

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter Holidays 2017

Edition XXIII



This newsletter is dedicated to Freddy, my favorite ciBemba ruffian. Thanks for opening your loud mouth and blabbing all over Zambia how amazing this project is; thank you for giving me renewed enthusiasm for the work and for reminding me of how fortunate I am to be able to do it. The time I shared with you to learn about The World meant the world to me. Love you Allways.



Betty, Nunyez (“Star”), and Radiance: Triple-Trouble in our village in Simwatachela. The Terrible Trio has been rumored to chase goats, to recklessly climb mango trees, to play ‘house’ dressing up the chickens in doll clothes and to milk the cows without permission...

“Love is the absence of judgment.” ~ Dalai Lama XIV

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Happy Holidays to All! I will do my best to keep this newsletter short and sweet, but we probably know how bad I am at being abridged, especially where my heart is concerned. ☺ But in light of the busy holiday season, I will keep verbiage to a minimum. At the very least I will try.



Visitors in Simwatachela

SSAAP commenced its projects in Zambia in June 2017 (after working in Sierra Leone until April 2017, followed by the Assessment Trip to Ethiopia from April to June 2017). The last few months in Zambia were an incredible four-month stint back in SSAAP’s African home. We had plenty of visitors and accomplished much, specifically with the Microloan Program.

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Gail’s Visit to Simwatachela, July – October 2017

We should all be so fortunate to have a mother as engaged in her children’s life as my mother is mine. Gail is SSAAP’s Secretary and spent time in the village with SSAAP for three months: attending Office Hours, giving out loans for SSAAP’s Microloan program, assisting in the School Sponsorship program, meeting people SSAAP works with, and a plethora of other duties.



Gail was incredible. She was a warrior and took the spirit of the village into her veins; like a trooper, she endured the village heat, the task of everyday chores (washing, fetching water, cooking, cleaning) and embraced this lifestyle with compassion and Love.

She also organized for SSAAP's Guest House to be built; the Guest House was almost entirely community contribution, save 50 Kwacha (~ \$5 USD) SSAAP purchased for dried grass for the thatching on the roof, and 400 Kwacha (~\$40) on bricks.

SSAAP's philosophy on community contribution parallels the U.S. Peace Corps model in that community contribution toward the project itself – *not* toward their benefit from the project, but toward the general maintenance and upkeep of the project – must be mandatorily 25 percent in cash or in-kind. The community contribution aspect is the sustainability piece of the project. Without it, the community is taking from SSAAP and SSAAP keeps giving to the community and parasitism has occurred, rather than the mutualism or sustainable relationship we strive for.



The labor, door and door frame were donated to the building of the Guest House by various communities within Simwatachela, as well as the cement floor by an American volunteer who has visited the project site three times now. The Guest House is a success story from the perspective of community contribution toward a project intended to serve the community members.



The Guest House is intended for future visitors to have a house to sleep in, rather than a tent to sleep in on the hard earth. Anyone is welcome: engineers, project supporters, friends, family – all over the world. Please come.



Gail's professional as well as personal feedback on how the project could be better-managed, as well as her suggestions have been greatly embraced after having spent so long with us here in the village.



I even made her hitchhike. It's one of my favorite pastimes in Zambia, saves SSAAP money, and many (70 percent +) of the friends I have in Zambia I have made this way. The hitchhiking rule we always said during the Peace Corps days is that if the person is sketchy, you just don't get in the vehicle. *Simple*. You can usually trust your first instinct on it: it's a lesson in trusting your gut. Fortunately the majority of Zambians are the kindest people on the planet and mental illness/violence related to mental imbalance is very low in this nation of the world.



In short, Gail, thank you from the bottom of our heart[s] for visiting the project site, for enduring suffering just to understand the nature of the work more carefully, and for donating 3 months of your life to this project. I hope it will be a life-changing experience for you as much as it has been for us. ☺ As well, I hope it met your expectations. I hope you will never forget it – the good, the bad, the ugly, the unspeakable beauty, all that is Africa is now a part of your blood, too.

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EWB-MSU's Visit to Simwatachela, August 2017



The fifth and final trip in the 5-year contract Engineers Without Borders-Mississippi State University (EWB-MSU) made with SSAAP occurred in July/August 2017.



The Team monitored the water flow, cleanliness of water, possible water contaminants, and maintenance of eleven wells in Simwatachela.



Although EWB-MSU's contract with SSAAP is technically terminated as of August 2017, both Dr. Dennis Truax and I have hope of future projects together – either through Mississippi State University, or through personal means of inviting students to work on the project as a separate course of study and hands-on field experience.



Although EWB-MSU's contract with SSAAP is technically terminated as of August 2017, both Dr. Dennis Truax and I have hope of future projects together – either through Mississippi State University, or through personal means of inviting students to work on the project as a separate course of study and hands-on field experience.

SSAAP-Zambia's Clean Drinking Water Initiative has been almost entirely organized, funded, implemented, monitored and evaluated by Dr. Dennis Truax and the EWB-MSU Student Chapter, as well the loyalty of the students and Mr. Duane Wilson who has accompanied the Team for the last three visits to Simwatachela. You will be sorely missed in our village. Please, come again, even just for a visit, to assist with water; anything you can do will help enliven the spirit of the community. You know how much they love you!

