

# SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter XXI

## Holiday Edition 2018

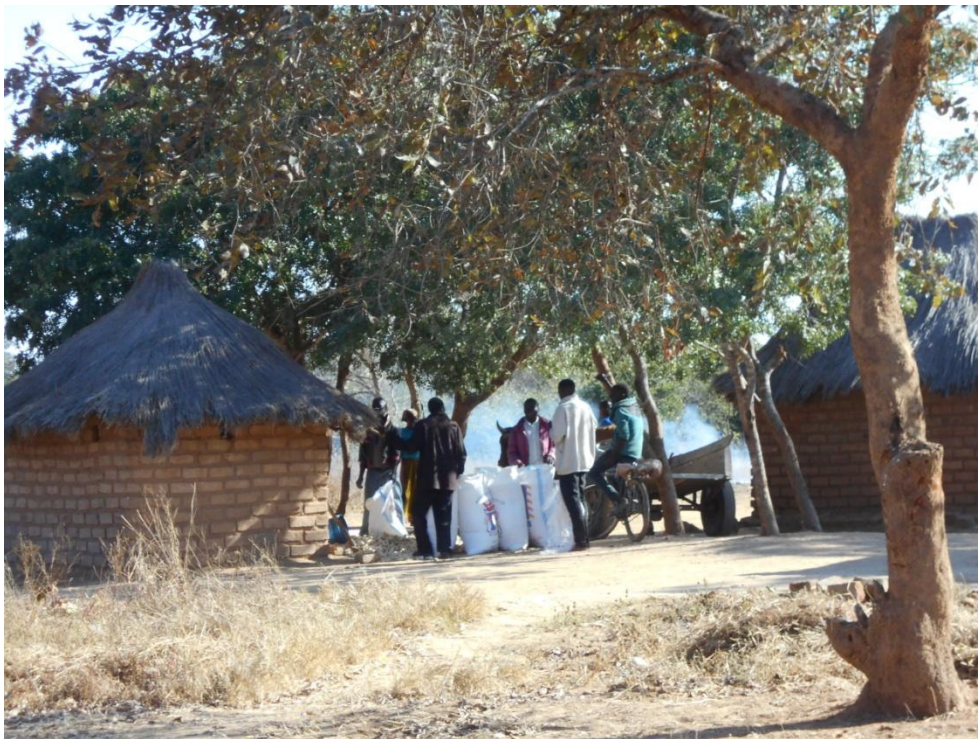
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*Dedicated to Kristi and Franko. How I Love you. The joy of my life is compounded exponentially because you exist. You have supported our work in Africa from its skeletal beginnings. Thank you for not only believing in us, but for reminding me of the daily beauty in this work ~ as well for the subtle nudge to push on, no matter what mystery may lie ahead. I am thankful beyond measure for you; you both are the gift.*





I will keep this newsletter short and sweet – famous last words! – in the interest of time, for the holiday season always finds us so busy, no matter where we are in the world.



So don't let me take up too much of your time. It seems time is the most precious resource we have – more than money – because time is our actual life, versus money is something much of the world has survived without. My sister, who is very wise, told me once that money is a resource that comes and goes, but time once gone can never be returned. So she told me she would never spend her life chasing money. Her example has inspired me greatly in my life.





## *New Partnerships, Fresh Adventures*



Every project wishes for partners it can work sustainably with: sustainable relationships, to endure the hardships together and to learn and grow together. Like any meaningful relationship in our lives, a partnership between two organizations with the same intention of organic growth within the structure of the local people and meaningful work is essential for success.



## *Partners in Zambia*

- **True Thabo.** Please see their website: [www.truethabo.com](http://www.truethabo.com) True Thabo believes (as does SSAAP) that clean water is a right, not a privilege. This organization found SSAAP!, and through dialoguing, we have discovered we have so much in common, sharing the common bond of wishing to implement clean water in as many villages as possible in Africa. True Thabo is a small organization, like SSAAP, run through the passion of two young women who have discovered the beauty and strength of Africa on their own. True Thabo currently has funding for 3 wells in Zambia, and we are going to have them drilled in Simwatachela Chiefdom in September 2019. Marissa, an employee of True Thabo, is hoping to join me in the drilling of the wells, and will stay with my daughter and me in Simwatachela Chiefdom as they are drilled. It will be SSAAP's work to find a driller in Zambia who will drill wells for us for a reasonable price, as well as locate the three villages where we want to have the wells drilled. Thus far, our Board of Directors has nominated the following areas for wells:
  - Jenga Village
  - Siabeenzu Village
  - Simatete Village

It is a pleasure and an honor to work with you both, Marissa and Jaclyn!



