

Kia Corthron on the genesis of "A Cool Dip..."

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In January 2007, I traveled with the [Foundry Theatre](#), who partnered with [Ma-Yi Theater Company](#) and [Hip-Hop Theater Festival](#), to the [World Social Forum](#) in Nairobi. Sixty-six thousand internationals descending upon the Kenyan capital, and of the literally thousands of political sessions, I was most drawn to the ones focusing on water: who has access, who doesn't, and the consequential power structure. On the edge of the city, where remarkably few of the activists ventured, was [Kibera](#), an enormous

slum. My fellow traveler Katy Savard befriended and introduced us to Kiberan resident Kennedy Odede, the 23-year-old director of a local community center (in a space that Americans would consider a shack but which held for Kiberans boundless possibilities) from which a youth theater company had been founded. In Kibera there is no running water. I stood on a hideous cement bridge staring down at the filthy grey stream, its banks crammed with garbage. When Kennedy and his partner came to visit us in our hotel, they joked about bathing in the fountain outside, its constant fall of sparkling clear water. Kennedy spent the night in one of our rooms, and in the morning twisted the shower handle, awed by the confidence that water would invariably flow from the spigot. This was the beginning of *A Cool Dip* before I knew there would be *A Cool Dip*.