Additionally, Dr. Truax presented to the local Rotary Club of Starkville a synopsis of EWB-MSU's work in Simwatachela. Please feel free to view the article:

<http://www.cdispatch.com/news/article.asp?aid=60921#.WcvnKAPqTgU.facebook>

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Hope Foundation's Visit to Simwatachela



One of our best friends in Zambia works with the Hope Foundation from the nation's capital, Lusaka. The Foundation works specifically with disadvantaged children, orphans or vulnerable children, both in the urban and the rural sect, sponsoring children to school or working to create schools. The representative from Hope Foundation visited Simwatachela during the time-frame that both SSAAP's Secretary as well as the Engineers Without Borders from Mississippi State University were there. It was a full house and so much fun. Thank you for representing the Foundation and for coming to the village. It meant the world to the project as well as to me, personally. Next time you visit you can stay in the Guest House so your back won't give you any more trouble sleeping on the

ground. The Engineer Team, SSAAP Team, and our host community collectively thank you for your visit.



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Redesigning SSAAP's Website

SSAAP's website is in the process of being remodeled. A lack of organization, too much content, and excessive verbosity caused many readers confusion and I apologize for that.

We invite you to peruse the newly-remodeled website, www.ssaap.org.

Many thanks not only to our Web Master, Ian Cumming, but also to Rich Hill and Gail Cumming for the *hours* of time they dedicated to making the updated website so incredible. Every word, every paragraph they agonized over to the point of perfection. I can't thank all three of you enough for this group endeavor.

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"If I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reason behind it was my desire for self-realization."

~ Mahatma Gandhi, 1925

Art: The Immortal Voice



In 2017, SSAAP worked again with its loyal partners, We'Moon from Wolf Creek, Oregon to empower, enthuse, uplift, and inspire women from Sierra Leone, Ethiopia and Zambia to create art for the 2017 We'Moon Holiday package, sold with We'Moon Journal Calendars for 2018.

Please visit their website for more information, to see beautiful art, or for holiday gift ideas:

www.wemoon.ws

A brief synopsis of a few of the women SSAAP worked with in the remote areas of Simwatachela and Mukuni Chiefdoms is as follows.

Local Village Crafting Projects: We'Moon/SSAAP Women's Art Initiative

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Please note that all of these women have signed written consent for their stories to be used for the general public to learn more about Zambian conditions, and life in the more remote rural areas of this southern African nation.



Meet Christine Sianzyele, 50 years old. She has 7 children and 13 grandchildren. Her problem (like most of the women in this report from Simwatachela, Zambia) is that her husband, a poor farmer, does not have enough money to support their children/grandchildren to school. Her children range in age from 26 to 12 years old. In Africa, it is not uncommon for the grandparents to also support their grandchildren, and therefore the 13 grandchildren are also a responsibility for Christine and her husband Edson.

Christine is sewing ten phone pouches/neck pouches such as the one strung around her neck.



Here she is signing the receipt for the money she received for the job. Even this little bit helps these women in their lives, which I assure you are a daily struggle. It means the difference between school and no school for their children/grandchildren, as well the difference (sadly) between eating and not eating on a hard day. My words hardly do justice not only to the problems and sufferings here, but also how much something small to us means something monumental to them.

Christine has finished grade 4, then ended her education. She can read and write.



Meet Irene Sikwelukuba. She is pictured above with her contract and permission to share her story contract, signed with her fingerprint. Irene finished grade three. She is unable to read or write, so everything must be explained to her before signing.



Irene is pictured with one of her eight children, behind. She has been contracted to sew ten phone purses/neck purses (just like Christine), like the one she is wearing around her neck. She is 42 years old and has one grandchild. Her biggest problem, she tells me, is affording school fees for her children. The SSAAP/We'Moon Initiative will help her significantly in affording school fees for the 2017/2018 school terms.

Edina (“Edna”) Sioni, age 45, is back with us again this year (below) for the SSAAP/We’Moon Arts Initiative. She has been contracted to sew five sets of placemats and napkins this year.

Edina has eight children, five grandchildren, and can read and write. Edina’s situation is perhaps the hardest for me to endure in the village. Her husband is a drunkard and beats her repeatedly. He drinks up the money in the household and so she asked me to keep her contract and her money secret so he would not know she had money as he would take it from her. In 2015 she had to leave him as he beat her so badly she almost died. Due to poverty, she returned to him in 2016.



Together, Edina and I discuss patterns, size, and design for her placemats and napkins.



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SSAAP Cattle Project



Above: this is Lucy, the first cow we bought for SSAAP's cattle project in 2016. The second cow, Naluja, stays nearby our home. Lucy has given birth once and is already pregnant again, and Naluja is currently pregnant as well.

I learned, in the loosest sense of the word, to milk a cow but please understand, it was not with the ease and grace that the Zambians do it. Please note the above photo. It was a dirty disaster that ended in Lucy hitting me in the face with her tail. Talk about being humbled. Milking a cow is actually very difficult and I have a whole new respect for how much effort it takes just to lighten the color of my coffee in the morning.