## Partners in Sierra Leone

SSAAP is proud to announce its many partners working together towards water wells and school sponsorships in Sierra Leone.

- **Goldfish Swim School**. Located in Dayton, Ohio: this swim school not only taught my daughter how to swim, it also raised funds the entire month of September 2018 for a well in Sierra Leone! Please see their website: <https://www.goldfishswimschool.com/dayton/>



- **SSAAP Sponsorship Program**: SSAAP recently received a very generous, very substantial grant from Minnesota, U.S.A. to sponsor children to primary school in rural Moyamba and Port Loko, Sierra Leone – hopefully for many years to come, as we can make the funding stretch to serve, on average, 20 children per year for the next 3 years with this incredible grant. I am tongue-tied and without words to the generous donors who have made this possible. *Thank you.*
- **Wells**: I am just as elated to announce that SSAAP has funding for 12 wells in Sierra Leone for 2019/2020!!! Radi and I plan to return to Sierra Leone in November 2019 and have six wells dug in rural Port Loko and six dug in rural Moyamba (two provinces of Sierra Leone that SSAAP works in) from the time-frame of January-April 2020. Please note SSAAP's goal was to return to Sierra Leone in 2019 with ten wells; we now have twelve. SSAAP is now twelve wells closer to my lifelong commitment to give every village in Sierra Leone water. SSAAP hand-digs wells in remote, hard-to-reach, off-the-grid, jungle villages in Sierra Leone – some

only reachable by foot, through which even a motorbike or a bicycle cannot traverse. How is the equipment to dig the wells, as well the cement and the pulley/chain/bucket brought into these hard-to-reach villages? By foot!

- **Cashew farms:** SSAAP now has funding to assist our partner in Sierra Leone, Community-Based Organization (CBO) Grace Children's Foundation, with three cashew farms in rural Port Loko, Sierra Leone. Cashews provide food, nutrition, as well as a substantial amount of income for cashew farmers in Sierra Leone.



## Partners in Ethiopia

- **Grow East Africa:** SSAAP has been so fortunate to be put in touch with Dr. Yohannes Chonde, who is an Ethiopian but has spent most of his life in U.S.A. He lives in Washington, D.C. and has a very similar approach to sustainable partnership, rural community hunger and water issues, and self-imposed empowerment in the remote areas of Ethiopia as SSAAP does. I feel extremely relieved to make partnerships with Africans living in the West as they understand both 'worlds,' as I say, the way that I do – the difficulties and limitations of working with both extremes of this world. Please peruse at Grow East Africa's website: <http://www.groweastafrica.org/>. Also please read below (in green) SSAAP's most recent correspondence with Dr. Chonde:

*“We will talk in detail about our project activities: Goat Distribution for rural needy villagers and Vegetable Garden Initiative for internally displaced people (over 1500 families currently dispersed throughout the district). Both projects are growing year to year. We especially are excited about the expansion of the vegetable garden where we will use a sustainable process of conserving the precious water and solar powered well water pumping to drip irrigate 2.5 hectares of the new field. My recent visit was primarily spent on the expansion of the Vegetable Garden initiatives securing the purchase of the various pieces of equipment and constructing the necessary infrastructure, securing installation services. The Goats*

*Distribution project is proceeding well. We have been in the Billa Village since August 2016 and plan to expand to other villages next year.*

*During my discussion about your interest, I was asked a wide range of questions. I told them, your approach is unique and focused on directly living among the community and impact their lives by empowering them to bring out solutions to their needs from within. Let us chat more.”*

- **Gambela Children and Community Development Organization (GCCDO).** I met Nhial Jeing Pal during our assessment trip to Ethiopia April-June 2017, in Gambela, Ethiopia. The organization he works with concentrates on remote, hard-to-reach villages in a region of Ethiopia (Southwest) where people are very much in need of basic human resources.
- **Water in Northern Ethiopia, outside of Gondar:** SSAAP will also be visiting/working with water solutions in a large village (28,000+ inhabitants) in a village some hours from Gondar, Ethiopia in hopes of finding a solution to a community which has approximately one 20-Litre jerrican of water per week per household. I am working with an esteemed partner and friend, Tilahun, who I most trust, on this endeavor for his mother’s village. ☺



