities to sit down and write a long letter. The rarity of handwritten notes in our modern times confirms our general bewilderment and cursory lifestyle. We are starved for meaning, true communiqués, beauty, order, expressive language, refined discourse. We do not know where to find these words, where to find spaces of silence; we can only look to the past. The digital age has ruined genuine interaction. Philosophical and transcendent discourse has been replaced by candy, in the form of scientism and technology. Words have become wilting and lifeless; they are replicated across multiple platforms, on multiple

screens. There are no more panegyric odes to democracy, ink-stained pages, meanderings or earnest scribbles on lost loves, just meaningless, impersonal boilerplate – a quick text or a quick e-mail straight to the point, *tout de suite*. The postman is no longer the wandering bard traipsing door-to-door in costume carrying his bag of letters and old songs – eager to pass along correspondence to the likes of the fictional but beloved Beatrice, Juliet, or Kate, or the scholarly Eleanor Roosevelt, Frederick Douglass, Alexis de Tocqueville, or Alexander Hamilton. He is not bringing mail from Verona, Aix-en-Provence, Boston, upstate New York, Washington D. C., Paris, or Budapest. The postman is currently the lonely purveyor of Visa bills, Amazon boxes, catalogs, and junk mail. Handwritten letters rarely travel across the country or around the world. Instagram, Twitter, text, e-mail, and Snapchat rule the conversation — quick, easy, painless, perfectly curated, and non-committal – the slow, tedious roll.

If you want to do something original, not practical in the least, but fervent, intelligent and artful, and perhaps life-changing — learn how to write a well-written letter. Research how it was done with aplomb and substance. Peruse at your

continued on back

What You Didn't See in the News: Myanmar

By FRED POLLEVICK
STAFF WRITER

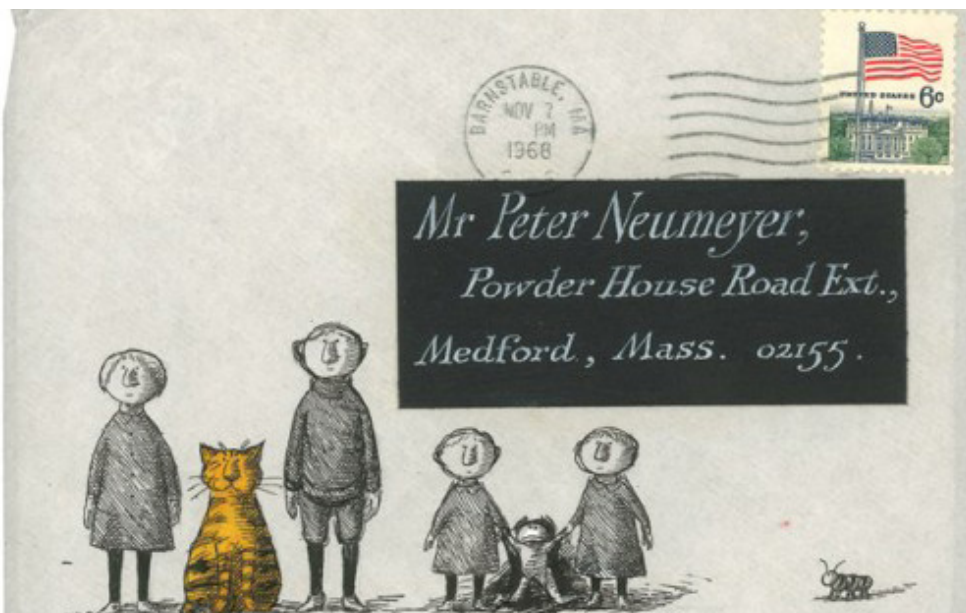
Last Friday, Hamilton College hosted the Model African Union Conference for the New York Six. The keynote speaker was Adama Dieng, the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary-General on Genocide Prevention. Mr. Dieng spoke about Myanmar, a country in Southeast Asia. Myanmar (formerly Burma) has a population of roughly 53 million people. While its major religion is Buddhism, there are 1.1 million Rohingya in Myanmar, according to a recent article posted by the Qatar-based news organization Al Jazeera. According to the article, the Rohingya are a Muslim-majority ethnic group who have lived in Myanmar for centuries. During his keynote address, Dieng spoke of the mass persecution

The world cannot stand by and let the Myanmar government carry out these atrocities on its own people.

of the Rohingya people. His message was simple: action must be taken. The world cannot stand by and let the Myanmar government carry out these atrocities on its own people.