The children sat on the fence and laughed at me so it made me laugh at myself. 😊

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SSAAP-Zambia Office Hours

SSAAP's Office Hours were initiated by the large amount of people asking for help at awkward hours, any time, any day. Due to my commitment not only to my daughter's home-school but also to the administrative side of SSAAP, I needed some days of the week without constant interruption and so SSAAP's Office Hours were established on Tuesday and Thursday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a lunch break from 1-3 p.m. so I can feed Radiance and me, then Office Hours continue from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Below, people line up inside and outside SSAAP's Office. We started a Sign-In sheet in order to assist everyone democratically, as many of the people in the village tend to push ahead and not follow lines and order.



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“Truth is the still, small voice within me.”

~ M. Gandhi

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Microloan Project; Simwatachela, Zambia 2017

This project, cleverly designed by one of SSAAP's donors in America, allows for individuals (women or men), schools, farmers' associations and women's clubs on a case-by-case basis to receive an interest-free loan from SSAAP. The loans are usually given for 6 months, 9 months, or one year. Occasionally they will be distributed for as short as 3 months or as long as 2 years, but 3 months is usually too short for the individual/group to return the loan on time, and 2 years is too long a time interval.

The loans are cyclical: Cycle #1 Loan is given for 200 Kwacha or approximately \$20. If the loan recipient pays the loan back on time, including two reports (first report when the loan begins, second report when the loan ends) then the loan recipient is eligible for a Cycle #2 Loan: 400 Kwacha or \$40. Cycle #3 is for 800 Kwacha (\$80 USD, approximately), and the Loan Cycles grow exponentially as such.

The following chart reveals what the loan recipients intend to do or have done with loan funds received.

A brief background on a handful of the loan recipients follows.

SSAAP Microloan Program 2015-2018

**Exchange rates:
10 Kwacha ~ \$1 USD (Zambia)**

LOANEE NAME	CYCLE #	LOAN PERIOD	PROJECT	AMOUNT (USD)	REPORTS
Gibson Sinangombe	1	August 2016-July 2017	Emergency fertilizer	\$20	X 2
Finola Siamafumba	1	August 2016-July 2017	Previous boyfriend threatening to kill her	\$20	X 1
Mate and Betty Sibooli	2	August 2016-July 2017	Fishing/selling fish program	\$40	X 2
Mate and Betty Sibooli	3	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Fishing/selling fish program	\$80	X 3
Mate and Betty Sibooli	1	Sept. 2015- August 2016	Fishing/selling fish program	\$20	X 1
Matthews Siamayabe	1	August 2016 – July 2017	Goat-rearing project	\$20	X 0
Matthews Siamayabe	2	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Goat-rearing project	\$40	X 0
Decision Siampongo	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Goat-rearing project	\$20	X 1
Gibson Sinangombe	2	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Photography	\$40	X 2
Edson Sinangombe	2	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Vegetable garden	\$40	X 2
Edson Sinangombe	1	Sept. 2015 – August 2016	Vegetable garden	\$20	X 2
Pumulo Lozi	1	Sept. 2015 – August 2016	Cattle-rearing	\$20	X 0
Syoonze Club	2	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Produce garden	\$40	X 1
Syoonze Club	1	Sept. 2015 – August 2016	Produce garden	\$20	X 1
Peggy Pukeni	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Buying used clothing for shop	\$20	X 1
Peggy Pukeni	2	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Buying used clothing for shop	\$40	X 1
Micah Neede	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Chicken project	\$20	X 1
Pellina Neede	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Sewing / finishing grade12	\$20	X 1
Kupenga Club	2	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Fishing project	\$40	X 1
Kupenga Club	1	Sept. 2015 – August 2016	Hunger problems; feeding family [polygamy]	\$20	X 1
Kandunya Club	1	October 2014 – Aug. 2015	Sewing project	\$20	X 4
Gibson Sinangombe	1	October 2014 – Aug. 2015	Photography	\$20	X 1
Cinkoyo Club (Pumulo Lozi)	1	October 2014 – Aug. 2015	Agriculture / cattle	\$20	X 0
Juanita Balla	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Vegetable garden/ hunger problems [polygamy]	\$20	X 1
Nelson Kanyembe	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Goat-rearing	\$20	X 1
Alice Kanyumbwe	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Goat-rearing	\$20	X 1
Nellie Matonga	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Transportation to funeral	\$20	X 1
Finola Siamafumba	2	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Chicken-rearing	\$40	X 1
Edina Sioni	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Vegetable garden / hunger problems [abusive husband]	\$20	X 1
Felex and Eunice Taulo	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Tomato garden	\$20	X 1
Mark Sibooli	1	July 2017 – Sept. 2017	Chicken-rearing in 2 farms	\$20	X 1
Mercy Magomba	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Selling beans	\$20	X 1
Florence Sialubala	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Baking buns	\$20	X 1
Sargent Siakumbali	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Goat-rearing	\$20	X 1

Rich Sinangombe	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Goat-rearing	\$20	X 1
Veronica and Tom Sikalele	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Maize mill (grinding maize)	\$20	X 1
Raphael Siafuwa	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Business initiatives	\$20	X 1
Tenson Sikalele	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Vegetable-selling	\$20	X 1
Cricesia Dumbe	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Vegetable garden	\$20	X 1
Rodgers Sibooli	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Chicken-rearing	\$20	X 1
Raphael Sibooli	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Produce garden	\$20	X 1
Hezah Kalulu	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Selling fritters (buying flour, baking)	\$20	X 1
Aswell Sibooli	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	School fees for children	\$20	X 1
Obiya Zion	1	Sept. 2017 – Sept. 2018	Goat-rearing	\$20	X 1



Micah Neede came to SSAAP's Office Hours for his Cycle #1 Loan (200 Kwacha or \$20 USD) after waiting over nine months for it.