## **Other Projects in Africa: Wish Bucket**

Should our endeavors in Ethiopia fail, or should the Universe provide opportunity, SSAAP would be honored to work with long-term friends on the following initiatives:

- **Agile International.** Located some hours outside of Bomako, Mali, Fatoumata Doumbia of Agile International has started a water project assisting communities with water wells. She has requested the help of SSAAP for a water well. Please see her website: [www.agile-international.org](http://www.agile-international.org). Fatou is based in Longmont, Colorado and we have been dialoguing for years on how we could work together. Mali nearly shares a border with Sierra Leone (Guinea



separates the two countries), so I have told her we can cross our fingers and try to work together.

- **Hands of Hope for South Sudan.** A very dear, lifelong friend brought me to a meeting for this organization that she sits on its Board. Fighting to help South Sudanese refugees in northern Uganda, I offered SSAAP to help them organize their refugee camp to help bring supplies, water, and anything else they need to the area. The vastest resource I have to offer Africa is not only my time, but my passion. Unless it is a war zone (that is my only restriction) I will help any part of Africa with anything it needs – if I can. Please check their website: [www.handsofhopeforsouthsudan.org](http://www.handsofhopeforsouthsudan.org). Beautiful people with an incredible mission. Please let me know how I can serve you and your mission.
- **Sudan:** Through making many Sudanese friends in the Colorado Front Range area, I am convinced it would be a country SSAAP could work in. We may try to visit Sudan while we are in Ethiopia: 5 February – 16 April 2019.



## *Education for Children in U.S.A. about Africa*

The education piece for SSAAP doesn't start and end in Africa; it also encompasses U.S.A. I have noticed a genuine curiosity about Africa while I am in U.S.A., but due to political-correctness or cultural barriers, sadly, people sometimes don't ask the questions that are on their minds. Why are there so many wars in Africa? Why are there communities living in remote parts of Africa that have no water? Why is there such a lack of food? Why do people have ten children when they cannot even afford to feed one? These are all the kinds of issues I like to address in my SSAAP school



presentations. We have had great opportunities to work with the following schools while my daughter and I have been in U.S.A. (Colorado and Ohio):

- **St. Albert the Great:** Kettering, Ohio. Please see the photos below. The classes were enthusiastic and inspired, and will hopefully continue to try to work together with SSAAP on a specific target project.



- **Horizons K-8 School:** Boulder, Colorado. Please see the link of photos below. These children asked unusual and profound questions about the psychology and nature of the African people. I was moved to tears by these children. Thank you so much for your inquisitive nature! I hope we are able to work together in the future in a meaningful way for both your children and the children in the villages SSAAP serves.

**Photo link:**

[https://photos.google.com/share/AFrQipNxdl4jP3CznBinx77rQiu83JGe\\_SyDg6tlMkv4IROaPNjeLuTdTJU7YCd8VPHDbA?key=dnVwMWiCTl9CSnZQX2dqaUttWmptMWiCREJtSoZn](https://photos.google.com/share/AFrQipNxdl4jP3CznBinx77rQiu83JGe_SyDg6tlMkv4IROaPNjeLuTdTJU7YCd8VPHDbA?key=dnVwMWiCTl9CSnZQX2dqaUttWmptMWiCREJtSoZn)



## **India's Influence on SSAAP**

India has touched my heart in profound ways through the years; it is vastly different from Africa while still maintaining many similarities. I have been fortunate in that I have used India as a platform for learning throughout my life; I have traveled there seven times and my daughter, twice. As it is quite close to Africa, airfare is very cheap between Zambia and India, due to the large populations of Indians living not only in South Africa but also in Zambia.





The course we attended on Gandhian Nonviolence lives within me every day; SSAAP's partner organization in Sierra Leone, a CBO called Grace Children's Foundation, expressed a sincere desire to study nonviolence and *Satyagraha* ('Soul force') activism, and so for two years my counterpart, Taylor S. Kamara, saved money and did work to afford his airfare from Freetown to Mumbai. Taylor is currently studying at Gujarat Vidyapith, and is learning about Gandhian thought, nonviolent activism, and all that the course entails. The course is free: three meals a day, lodging, and the course itself is free – only the airfare to India is absorbed by the student. If you are interested, please let me know!

