

SSAAP Holiday Quarterly Newsletter,
Edition XXXV, November 2023



To Mama and Papa G.: You are two of the most gentle-hearted and caring people I have ever had the pleasure of knowing. Nothing has changed since I was in middle/high school and you welcomed me into your home as another one of your children. We think of you during the holidays: the season of Love and warmth against the backdrop of cozy snow, cheerful baking, colorful lights in the darkness, and poignantly enchanting music; we think of you all the time, indeed. Thank you for your generosity, your dedication to keeping in touch with us through our monthly phone calls, for everything you do and everything you are. You are Christmas.

We Love you, Heather and Radiance



Please note: The photos in this newsletter are not high-quality. I am sorry about this. The camera that we adored and used every day, donated by our beLoved friends in Ireland, was stolen in the robbery to our home in Sierra Leone on June 23, 2023; our back-up camera (Radiance's camera), only two-weeks later, landed in a mud puddle when we fell off a motorbike en route to the SSAAP land where we are building our house. The man driving the motorbike felt so badly that he gave us his brother's digital camera, as it was ultimately his fault we fell off the motorbike and landed in a mud puddle (our camera with us). Though grateful to have any camera at all, I must admit that these photos are not my best work.



Water Wells in Sierra Leone-2023: Cikaalo ku Salone

Please feel free to peruse the three attachments to this newsletter, entitled:

- *Kowa Chiefdom: Moyamba District, 2023*
- *Mano-Dasse Chiefdom: Moyamba District, 2023*
- *Unfinished wells (as of August 16, 2023)*



Here are two examples of plaques made by Musa (60/67 of our wells contracted to him in 2023), as shown above; and Taylor (7/67 of our wells contracted to him in 2023), as shown below. Musa's plaques are made of etched PVC pipe material used on the surface of a granite stone; Taylor's are made of sedimentary stone used for gravestones/tomb markings.





Leaving Sierra Leone: Kuanka ku Salone

In the days before we left, random people that we didn't even know cared about us passed by to bid us adieu. Noah, a motorbike rider, who would take us to our site and sometimes go to the market on our behalf (below, left); three days before our departure, a friend of ours had a huge bowl of our favorite Sierra Leonean food (rice, fried potatoes, boiled eggs, onion/spice minced sauce, cucumbers, salad, beans, yams, cassava, sweet potatoes) catered to us:



I know I am biased, but I see Sierra Leoneans as being some of the most beautiful people in all the world. Above, Hassan with his wife, Fatima; they lived two doors down from us, and between us and them was an abandoned house. Fatima brought us food one day in December 2022, asking me if we liked rice with potato leaves and palm oil. We returned her dishes to her with some of our food

inside. We shared food – which is my favorite tradition of neighborism – up until the last week of July 2023 when we left Sierra Leone. I always say to my daughter: “A friend who is a friend only in certain circumstances isn’t really a friend; a friend who is always your friend no matter what other people say or think of you is a true friend, and one that you should work hard never to let go of.”



We knew some of the children in the neighborhood would miss us as much as we would miss them.



At the bottom of the hill where our house was situated (we were at the top of the hill) was a forest, and through the forest: a stream in the dry season, a river in the rainy season. Our last evening in Sierra Leone we walked to the river in the rain to say goodbye to the water and to thank it for everything it had given us. We spent both Radiance’s birthday and Christmas in 2022 at the river, and sometimes – even just knowing it was there – gave us a great sense of comfort. Water gives me great comfort; I feel relieved when I see a pool, or a water source (no matter its size), the sea, a stream, river, or lake. Why is this? It has taken me a great deal of my life to understand why my Love of water dates back even further than my childhood of spending summers at Grandma and Grandpa Cumming’s swimming pool just the street parallel from my childhood home; it dates back to the ancient ancestral memory of my Soul.

There is great psychic potential in water, and within this: the potency for telepathy. That is why I notice that when I am stuck with something in my life: tangible issues, logistical problems, emotional pain, disconnection with a Loved one, a misunderstanding with a friend or ally, immersion in water [be it a shower, a bathtub, bucket bath, stream, sea, lake, ocean, river] soothes it; without even consciously working on the issue, the unconscious mind is at work, whispering to the subconscious; new solutions to old obstacles arise, or a sense of peace surrounding what is out of my control. That which I cannot make sense of stops being a threat to me and rather becomes a vehicle for profound inner realization and prophetic change in my attitude, the way I see things, and my version of reality. In short: water is a channel for clearing and cleaning our hearts and our higherminds. Without it, from a biological, practical, and scientific standpoint: we could not exist. All life on planet Earth is connected through water. Water holds memory and quantum physics is even beginning to tap into these phenomenal mysteries of water, which could even in the future be linked to scientific research as well as mainstream fact.