All Loan recipients of SSAAP are required to fill out application forms, receipts and a statement of their self-chosen punishment in the event they fail to pay back the loan. Micah holds SSAAP's receipt book in this photo. Micah will use his loan to begin a chicken-rearing project in the village.



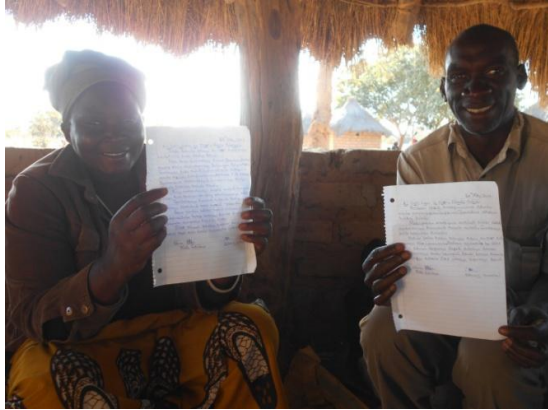
Micah Neede's wife Pellina Neede received a Cycle #1 Loan to work together with Micah on the chicken-rearing project. The income generated from the loan will help her finish her grade 12 education and will help him with the bee-keeping/honey project he is also working with SSAAP on.

She happily holds her first Loan Cycle's 200 Kwacha. Her biggest issue is that she didn't finish school. Due to the great expense of school in Zambia (most African nations have free schooling for grade 1 to grade 12. In Zambia, parents/guardians are forced to spend a lot of money that they don't have on school fees and uniforms to send their children to school, which results in most village children not going to school).



Pellina signs a receipt for her loan money. She finished grade eleven, but left school before she completed her grade twelve. The reason was not due to early pregnancy, as it is 95% of the time, but rather a lack of funds to finish grade 12.

With this money generated from the chicken-rearing program, Pellina hopes to source the funds to finish grade 12 and further her education.



Mate and Betty Sibooli are the first SSAAP Loan recipients to move to Cycle #3 of SSAAP's Microloan Program. Here they hold the required reports to evolve to the next loan cycle. Betty and Mate have an on-going fishing business in which they travel to the Zambezi River (separates Zambia and Zimbabwe) that is a 2-day walk from our village, and buy fish to re-sell in our area. They were given 800 Kwacha (\$80 USD) on July 4th, 2017 for their project.



Both gratefully sign for half the money.

It is the best feeling watching people light up with joy.



Syoonze Club is now eligible for a Cycle #2 (400 Kwacha or \$40) loan.



I issued the loan in my grass-roofed office in my pajamas. You see ☺... there are truly vast benefits to living in Africa.



There are approximately ten women in this club. Their loans always are used on their vegetable garden project, whereby they grow cabbage, tomatoes, a leafy green called 'rape,' and pumpkin. The biggest challenge/setback has been to keep the cattle out of the garden. They have had many disappointments when discovering in the morning a chewed garden and broken fence: midnight four-legged thieves.



Edson Sinan'gombe, eligible for Cycle #2 Loan (400 Kwacha or \$40 USD), excitedly receives his money. He has a very well-maintained tomato/cabbage garden, and sells it to all of us who buy it in the village. He seems to have a green thumb, and his produce is incredible.



Eunice Taulo and her husband Felex applied for a Cycle #1 loan with SSAAP. They intend to cultivate a tomato garden and do a large-scale gardening project with the loan money.





Matthews Siamayabe has lost all abilities to move his right leg.

His son loyally accompanies him wherever he goes. He just returned his Cycle #1 Loan for a goat-rearing project, and was eligible for Cycle #2 Loan (double the amount) to continue in the same endeavor.



Juanita Balla, seven children and twenty-three years after being married to her husband Coster Merrick, was dumped for a twenty-two year old woman who Coster took as his second wife. The victim of traditional Tonga polygamy, she asked me for a loan so that her children could eat. The loan will be used to buy cooking oil, vegetables, and busu (powdered maize used to make our staple food n'shima).



Her children are malnourished, and look sick.

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“Thank you for visiting [Africa], whether you have come to serve the poor with your skills or to be a witness and a voice for those living in poverty...every little bit we do helps to change the life of another.”

~ Gemma Pilcher, Australian missionary

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SSAAP in the News



On June 19, 2017, SSAAP was represented on ZNBC, the national news station of Zambia. I spoke the whole program in *ciTonga*, the local language we speak in Southern Province, Zambia.

The program was aired on national television on the *Tonga Program* on Saturday, July 1st.

A video clip of this news program will be available on SSAAP's updated website under the link: "SSAAP in the News" within the next few months.