When I studied at Gujarat Vidyapith (October 2017-January 2018) I organized with Navajivan Printing Press to donate literature to SSAAP in hopes of establishing rural libraries in remote parts of Sierra Leone about Nonviolent Activism. Taylor is working with the Printing Press (Gandhi's press) currently; we hope he can bring books back to Sierra Leone and when I meet him there in November 2019 we can begin to build the libraries (out of local materials) to educate people on working with the government in nonviolent ways-- through Love rather than violence.

Please see the attachment for Taylor's most recent academic PowerPoint presentation for the course.

SSAAP was able to give Taylor a small grant for the course, but the majority of the funds he raised to study abroad were due to all his own efforts, hard work, and resilience. *You mean the world to me, Taylor. You are an example of everything that is strong and brave and resourceful and powerful in Sierra Leone. I love you and so does Amara (Radiance). Keep up the good work. I will meet you Home. We will be laughing under the stars together again before you know it.*



Taylor (in red shirt, center) with a community, doing an assessment for the GCF/SSAAP project – probably to assess whether or not they need a water well and/or what other projects could serve them. The headman is wearing white, standing, with a cap. Most of our meetings in Sierra Leone remind me of being at a theatre. The people are animated and dramatic and raging with passion 😊

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As my work / SSAAP in Africa is heavily influenced by India, as well by Gandhi, a friend of mine introduced me to this video online. I think it is so well done and one of the best nutshell versions of what being a *Satyagrahi* truly means:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n\\_gQxVOmodo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_gQxVOmodo)



## *World School*

As we don't actually have a home anywhere in the world except in Zambia, and our house is made of grass, mud, and baked-mud brick – with some cement here and there to deter the termites – I should probably more accurately term my daughter's home-school as her 'World School.' Her school, called *Love, Light and Literacy Academy*, has taken her to profound areas of the world in which to engage her in study.



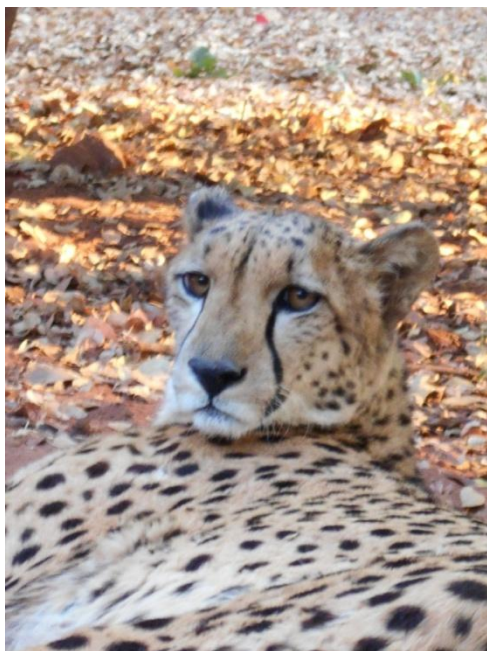
**Baby Croc, Reptile Park; Mosi-oa-Tunya, Zambia**



**Mukuni Big Five; Mukuni Chiefdom, Livingstone, Zambia**

I love home-schooling my daughter and what home-school has taught me is that the world is a school. So now I am calling her home-school a World-School, because I have one fundamental aim for her education: that she sees the world as a collective whole rather than fragmented countries and learns from hands-on experience that the whole of humanity on the planet has different ways of doing things based upon culture, climate, living conditions, and belief systems – but that there is no right or wrong culture, country, or way of life – it’s all just differences.

There is a balance between formal, classroom education: *academia*, using books and written materials (Western model) and informal, hands-on, field experience (African model). One is not ‘correct’ or ‘incorrect’; they go together, like two wings of a bird.



Radiance wants to be a veterinary physician when she grows up, so taking her to see wild, live animals (such as the Cat Park called ‘Mukuni Big Five’ or ‘Reptile Park’, both in Livingstone town, Zambia) is part of her home-school. I am looking for opportunities for her all over the world: to study Native American culture at the Summer University Program of The Indian University of North America (Crazy Horse Program), to study Mohandas Gandhi in Ahmedabad, India, to study wild cats with the year-long internship Mukuni Big Five hosts. The world is full of opportunities, many of them cost-friendly or even free, and so I have begun already investigating opportunities for her as a teenager or a university student. She is nearly nine years old now. I like to plan ahead 😊





I am very proud of Radiance's African heritage and do everything I can to promote her African bloodline despite the absence of her father and his family in her life. In Africa, people tell me that Radiance comes from the same tribe as President Obama. The Africans believe Obama belongs to them the same way they believe Radiance (my daughter) does; often they say that anyone with a drop of African blood in his body is an African, and identifies himself as a black man. The perfect example of this is Bob Marley, who was born from a white father (Captain Norval Marley) and a black mother (Cedella Booker).

