



October 2025

## A Youth Congress to remember

At the end of the month, the All-Africa Youth Congress gathers in Nairobi, with the theme “Africa: My home, my future.” A delegation of 11 African diaspora young adults from the ELCA will attend. To show what it means to bring young people together like this, I talked with a friend who attended the 2022 event. The conversation was edited for length.

### Ola: “It gives you the sense of solidarity...”

Ola Mohamed is a humanitarian worker, activist, photographer (insta [@olasodysey](#)), writer, daughter, and sister. She is Sudanese, and has been a refugee in Egypt since early in the current Sudanese civil war. In 2022, on the first night of the All-Africa Youth Congress in Ghana, she invited me to sit across the cafeteria table from her and we’ve kept up from time to time since then.

#### What were you doing in 2022 when the last AACC Youth Congress happened?

**OM:** Back then I was working with a local NGO that I am still part of. At that time, I was more focused on health and nutrition projects. I was in Khartoum, Sudan. This was before the war happened.

#### What are you doing now in your life?

**OM:** We have been in Egypt since the end of May 2023. So we haven't seen our home country in over two years. It's kind of traumatizing, but anyway...



I came here alone in the beginning to try to find a place for my family to stay and organize a way for them to get into the country. They joined me after a month or something. So right now it's my parents and my brother together here. At the same time, I am still working with the organization I was with. I am currently working remotely which is a little hard because everyone is in the field and there are just a few of us here. I also expanded into another organization as well, combating online gender-based violence.

Also because of the war, I tried to find a hobby and I found photography to be a very calming outlet for me. So I do photography and have exhibitions happening. I started with landscapes and architecture of Cairo because it's a very rich place. We came from the war and we are very attached to the place we are coming from so we're always trying to find Sudan but in Cairo, you know. So when I see something that looks familiar I'm like, "OK, let me take a picture of that," or "Oh, this looks like something in Sudan." So I am starting with that. But I got into kind of documentary photography so I shifted into documenting what people do in daily life as displaced people or in exile,

or like, what is the concept of home for people, for me even, so some of the projects became really personal.

### **What did you take home with you from the 2022 AAYC?**

**OM:** The networking was really amazing. I mean It's not every day that us Sudanese get to meet people from other African countries and actually have conversations and seeing the different challenges their youth are going through, different lessons learnt or practices. The group we have on WhatsApp, it gives you the sense of solidarity because you see the people commenting and praying for each other, so it was that spirit of panAfricanism that we were missing for so long, but then it got shaped through this congress. It is something I am really grateful for.

Another thing, I loved the part where there was a media competition. I wasn't a media person before. For example Daisy, if you remember her, was taking video and I still remember when she was saying hi to everyone and she put it all in one video. This video is literally stuck in my head and it can be rewatched in my head every once in a while. It was such a beautiful video because she really *got* the word "solidarity". From that moment I felt like, ok, there is a lot that can be done through social media, through documentation, and it helped me get into photography. I think that really ignited my love for social media. Now I've started doing a bit of content creation on the side.

### **How can we pray for you?**

**OM:** I mean, in any way possible pray for the war to stop in the whole of Sudan. Yes I'm here (in Egypt) and I'm safe and living a good life, but a lot of people are still suffering.

Any form of solidarity would also be great. At the same time, it can take a toll on a person, so I understand if people don't want to see what is happening in Sudan where some images and some videos might be traumatizing. But I think any kind of prayer would be really appreciated.

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## **Briefly...**

**A barn-raising in Sudan:** In the September issue of *The Atlantic*, Anne Applebaum and Lynsey Addario did a [deepdive](#) into the Sudanese war, "The most nihilistic conflict on Earth". It took me a few days to chew through it. There has been a stream of inspirational, though wrenching, reporting in English from Sudan from the *NY Times*, *Washington Post*, *Al Jazeera*, and local outlets like the *Sudan Tribune* and *Radio Tamazuj*. At the UN General Assembly in September, the Sudan war was in the [spotlight](#), with high-level meetings taking place focusing on de-escalation and resolution. We've been used to calling it a forgotten war, but its resolution is getting some overdue attention.