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"Tree-planting was not compulsory, but merely a suggestion. It should be done seriously or not at all. I have an impression that they laughed at my ideas. I remember that I was in earnest when I planted the tree allotted to me and that I carefully watered and tended it."

~ M. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments with Truth*

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SSAAP's Forestry Project

In 2016, SSAAP requested a plot of land from Chief Simwatachela in which to begin a small-scale forestry project which could, potentially, become a large-scale forest, the intent to bring more rainfall to the area and to stabilize the deforestation in the Simwatachela area of Zambia.

I have seeds from West Africa which grow quickly and require very little rain, which potentially can grow very robustly. I told Chief Simwatachela that my goal is that from an airplane, one can see the SSAAP Forestry Project as a chunk of dark green from the sky. ☺

We will begin making seedlings for this project from these seeds in 2019 when SSAAP returns to Africa.

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Philosophy of SSAAP

SSAAP uses 75 percent to 80 percent of its funding on its projects and beneficiaries, expending 20 percent to 25 percent on administrative expenses. Sadly, most projects in Africa are the reverse (75 percent to 80 percent on administrative & 20 percent to 25 percent on projects), along with a horrible mentality that charity ought to be a money-making entrepreneurship-- taking advantage of the disadvantaged for personal gain.

I can't count the times I have been scolded for living in Africa without a car, without electricity and running water, or for "raising my daughter at a low standard" (scolded sometimes by Africans living in capital cities who see many NGO workers living at a luxury level and so expect me to do the same, or by expatriates who wish to live in Africa but keep the comforts of the West with them.)

I don't believe anyone is suffering if they are happy, and as I am happy (and I believe my daughter to be as well), we intend to keep on doing as we are doing – possibly forever. ☺



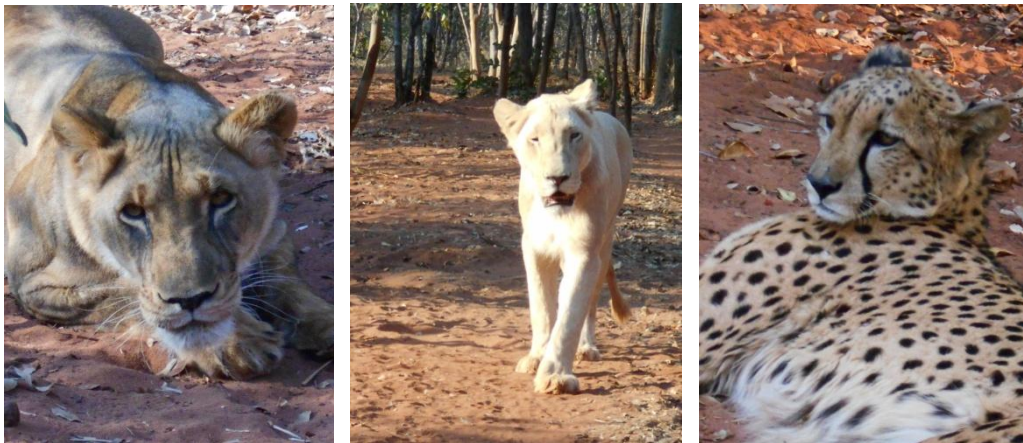
The Zambian-Zimbabwean border, separated by the mighty Zambezi River (Livingstone, Zambia/Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe)

Happiness is in the heart of the beholder, and I have had to explain to many Africans and expats that I cannot – and *would not* – ask SSAAP’s beloved and faithful donors and supporters in America to fund a vehicle or an expensive house for us – specifically when we are very happy living just as we are now. We want for nothing; we have everything we need here. Conversely, many, many Africans misunderstand us and cannot fathom how an American lady would “give up” her life in America where she could have had a nice job, a nice house and a nice car in exchange for this “life of poverty.”

And so I say: *Poverty exists within one’s mind and heart.* Ironically, it has less to do with money, material, or economics. I have spent the entirety of my adult life (15 years since I graduated from University) living in poverty-stricken pockets of the globe. My assessment in the end: *poverty is a disease that has more to do with our mindset than it could ever have to do with money.* Does wealth have to do with money, in the end, or abundance? The two concepts are quite different.

Poverty comes when we don’t Love ourselves enough to stand up for what is right – on the side of both the abusers and those who are being abused. This can only happen when we depend on the outside world to Love us because we don’t, internally, Love ourselves. That is why the external world always disappoints; it can never Love us the way we can Love ourselves. Poverty results from finding value only in the material world and greed results in manipulating the material world so as to make it seem there isn’t enough for all of us. There is.

In many senses, poverty is a mindset we all have; it isn’t limited to Africa at all. It’s a global limitation of our minds – not our hearts.



Cat Kingdom; Mukuni Big Five; Livingstone, Southern Province, Zambia

Some of the most incredible human beings alive on this planet are those living on less than fifty cents per day (‘A dollar a day’ is an inaccurate statistic. In actuality, in rural Africa it is much, much less than that.)

My thesis is that you cannot use a charity organization – or anything it enshrouds – to sponsor yourself. This is materialism. But through service to others through the rawest (and sometimes most difficult) denomination of Love, you can uplift others as well as yourself. Through service to others you ultimately drudge up your own inner demons, realizing how thin the veil of separation truly is between yourself and the people you are servicing. For me, *this* is the true art of charity. It helps those who give it and those who receive it. But it doesn't serve anything or anyone if the intention is not pure, and the poorest, most vulnerable member of the society is not served first – for he represents those who need the services the most.