## *Philosophy of SSAAP*



A project is nothing without its philosophy. SSAAP is not only an activism project on human needs and necessities; it is a statement on Love.

Charity vs. Justice: I have determined they should be the same thing. In other words, all charity should be justice-based. Charity where pity is involved becomes demeaning to the beneficiary and then becomes ego-based, thus intellectually-based; charity should be justice-based, thus Love-based. It should have its roots in democracy and in compassion. It should cling to the essence of universalism rather than judgment.

Democracy is a heart-centered, Love-based concept dysfunctioning in a world that is dominated by the intellect, by the lower mind. The Higher mind knows there is more than the Self. It laughs in its own wisdom to think it could have tricked itself for so long. The lower mind always doubts the Higher Mind.

I believe each of us owes it to ourselves to live at the level of the Highest Self.

Whatever that space is within each of us will differ, but there is a collective that is shared within all humanity ~ and that sacred space is where the magic occurs.

Why? Because this is the place the heart feels most natural, and where we are free.

*When will you stop?* So many have asked me, exasperated people often look at me with that tone in their eyes. *Won't you get tired? What's in this for you? When will it be enough?*

*It will never be enough, I say, so count on this project lasting my lifetime, I tell them, hopefully even beyond that.*

If something isn't worth dying for, then definitely it is not worth living for.

Here is my self-realized Truth: If I have lived only for myself and what I think I should be or ought to have been, there is no way I will ever find my center, my energy source, the channel back to my highest self. If I live for anything that isn't my deepest truth, I haven't been living to my highest self. My highest truth (also my deepest Truth) is that the purpose of my existence has nothing to do with me at all, in the end.

An extension to this: My life should be lived in Truth. Anything else is a waste of a lifetime, or **my** lifetime I should specify. I have given everything, worked everything, Loved everything and suffered everything towards my Truth. The only Truth I perceive is that there is no separation on this earth between humans of all continents, countries, celebrations, religions, races, cultures, hemispheres. On every level of consciousness it is intolerable and unbearable that there should be an entire continent of human beings drinking filthy, fatal, fecally-contaminated water and eating less than a meal a day – and if every moment of my life is spent living within the Truth of trying to better this for at least one single human being, then my life has already been lived, and it has already been worth it.

And for whatever reason, or perhaps because of the alignment of some shooting stars, I have everything. I am living, breathing abundance. I am Love: I get to be a mother to a beautiful baby, I was born into an exceptionally brilliant family, I have friends who love me unconditionally and will tolerate all my strangeness, I have a full stomach and all the resources of America at my fingertips. I

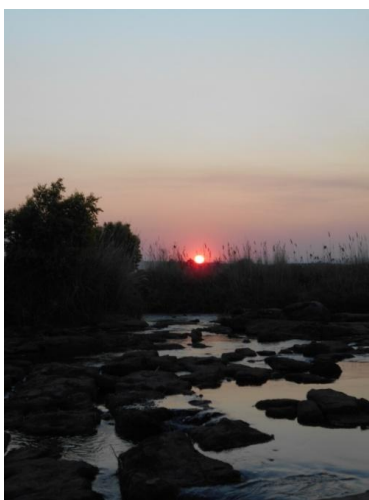
have no choice other than to share. How many times have I lived before and done it only for myself, because I was so fearful and that fearfulness made me selfish?

But this time around is different, and I feel that in the marrow of my bones. Whatever it is that I have is too vast anymore just for me ~ it's for everyone, it is for the world ~ if the world wants it.