The *Atlantic's* piece ends with a reminder to not fall into cynicism about the prospects of leadership in Sudan – that the long movement for transparency in government and the widespread sentiment of volunteerism among Sudanese has been a foundation for less violent political systems in other places.

The author mentions *Nafeer*, or communal work, in Sudan, which in parts of the country provides the only medical care or charity meals. In [Rwanda](#), the communal work is called *omuganda*. Maasai

in Tanzania call it *matonyok*. In [Ukraine's](#) history it was *toloka*, and in the [US](#) from Pennsylvania through Indiana I know it as *barn-raising*. Through community-based movements, we see how the spirit from the grassroots has power to raise up new ways of living together, a threat to oppressive goliaths everywhere.

**Communal youth energy:** Youth in this beautiful continent are not content. Gen Z protests this month in [Madagascar](#) ended with a president in exile and a (hopefully) good Lutheran, Col. Michael Randrianirina, leading the ruling committee that replaced him. In June across [Kenya](#) they took to the streets en masse protesting police brutality, among other injustices. In [Cameroon](#) last week, protests pushed against the declaration of election victory by Paul Biya, who has been president since 1982. In [Morocco](#), youth-led protests demanding public spending on social services and reduced corruption returned to several cities last weekend, just as the [No Kings](#) protests were happening in the US.

Everywhere I go on this continent, I see young people longing for connection and dignity. These are things that make us feel more fully human. The injustice of anti-poor leadership makes people feel less human, more like objects. This is the [common thread](#) of youth-led movements. Humanizing youth – giving them voice as children of God, is not a priority for gluttonous rulers. So youth are heard in the streets, in communion, where risks are terrifying but where they see potential for change. Please pray for dignifying outcomes of elections in the coming week in Côte d'Ivoire (Oct. 25) and Tanzania (Oct. 29). Martin Luther King Jr once gave a [sermon](#) about stinking peace. We pray for the sweet-smelling peace.

**Church cooperation:** ELCA is not alone among Lutheran mission agencies from the global North. Several northern European countries also have them. In this era, mission agencies who are engaged in working with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania pool some of their funds for common interest in serving with the Tanzanian church. Much of those funds go to pastors' scholarships and vehicles for dioceses. Another function is as a clearinghouse for bilateral funds so that we can know who is funding what. This transparency is like an alarm for inequitable partnerships, where a few churches would get most of the external funding.

In Tanzania, one of the biggest such meetings of the year happened Oct 2-3 in Shinyanga. It is called the Lutheran Mission Cooperation Roundtable, where the European partners, ELCA, ELCT national staff, and bishops from all 28 ELCT dioceses get together. Since 2024 I have held ELCA's spot on the LMC board, which makes policies for fund usage and oversees the secretariat that handles the daily administrative work.

For the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church, Joint Mission Cooperation Kenya has a similar function, though since KELC is a much smaller church, JMCK is a much smaller operation. Together with Kenyan and German partners, we had our annual meeting in Nairobi the last week of September.

**Recent Visitors:** Shoutouts to new friends and recent visitors from:

- Country Club Christian Church in Kansas City
- Lutheran Partners in Global Mission

**Happy birthday to...** Me, today! My love languages, in case you're wondering, are quality time and acts of service, so come visit me and unclog my bathroom shower drain.

## About this newsletter

This is an update from Daudi & Kellen Msseemmaa in Arusha, Tanzania, serving the ELCA as regional representatives in East Africa. It is sent out a few times a year, hopefully. Feel free to share it, and your feedback or ideas are welcome. If you want to not get these emails, ask me to remove you from the mailing list. Contact [daudi.msseemmaa@elca.org](mailto:daudi.msseemmaa@elca.org).

## Stirring Chai?

The title of this newsletter is a reference to one of the most calming sounds I know. Much of our work of building relationships happens over cups of tea, which is something that unites East Africans of hundreds of languages, cultures, and faiths.

## How to support us:

**Check:** Make payable to “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” with “Msseemmaa GCS2058” in the memo line. Give through your synod office or mail your check to: ELCA Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

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**Prayer:** Pray for us! Also pray for the lives and ministries of our dear companions in East Africa and beyond.