After all, on all levels, there is nothing better than distributing joy to others. The currency I am paid in is when I hand someone in the village a \$40 loan and see her face light up or tell a teacher SSAAP can sponsor 5 orphans at his community school for a year. There is no better feeling in this world than making other people happy. I am selfishly addicted to it. ☺



My best friend from Peace Corps and me in his hut in Kenema, Northern Province, Zambia; 2005.

I hold deeply the impression that Capitalism is a system that has hope of functioning only in societies where the majority of the citizens are educated, and education is a priority for that nation. Capitalism, when introduced into a society where the masses are either undereducated or illiterate, has little chance of survival, and – dangerous still more – will deplete the society of its indigenous resource, which is self-reliance. Capitalism isn't a system that functions at its fullest capacity when the masses are either undereducated or illiterate. What you are left with instead is a race for money that becomes squandered by corrupt people in power, lack of knowledge by the citizens of their innate human rights, as well as an education of how money earned should be used; for example: a homeless single mother with seven children sleeping on the street with a Smartphone in her hand.

Capitalism has the power to destruct on a large-scale level, more than anything else, in societies that indigenously use a different system of currency, such as a bartering system or trading one good for another.

Money without education causes more harm than good, as education is the only way that money can be of any real service to anyone.



The children extract a massive amount of joy from laying blankets outside and playing in the dirt with each other. They seem to cherish this playtime; I know my daughter does. When asked whether or not Radiance is getting the socialization she needs being home-schooled, I explain: what better place to socialize a child than an African village? After all, this is the way that African children are socialized in the village; very few of them actually attend a formal school. The village is their socialization and their schoolyard.



In a nutshell, we are learning that the world needs America and the world needs Africa but not for the same things or for the same reasons. Like all things carrying an essence, what we extract from both has the potential to make us better as a collective humanity.

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The Deeper Significance of Heroes

My daughter Radiance asked me a few weeks back what a hero is. I told her: “A hero is someone whose spirit, whose fire and passion you feel resonating deep inside your heart. They stick inside of you like honey sticks between your fingers. Someone you do things in the name of even if they never know it or even if they are already dead – that’s a hero.”

I am under the impression that we all need at least a few heroes, heroes that change the course of our lives or for whom our internal relationship changes and grows with time.

Heroes can take us a long way; we make decisions in our lives sometimes through what they whisper within our hearts.



Politics aside, the nature of a man or woman is what makes him/her a Leader. False politicians are mortal whereby the content of a true Leader’s character creates his or hers immortality.

Barack Obama is a hero to Africa the way that Nelson Mandela is a hero to America. Sometimes a man is appreciated less by his own village than he is to the rest of the world. Obama’s face, his untraditional life story, his beautiful family, his democracy is deeply woven into the fibers of Africa. The Africans love him; he is iconic here.

On the following page 31, (left) a picture made of indigenous seeds of Barack’s face (Kazungula, Zambia); also (right), a gift shop in the Nairobi airport features postcards of Barack and his grandmother Sarah in his home village (Kenya).



Often when we are too close to someone/something it is more difficult to appreciate what that person/thing means. I have often felt that Africa appreciates Obama more than America as Africa tends to see Obama as a spiritual leader of America more than a politician. I believe South Africa has the same relationship to Nelson Mandela and that it is easier for Americans than South Africans to see Mandela as a spiritualist rather than a politician.

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International Students' Course in Gandhian Peace Studies and Nonviolence



My reverence for the writer, passionist and non-compromising servant of the Indian people – both in South Africa and in India – Mohandas “Mahatma” Gandhi, led me to West India, Gujarat State, where I am now until February 2018, studying at Gandhi’s University (*Gujarat Vidyapith*) which Gandhi established in 1920 in Ahmedabad, India. The course is an international students’ course for Truth-seekers worldwide whereby we are learning how to spin thread to make *khadi* cloth, learning

about Gandhi's life through reading his autobiography, philosophies of nonviolence and noncompliance. *Satyagraha* means "Truth force" in Sanskrit which also translates into: "Soul force." Truth force, Soul force, and Love force are the triangular approach of nonviolence or *Satyagraha* in Gandhian Thought. Soul force is the application of Love, and the Love force within. Gandhi believed that nothing in this world was worth anything unless it is Truth-based.

SSAAP and I follow a very paralleled theory, substituting the word 'Truth' for 'Love.' I believe that nothing in this world is worth doing, worth having or worth working for unless it be Love-based. This is the theory upon which SSAAP is founded.

We are also learning about Indian culture and communal/ashram life in this course according to Gandhian principles, as well as in harmony with the three ashrams he founded in India: Kochrab Ashram (Ahmedabad), Sabarmati Ashram (Ahmedabad), and Sevagram Ashram (Wardha).



The 2017-2018 course hosts one other American student (besides me) from New York, five students from Mexico, one from Bangladesh, one from Indonesia, and three from Nepal.