## *The Living Wisdom of Africa*

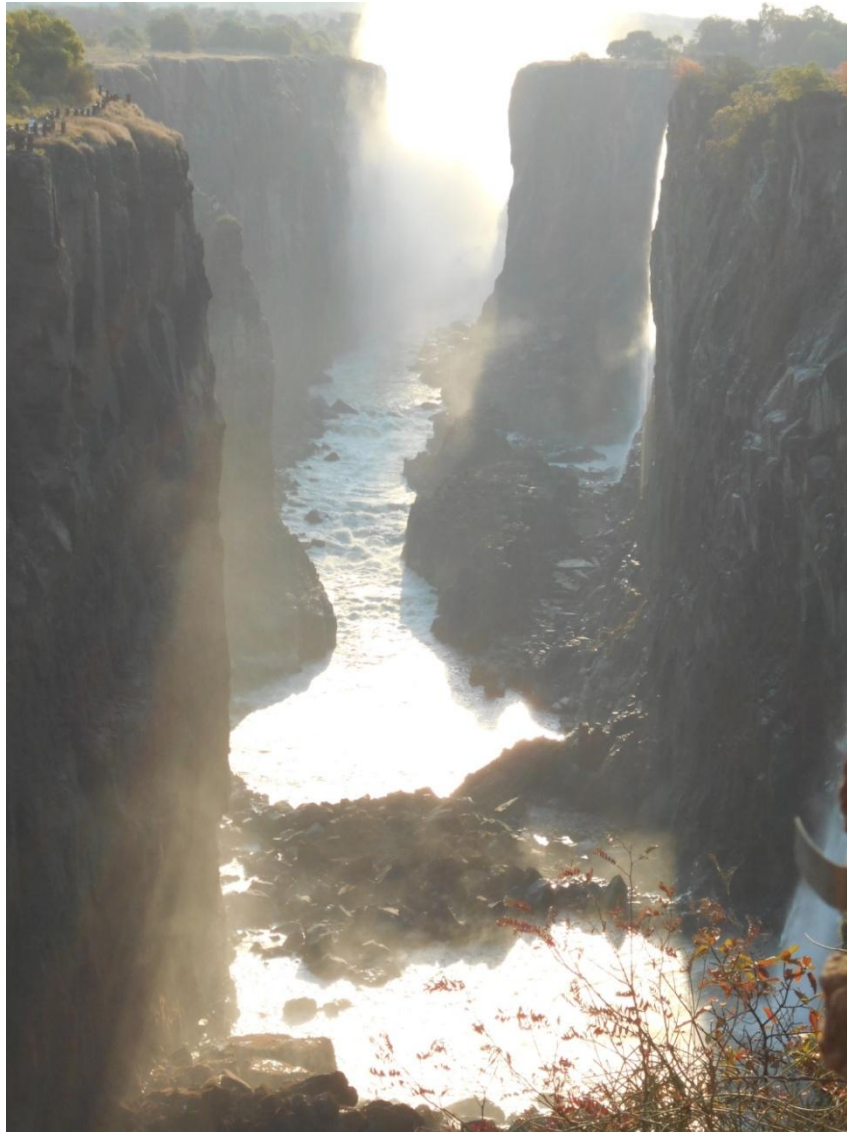


Even banking in Zambia is fun! It is unheard of that I would enter Barclay's Bank in Livingstone, Zambia and not spend at least two hours chatting with the Manager, Kennedy. Everything in Africa is this way; business is relationship. Every transaction is personal, and everyone knows everyone historically. There is no such thing as a stranger in Africa. Everyone is family to everyone else, and no one will allow him or herself to be a stranger to you.



The Mighty Zambezi, at sunset. The sun rises a red ball at dawn then falls back into the horizon at dusk the same.





I am incredibly biased 😊, but I believe Victoria Falls is the most sacred, healing, holy place on the planet. Maybe it is always what calls me back to come Home. And like anything I have vowed to Love, I Love the Falls in all its seasons: its bad moods, its warm and cold, its grace – and like an African, I don't Love the Falls only when they are drenched in water; I Love the Falls when they are dry, after all the tourists have left, disappointed. Only then is there the utter calm that comes from the sensation of being within. The cavity of rock and the divine portal of Zambezi River, rushing through the veins of the canyon, is enough for me. I am mesmerized. I have never been able to separate what I Love the most about Africa: the Africans, the raw and easily-accessible Nature, or the attitude of living in the moment – being present and feeling everything, no matter what the burn might be later.

## *Art Trail: African Village to SSAAP Art Sale in U.S.A.*



Our paper mache artist in Simwatachela, Zambia. He made a fish which sold (and was fought over in the silent auction!) at SSAAP's Spring Fundraiser in May 2018. His paper mache crocodile sat outside my front door for 3 months, and as it was too large to put in the luggage to take home, I was forced to say goodbye to it. I had a joke with my neighbors and children in the village that the crocodile was the only husband I would probably ever have, so I had no choice but to kiss him goodbye when his owner took him home ☺ The children would all come around the house and scream when they saw me kiss the crocodile.



