

Johnan Kaleeba, a senior, is originally from Uganda but attended an international high school in New Mexico. He confesses to a "personal passion" for biology and has found the opportunity to develop his scientific interests at Reed "a privilege." He helped start a chapter of Amnesty International at Reed and has been active in an international forum that coordinates relations between international students and the Portland community.

I have led a very academic life. I think it has to do with being African. I was telling a friend of mine yesterday why pulling out of school in Africa means such a different thing. Whoever isn't going to school is getting married. If you don't go to school, there's not much else to fall back on. I was brought up to haul myself through difficult academic situations and to make sure I succeeded, with the expectation that at the end of the road there will be an income, a job for me.

"Biology has been my passion from the time I left high school. I could say a tremendous lot about Reed's biology department. The professors here have been both parental and very concerned that I am getting as much out of my experience as possible. I've found myself plunging deep into the opportunity, and the receptive character of the department has made me very comfortable in taking on my own projects, pursuing my own ideas and dreams. The many chances and avenues of research and investigation that I have been exposed to would be quite unusual in a larger school. It has been unimaginable, something priceless.

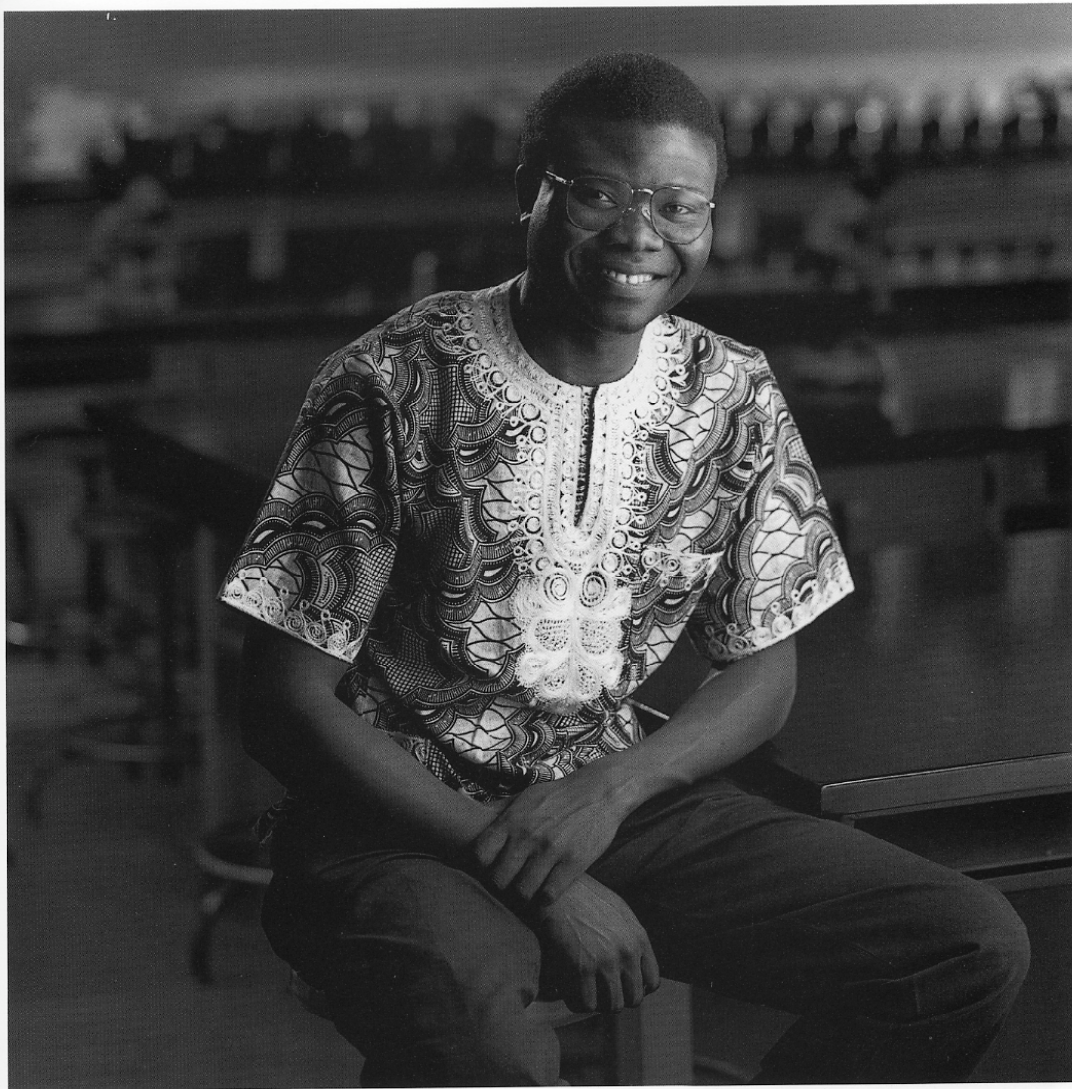
"I am writing a thesis which is very, very exciting. It is called 'Evolutionary Conservation of the Molecules of the Immune System,' and it has interesting implications for cancer resistance and transplantation tolerance. It's particularly concerned with identifying similarities between the structural and functional characteristics of amphibian and mammalian proteins that are involved in specific suppression of the immune response. We have shown that amphibians have an impressive resistance to pathologies like cancer, and we published a paper where we suggested that such resistance is related to the presence of these soluble proteins in the animals. Given the results that I have just obtained in the lab, I hope to publish more. I have been in close contact with Dr. Martin Dorf at Harvard on this project, and this morning he informed me by phone that there is

every likelihood my project will be recognized by the scientific community.

"The kind of opportunities I've had at Reed are unusual for a small, liberal arts college. That is probably a bias, but it is a very fair one in terms of my experience here. Reed is the kind of community that is inquisitive, curious, wanting to know, and very individualistic in the way it goes about looking at things. I think it's that personal passion that enables the academic community here to maintain its high position with respect to the rest of the country. I've been in touch with so many established scientists. When I tell them I am from Reed, they understand immediately the extent of my preparation for future research. Clearly, Reed was in every sense the right choice for me.

"I have been involved in Amnesty International for seven years. The Reed chapter has brought speakers to campus from Chile and Pakistan, with other prisoners of conscience. I have been an active international student here, but I have also participated freely in other aspects of the community, from house adviser and serving on the Student Committee on Academic Planning and Policy, to being a member of the Cultural Diversity Committee. It's easy to do whatever one chooses here; all student activities are accessible. Students are not divided into groups of actors and spectators; everybody adds to the richness of the community and we end up celebrating our differences.

"I would like to see more international students at Reed, because that's me, and that's how I've been brought up. In fact, most of the time I think of myself as an international person, even more than as a Ugandan. National boundaries are a fine reality, but they stand in the way of the great intellectual exchange for which we can't afford to wait much longer. I strongly think the trading of minds is important, and generally, at Reed, we are all active participants in that process.



"This is my last year. I am hoping to attend medical school at Johns Hopkins University, and I think I will not take any time off. At some point, I don't know exactly when, it will be necessary to return to Uganda. I think the Ugandans need me a whole lot more as a physician than they might in this country, and I owe Uganda a good deal. Besides being altruistic and noble about it, I think it is just right for me to do that."