In 2018/2019, I wish to invite my friend from South Africa, a friend from Livingstone, Zambia, and a handful of other Zambians and Sierra Leoneans who have shown interest about this course. I think it forever changes the lives of those students who are fortunate enough to study here.



The course is free, as is food and housing, and so airfare is the only expense to attend. Airfare from Africa to India is very cheap (it cost roughly \$300 each for my daughter and I to fly here from Zambia) and so I am encouraging as many Africans as I can to apply for the course and attend! The course needs representatives from the poorest part of the world (Africa) whereby it is commonplace that someone cannot read, nor have more than a meal a day, or any money in his pocket. Africa, I have found, is misunderstood all over the world and the depths of poverty which exist on the Continent unknown to most.



As a parent and as a teacher, I had several reservations about bringing Radiance on this course. I did not know how the other students would react to a child sitting in on the lectures, and did not want them to resent her if she caused a lack of concentration in the classes. I did not know how some of the students would react to me, a mother older by more than a decade-and-a-half than the youngest

student. After much meditation, I decided to take the plunge and dive into the unknown, as I suppose has been my consistent life's pattern, and continue to be grateful to both my parents who encouraged me on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.



There is a divine sense of Love surrounding all aspects of this course. Each of the students is proud to represent his/her culture, and each student is an activist for his/her passion in a social issue. We are a very intense, loud, but respectful group when we all come together. 😊



All of our food is made fresh, by a cook who takes care of us like a mother, and her husband; our professors are constantly concerned with our well-being and are masters in their extensive knowledge of Gandhi's life and worldview. As a very important side note, they have been exceptionally kind to my child.

The friendships my daughter and I have made here we will cherish for the rest of our lives.



I am asked almost daily about my daughter’s education. Our school, called *Love, Light and Literacy Academy*, is a “distance-learning course,” or “home-school” depending upon what terminology one prefers.

Love, Light and Literacy Academy emphasizes two major points:

1. *Child is adaptable.*
2. *Through intensive study of culture, child learns the equality of all people.*

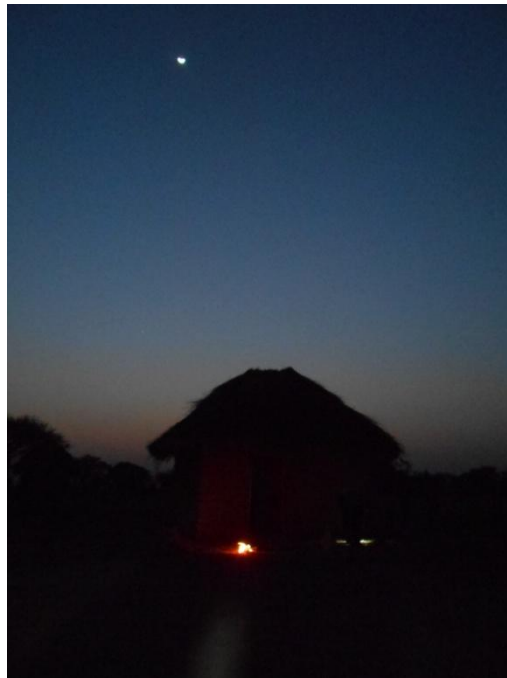
As well, the child develops a strong sense of inner peace and knowledge of Self through meditative arts such as painting, drawing, sewing, reading, writing, swimming, weaving, or spinning thread – as Radiance has learned how to do in this course.



In short, we are forever grateful to Gujarat Vidyapith for this course, as well as the other students who are here with us as a family – spending the holidays together and learning and growing together.



*



How Gandhi Relates to Africa

It may be debated that Gandhi's work in South Africa against the mistreatment of Indians in both the Natal and Transvaal Provinces was as effective, perhaps even more so, than his work in India. When Nelson Mandela became President of South Africa, the first trip he took after he was elected was to India to pay his respects for all that Gandhi did to equalize all in South Africa.

The more representation the world has of Africa through pure-hearted voices Africans – *not* references such as *The Economist* or UNICEF and UNDP reports with scholarly intellectual reports – but rather through the clear speech of African people themselves, the more the world will understand Africa and why the West needs Africa to develop our universal world; we can no longer use Africa for resources and leave it behind for everything else: medical, educational, basic needs (food, water, clothing).



The world is missing one of the biggest pieces of the picture for development as well as enlightenment if it continues to do as it is doing with Africa: using it and dumping it.

Simply stated, if the world wishes to collectively develop for the betterment of the planet, we can't just leave Africa behind because right now we can't see a way it will serve us. That's not the way to love anything, whether it is a plant, an animal, a human being, or a continent. There are plenty of benefits and secret treasures hidden in Africa. Most of them are yet to be discovered. And most of them we won't even see until one day when we need Africa and it has to come to the West's aid. (Only Heather's philosophy, not shared by anyone else I know.)

As a wise young South African man once said to me, with such passion I shall never forget: "You can go anywhere in the world but you can never leave Africa if it has gotten into your heart. It's some kind of spiritual dis-ease whereby no matter how bad it is here, your heart will only feel at home when it comes back to Africa."