The fish finds a new loving home after the SSAAP Spring Fundraiser, May 5, 2018 in Wheat Ridge, Colorado.





# Thanks-giving

Many of the traits we fault ourselves for are actually a part of the human condition, rather than defects within ourselves.

We are all born with fear and spend our entire lives working to overcome it: fear of not being enough, fear of not being loved. Fear of being loved! Fear of loving or fear of the deep that love automatically claims us with. Fear of having children or not having children; fear of being unworthy parents or not giving our children what they need. Fear of falling short. A warrior is one who hunts his/her fear, pierces it through its spine. I believe the pain we experience in our lives is as important as the Love that comes with it. I don't know if anything that has meant anything to me in my life has been achieved painlessly. Sometimes I think the pain is the whole point: the philosophical mystery turned magic. Because each pain is an etching into our place of deepest peace, if we tread patiently enough inside the pain.

As a collective humanity, we fear pain, and so we avoid it ~ but when we pierce pain, walking through it, a new layer of the Self is known, exposed to the Light. Each of our human destinies is unraveled in this: how do we face fear, because fear is – indeed – a centralized part of the human condition. It is nested within the heart of each and every one of us. It is a common human bond that no one is exempt from! It keeps us connected. So we all possess fear. The question is: how do we face it?

Before he died, Gandhi was told he needed to write an autobiography; he loved to write but didn't want to write the autobiography. Eventually, he wrote the autobiography (although it didn't span the entirety of his life) and renamed it: An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth.

SSAAP is my experiment with Truth, a long book that can never be read through the journey of the human condition. Within it is pasted all the wisdoms of everyone who has ever spoken to me; I carry a journal with me wherever I go to record other people's wisdom, because every single living creature has its own wisdom. Africa has shown me my greatest strengths. It has shown me my deepest weaknesses, my ugly places and sore spaces. I have spent my life researching this, and Africa has been my experiment with Truth: How deeply can we love others? And when we believe we have reached the depths of it, does it still get deeper? Is that what Love is, in the end: we keep pushing the limitations of the self until the Self dissolves and we are left with a universal, divine Truth. Why do we believe we should only give Love if it is returned? Many of SSAAP's supporters and donors give to people they will never see or meet in their lifetime. This forces the question: Does it matter, in the end, if the Love is returned? Perhaps Love is only a measuring stick; how deeply we are able to Love others is directly proportional to how deeply we can Love ourselves.

How much can we give before we are depleted – or – is this a myth, a commonplace saying, that doesn't truly exist at all? Perhaps we reach a point in our giving that the only thing we are giving back to is a source more profound even than ourselves. We are giving back to the Universal Love Force, the energy that binds the planet together. The web that is so sticky, there is no getting out of it.

I have recently discovered that my humanity is in fact a very remote trace of me; it is finite, and I can feel its daily limitations. When I choose to tap into my own Infinity – which is actually the place where I remove myself from itself – I discover an ultimate, timeless connection to the trees; their haggard roots clutching into the earth I too can feel. I am the water, the ocean:- its pulse, its magnitude, its kingdom. My humanity is a very small aspect of my whole; when I put my energy into a larger space: into Love, into Nature, I find this work in Africa takes on a whole new meaning. I can attain self-realization through Loving and serving others ~ and in turn, I am Loved and served. It is a cycle, and I have become part of what I am serving.



*Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program (SSAAP) is a grassroots program created by the people of rural Africa (Zambia, Sierra Leone, and potentially Ethiopia) and committed to serving the needs of the people.*

*SSAAP is a 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization, Tax ID #: 27-2033029.*

*Please contact Gail or Heather if you wish to work together with SSAAP in any capacity or through any of our projects in Southern, Eastern, or Western Africa.*

*Come to Africa to volunteer! To work with SSAAP! Come help us make a water well, do an arts initiative with the women, improve our microloan program, rear animals with us. Please help us make SSAAP a better program. Come for the Africans and come for yourself; give that gift of Africa to you! Africa must be the most healing part of the planet.*







**Happiest of Holidays!**

**Thank you for your continued support of our work in Africa. Without you, SSAAP could have worked only with words and in theory. With you, SSAAP is a living testament to the beauty of both worlds: Africa and U.S.A.**

**May Love be your Light. Thank you for your time and for your Love.**