And of course, we knew we would miss the house that had been rented for us, that we had all to ourselves, the most.

Leave it to Sierra Leone, the rawest place on the planet (so far as I am concerned) to take you to the edges of your comfort zone and beyond. Here is what I have learned: the majority of us learn to create our own destiny to the point that we reach a certain comfort level and then stop the evolution process. We are our own worst enemy in this way. What if we decided to challenge ourselves enough to breach the edges of our own comfort zones, pierce them, only to realize the strength that is ever-present within us that we would never have met had we stayed in the safety of our self-created comfort?

The benefit to non-urban/non-expatriate/rural Africa as a whole, but Sierra Leone quite specifically, is that there is absolutely no comfort zone: food, water, and shelter are all problematic and difficult to resource. Within these limitations and stressors, a deep strength and magnificent wisdom unfold that would otherwise lie dormant. One's comfort zone becomes solely her/himself; nothing external provides any source of comfort. And this is specifically where deep, internal, alchemical change within occurs: where all you have is yourself, without any kinds of distractions.



Three days prior to our departure, as we had already packed up all of our cooking materials/brazier/pots and pans/kitchen and put them in storage at one of our trusted friend's house, we asked two people we thought were reliable to bring us food that we would reimburse them for; the first person ignored us entirely and didn't answer any of my text messages, and the second person we had organized to bring us food never brought us and texted us at 7:30 p.m. (19:30) that night to tell us he was sorry, but that he couldn't bring the food after all because he and his wife had had a fight. Things like this are, unfortunately, commonplace in all parts of Africa we have visited (though I will admit, we have starved a lot more in Sierra Leone than in Zambia due to neglect and broken promises); I was saving a bottle of *Nutella* our cherished friends in Israel had sent in a care package months ago, specifically for Christmastime or even for Radiance's birthday (December 17th). Anyhow, it just seemed like the right time to bring it forth and so our last night in Sierra Leone, this was our dinner: *Nutella*.

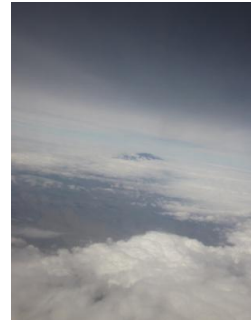
It is safe to say that the last three days we were in Sierra Leone, we ate one catered meal that our friend randomly brought to us. Needless to say on the airplane, we ate 2-3 meals each; we were famished. I highly recommend a trip to Sierra Leone who is interested in an intensive weight-loss program! Even considering the cost of airfare, it still might be cheaper than paying for a personal trainer or a membership to a gym. I am half-joking, and half-serious.



The flight between our two SSAAP nations is a beast, but we braved it – and it was so much fun! Freetown, Sierra Leone to Accra, Ghana to Nairobi, Kenya to Harare, Zimbabwe to Lusaka, Zambia. The cheaper humanitarian aid flights we are eligible for are often the ones with the long-layovers and awkward timings, but we have learned to accept it and have as much fun in the airports (making ourselves at home) as we would have anywhere else.



My favorite traveler, above, swaddled in her *Kenya Airways* blanket. On the last leg of the trip (Nairobi to Lusaka), we flew over Mt. Kilimanjaro, and it was spectacular!



I had told Radiance that she would know we had left one realm (Sierra Leone) and entered another (Zambia) when she got off the airplane and felt the cold air. We left Sierra Leone in the heart of the rainy season, and we entered Zambia on August 3, 2023: the cold season. The cold season in Zambia lasts about halfway through the month, and then it becomes hot!



We stayed in Lusaka with friends of our dear friends who live in the Netherlands; we had never met them before, and nonetheless they treated us like family. This is Zambian culture. And the best part of it! They had prepared us a beautiful meal:



N'shima (their staple food, made of maize meal), scrambled eggs, boiled greens, and beans made with onion and tomatoes.

They prepared a hot water bucket bath for us, and we put on our flannel pajamas – it was unbelievably cold! I cannot remember a time that I felt so relieved, exhausted, and content.





We woke to one of the sweetest breakfasts we had ever had, so Lovingly prepared for us.

