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Eritrean-Americans in San Jose, CA Connect with their Heritage via Adal School

13 March 2012 -- "Fostering a solid understanding of Eritrean identity through the languages, history, culture and Arts!" represents the objective of Adal School. March 3rd 2012, marked the kick off of Adal School, supported by the Young People's Front for Democracy and Justice (YFPDJ) Chapter of San Jose. On the first day of classes, 20 students living in the greater San Jose area had enrolled; by the second week of instruction, the class has grown to 28 students. Students will learn about the languages, cultures, literature, and social life of Eritrea. This program gives students a sense of pride and knowledge that will help them in fostering a strong sense of identity.

Participants of Adal School ages range from 10 to late 20s. The extent of the age gap proves that there is a deep desire to build a firm foundation of participants' identity, regardless of age. Rahia Solomon, a sophomore at St. Francis High School, attested to that desire, stating that *"the opening of Adal was an awakening to our community. I learned the importance of history and how it can benefit Eritrea today. One of the examples during history class was we don't just say "zikre n' sematat" for no reason. We say it because it reminds us of the past that will guide us to the future. Without learning our history we are a lost generation, that has no mistakes to learn from, and no excellence to pick up on. Adal School reminded me of these very important factors that every Eritrean should capture, whether he is old or young."*

Volunteer and Stanford University lecturer Issayas Tesfamariam started the first day of classes with a course based on defining history in a global context, in relation to Eritrea's history. The next course will focus more on the Eritrean identity through the languages, history, culture and arts. In addition to the Eritrean History course, Adal will offer two courses based on the widely spoken languages in Eritrea (Tigrinya and Arabic).

A California YFPDJ initiative known as CLEP (Cultural Literacy Education Program) has also been implemented at Adal School. The realization that our Eritrean communities in North America are "not representative of the cultural, social, racial, demographic, religious, linguistic, gender and class diversity that exists in Eritrea" aided in the birth of CLEP. The need and urgency to be conscious of not mistaking ethno-linguistic nationalism for Eritrean nationalism was also a driving force in the creation of CLEP. Therefore, the mission of CLEP is to "strengthen collective Eritrean identity through ethnic, racial, gender and class identities in line with the visions and principles of the Eritrean National Charter of 1994." Adal School will fully implement CLEP through various series, activities, and lectures- all reflective of Eritrea's 9 ethno-linguistic groups.

YoungPFDJ San Jose is proud to offer Adal School to local Eritreans; this is a collaborative effort of the Eritrean Community Cultural & Development Center of San Jose.

Visit <http://www.ypfdjcalifornia.org> for detailed course and school information, as well as photos.

If you would like more information about Adal School or YoungPFDJ, please email us at sanjose@ypfdjcalifornia.org or sanjoseyoungpfdj@gmail.com