After Myanmar gained independence from Great Britain in 1948, the new country enacted a "Union Citizenship Act," outlining which ethnicities could gain citizenship, due to its high level of diversity. In a 2015 report, the International Human Rights Clinic at Yale Law School found that the Rohingya were not included in the ethnic groups eligible for citizenship. However, because the act allowed people whose families had lived in

continued on back



leisure the letters of J. R. R. Tolkien to his children. Be amused and tickled by Gothic illustrator Edward Gorey's artful notes to his friend Peter Neumeyer. Explore famed Russian writer Vladimir Nabokov's beautiful love missives of half a century to his wife, Vera. Review with sadness the Antarctic explorer Robert Falcon Scott's farewell (near death) message to his best friend, the author of *Peter Pan*, J. M. Barrie. Appreciate the lifelong friendship of pianist Clara Schumann and composer Johannes

Brahms through their myriad of moving letters. Relish the starry-eyed discourse of two influential 20th-century philosophers, Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger. Envision the correspondence of the artist Henry Ossawa Tanner while in Morocco and France painting *Gateway, Tangier*. And finally, savor the tender and funny letters of artist Georgia O'Keeffe to her love, photographer Alfred Stieglitz.

Once you know how beautiful letters have been composed with sparkle, sincerity, ardor, or wit, write a

letter; do not send a text. And if you are going to write a letter, write a decent one with candor and depth. Take a risk. Shock someone and change how their story ends. Get out the ink pen, some proper stationery, an envelope, and a first-class stamp, and begin in silence and wonder. Know and believe that, more times than not, the person receiving a long handwritten letter will be moved, cured of what ails their spirit, and given an unexpected gift for which they are grateful beyond measure and beyond telling.

MYANMAR cont.

Myanmar for at least two generations to apply for identity cards, many Rohingya were able to gain such official identification from the government — and even citizenship. During this period, the Rohingya led successful and peaceful lives, and some even served in parliament. However, everything changed with a military coup in 1962. Now they were allowed only limited job and educational opportunities, and received only "foreign identity cards." In 1982, the Rohingya officially became de-recognized as an ethnic group. As a result, everything from education to health care, from marriage to travel, was restricted for them. To this day, most of the government in Myanmar considers the word "Rohingya" to be a recent political invention, and instead believes this people are Bengalis from nearby Bangladesh. Since the 1970s, the government has been running "crackdowns against violence" targeted at Rohingya neighborhoods and areas. Government troops have been accused of killing, raping, and committing arson against the Rohingya during these so-called crackdowns. Additionally, residents of Rohingya areas, as well as others in them at the time, have reported government officials killing unarmed Rohingya

men, women, and even small children. As a result, since the 1970s, nearly one million Rohingya have done so. In the past five years alone, approximately 168,000 have fled Myanmar.

The Rohingya face an incredibly long, violent, and dangerous route when attempting to escape to neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Bangladesh. However, the latter country's government believes that many of the Rohingya currently living

Government troops have been accused of killing, raping, and committing arson against the Rohingya during these so-called crackdowns. Additionally, residents of Rohingya areas, as well as others in them at the time, have reported government officials killing unarmed Rohingya men, women, and even small children.

in Bangladesh "illegally infiltrated" the country. In 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor and unofficial leader of Myanmar, won the Nobel Peace Prize for being a democratic and human-rights leader in the country. However, she refuses to speak about the Rohingya in her country and turns her back when

her soldiers slaughter innocent citizens from this minority. She ultimately denies an ongoing violation of human rights in Myanmar. For the innocent Rohingya men and women, there is no place to call home. They are rejected by their own government and have been left with no other place to go.

I was fortunate to be able to attend the post-Common Ground discussion with Karl Rove and David Axelrod. I had time for one question with both of these men, and I asked them the same question: "What do you think about American, or overall international, intervention in Myanmar?" Both of them had the same response: "We should *absolutely* bring American and international presence into Myanmar." Mr. Dieng warned those listening on Friday night of the dangers of another potential Rwanda. With the overall sentiment from many on the Right about accepting refugees (not migrants, but refugees) who are being forced to flee their own countries, Myanmar is being swept under the rug even more than it has been over the past 50 years. The world is watching idly as thousands are being forced to flee in fear for their lives. Let's not wait another three years and then have our president issue an apology for our lack of intervention. Let's do what is right, and help the innocent Rohingya of Myanmar.

ENQUIRY

vol. V

Sam Benevelli
Editor-in-Chief

Claire Anastasia Kitz
Andrew Juchno
Associate Editors

Helen Sternberg
Layout Editor

STAFF WRITERS

Julia Dupuis
Steven Falco
Elza Harb
Fred Pollevick
Montana Sprague
Allison Zuckerman

The opinions expressed in these articles are the views of their authors and do not represent the views of Enquiry or the Alexander Hamilton Institute.

Enquiry accepts articles of 500 to 800 words at sbenevel@hamilton.edu. Please be aware that we do not accept anonymous submissions.

CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

1. *Tout de Suite*
#ToutDeSuite

2. *What You Didn't See in the News: Myanmar*
#Myanmar