

Poetry Porch: Poetry

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We went to bed not knowing.

That evening, we left the hotel
where we'd presented to leaders
of school networks spanning
Africa and the Middle East.
They'd offered praise, thanks,
and business cards before
heading to late dinners
at the best restaurants.

Outside of the hotel, downtown Kampala.
Evening slowly exhaling day's heat.
Trees, of species we'd never seen,
some with candle-like blossoms
exuding heady perfume,
all underlit by the headlights
of cabs lined up awaiting fares.

No sound, except
for voices speaking English
coming from cab radios—
the BBC, we thought.
Six hours until poll-closings
on the East Coast, and already
the world was tuned to America.

The cabs, doors open
to offer seats to listeners,

were campfires around which
men clustered, waiting.

Next morning, we knew,
and headed to the school—
but stopped short when we arrived:
the office staff stood in a ring,
sobbing, arms wrapped around
one another's waists.

Perceiving us, each moved
quickly to her work spot.
And then, after a short silence,
one woman spoke.
“Now we have a president, too.”

We went to bed that night
knowing more.