

[I bet you've never heard of at least half of these 100 Eritreans who made the news in recent years](#)



Many, if not most of you will have heard of [HONY](#), Brandon Stanton's Humans of New York website and its associated social media outlets. A little over a year ago, HONY was highlighting the plight of Syrian refugees and eliciting heart-warming compassion from its readers. I too was touched by HONEY's reportages. I was inspired to think about what I could do to motivate my compatriots to focus on what makes us, Eritreans, humans of shared destiny. Something that hasn't been done. Something that brings out the warm-and-fuzzy in us as it relates to our shared history without trivializing our current challenges or absolving us from tackling them. That line of thinking ended up becoming the genesis of the issue I am writing about, the story of *humansoferitrea.com*.

The original idea was to seek volunteers, *citizen-reporters*, who were to contribute images and brief personal stories of ordinary Eritreans in pursuit of their daily lives anywhere in the world. This turned out to be impractical. The obstacles were many. They ranged from privacy concerns to difficulties in bridging the gaps that have developed as our diaspora communities became more and more polarized along political and other divides. Not to mention the fact that I have neither the desire nor the skills to make this modest initiative my bread earner as Brandon Stanton did with HONY.

I belong to a Facebook group of family members who share news items and other tidbits on the Web. A particular cousin within this group has become so adept at raking the Internet that he could share no less than 10 relevant items on the slowest news day. I credit this cousin for giving me the idea of adopting Internet searches as the source of the stories to appear in *humansoferitrea.com*.

The mission of the *Humans of Eritrea* initiative is simply to portray the lives of Eritreans, inside and outside the country, with pictures and *their own words*. I have been doing this for a little over a year now. You can see the result at www.humansoferitrea.com, or on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#).

I understand that this brief explanation of the what, how and especially the why of the *humansoferitrea* initiative raises as many questions as it answers. The most obvious being, who gets portrayed? The simple answer is any Eritrean who has featured in freely accessible news media and has spoken about herself or himself in the first person describing any inspirational aspect of their own lives.

You will notice the dearth of political personalities among the 100 Eritreans featured so far; this is deliberate for the simple reason that ample other avenues and venues exist for publicizing the lives of our political class. However, to the extent that the *personal* achievements or experiences of a politico are (1) deemed inspirational without being zealously partisan; (2) are expressed in their own words, in the first person, they have featured and will feature in *Humans of Eritrea*.

I am convinced that this initiative has great potential to heal Eritreans and to bring them closer together. We owe it to the post *ndal/ghedli* generation to expand the dimensions of our discourses to beyond the partisan and the divisive. I consider the current status of *humansoferitrea* a successful proof-of-concept. My vision for the next 100 Eritreans is to focus on the elderly: their words of wisdom and the lessons learned from their life experiences. For this to succeed, I need help from all Eritreans of good will who see a potential in the *Humans of Eritrea* initiative. I am looking forward to hearing from you at: webmaster@humansoferitrea.com or kmibrahim@humansoferitrea.com.

Cordially, Kamal M Ibrahim