In 1904, on a train journey from Johannesburg to Durban, South Africa, Gandhi was given a book. The book, entitled: Unto This Last by John Ruskin, offered Gandhi three principles upon which his Truth Movement ('Satyagraha') was based:

1. *The good of the individual is contained in the good/well-being of all.*
2. *Every work has its own value.*
3. *Every life should contain labor: tilling of soil, handicraft, carpentry, fabric-making, farming, manual labor.*

In theory, these values, more or less, parallel the vital principles upon which SSAAP is constructed. Of what value is my life when someone else has no food? No water? No health care for his sick child and then the child dies? If I only care about myself, then my welfare is in your despair. Conversely, if my welfare is found within your welfare, then true sustainable development can take place. It is our social responsibility, minimally, to care for the welfare of all people. For SSAAP, this is of primary importance.

All work has its own value. All work is of the same value provided those who are performing the work are doing it for the same purpose: earning a living. In this regard, a president or a prime minister or a CEO of a large-scale corporation must eat. How is the work of the farmer who has produced their food of any less value than the work of the president, the prime minister, or the CEO? There are different stations in life and each is sacred.



In practice, SSAAP plans to utilize this four-month course to its fullest not only by making international connections through like-minded people of the world, but also inviting them to work with the project. Some students have shown interest in working with SSAAP in the future.

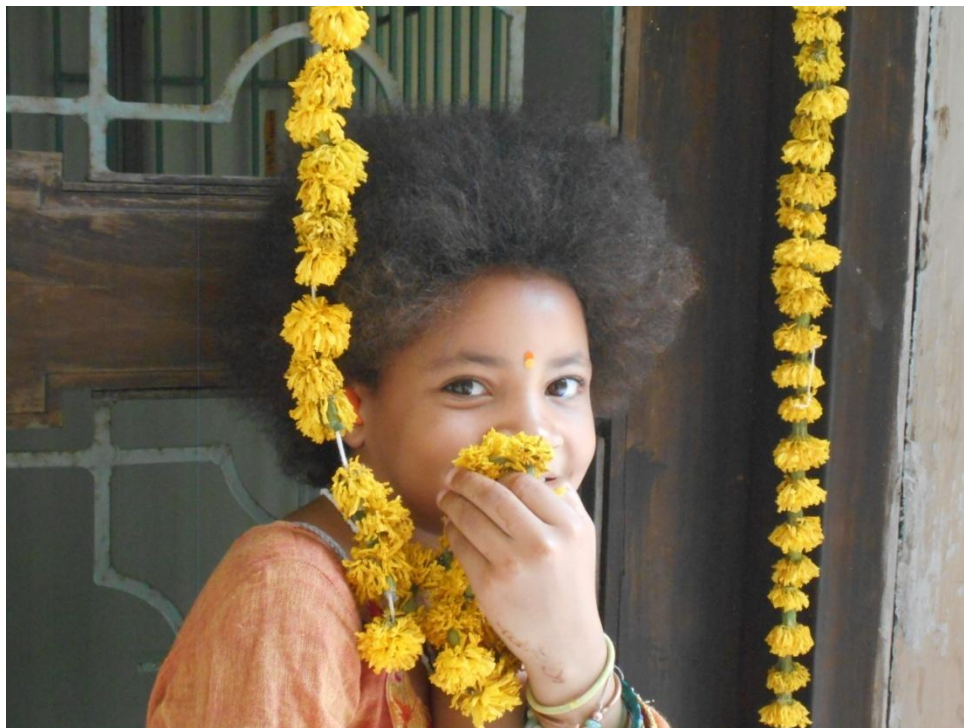


I am working with the University, *Gujarat Vidyapith*, on a proposal to have a partnership with SSAAP: an exchange program not only to bring as many Africans to the course in the future as possible, but potentially organizing a school in Simwatachela called: *Gandhian Philosophy and Sustainability in Southern Africa*. My project proposal is to organize a school on SSAAP's land in Simwatachela and invite fellow members of the International Certificate course to teach the class, as well bring literature from the University to Simwatachela in hopes of giving new ideas to communities who might deeply appreciate Gandhi's philosophies, many of which promote the rural villages of the world.

Years past I had taken books written by Gandhi and passed them around to my friends in Sierra Leone. A response to a book was tears in one friend's eyes. His father was a soldier who had been killed during the Sierra Leonean civil war (1990-2001) and had never really dealt with the pain of this loss. "I needed this," he had said. "How did you even know? This is something I needed to heal me but I didn't even know I needed to be healed."



"If you gain the whole world but you lose your Soul, is the achievement worth it?" ~ M. Gandhi





I love Africa with my whole heart.

Or, Africa is my whole heart. I have never quite known the difference.



But how could anyone *not* love Africa?!

The best part is that there were enough people apparently washing their entire bodies and doing their laundry in the sinks that merited this warning notice in the Manda Hill mall, Lusaka ☺



Photos (above left, above right) courtesy of Blake Stacy

Happy Holidays from our family...



Photos (above left, above right) courtesy of Blake Stacy



Photo courtesy of Blake Stacy

... sending greetings ...



Photo courtesy of Blake Stacy



Photo courtesy of Blake Stacy

...to everyone we Love all over the globe.



“I began to realize more and more the infinite possibilities of universal Love.” ~ M. Gandhi

All photos courtesy of Heather Cumming (unless otherwise stated).

Thank you for your time in reading this newsletter.