Then we took a walk, and saw the most beautiful vegetable market:



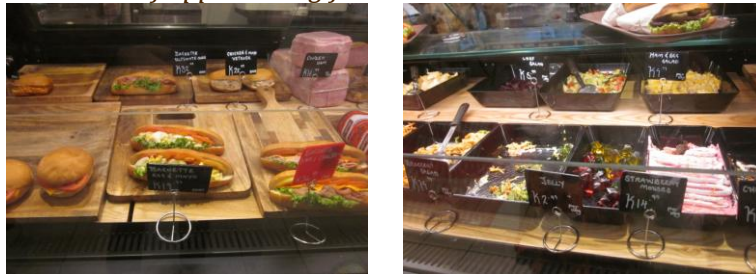
Our mission was the bank. We walked to our bank to re-open my bank account that I hadn't used in two years; it had gone dormant, and it took us four hours at the bank for them to re-open it.



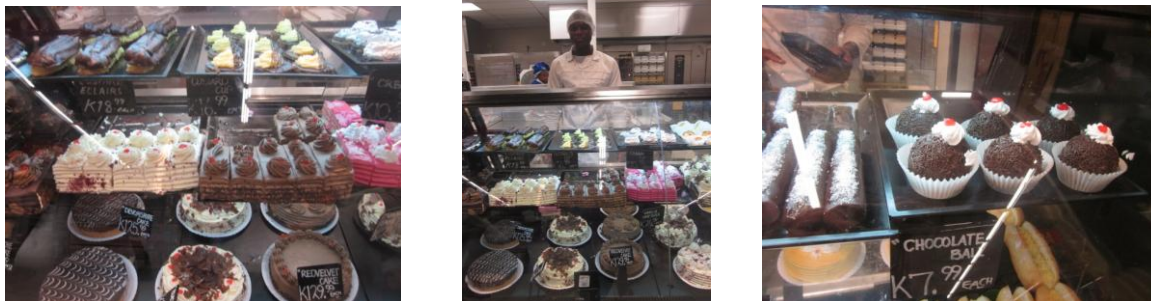
It was nightfall when we left the bank, and we walked across the street to the super-mall which is home to our favourite superstore in Zambia: *Shoprite*.



We took photos of each other standing outside of it, and tried to ignore the strange looks of all the shoppers passing by. *They don't know what we've just been through, I whispered to Radiance. The gift of starvation is the essence of appreciating food.*



The deli and bakery of *Shoprite* reveal South Africa's western influence on this country.



The young man working behind the bakery counter asked me why I was taking photos of the beautiful pastries. I told him I had just come from Sierra Leone, and that people don't really know how to bake there, and that we were really hungry and had been eating a meal a day for the last nine months. The look that passed through his eyes told me he had no idea what I was talking about.

The influence of India is ever-present in Zambia as well; we have so many Indians and Zambians of Indian origin living here (many Indians migrated north from Durban, South Africa over the last centuries). As Radiance and I cook predominately Indian food in the village (rice, lentils, cowpeas, pickled vegetables, *chipatis*), we get a lot of our sauces and spices from *Shoprite*.





That night we enjoyed the cheese and crackers from *Shoprite* in our flannel pajamas. One day, when I am an old great-grandmother, these will be my favorite memories of the time I shared when I was young with my daughter when she was small, in Africa, and we made *home* and *fun* wherever we went, despite what obstacles were waiting for us along the way.

When we left Lusaka, we went to a small town in Southern Province called *Choma*, also the regional headquarters of Southern Province, Zambia, and stayed with our driller, Abedneco Likumbi, until our new SSAAP site in Cooma Chiefdom was complete.

Likumbi is a Zimbabwean Geologist; water is his life's work. He has drilled hundreds of water wells and is renowned in Zambia for his proclamation that at every site he drills, he will find water. He takes his job very seriously, and his reputation follows him. He is in the process of drilling an 140-metre hole with metal casing pipes (as opposed to PVC piles) for Zambia's current president, H.H. (Hakainde Hichilema).

He also happens to be one of my closest friends in Zambia :), SSAAP's water well driller and construction engineer for our new SSAAP site in Cooma Chiefdom, and the person we have been staying with for almost one month while our new house is being completed (they are putting screens on the wrap-around porch right now to keep mosquitoes out - you might have to come visit after all as people are saying it looks like a lodge, with its own water system to boot!).

Staying at his house has given us ample time for a plethora of discussions: long meetings regarding SSAAP's upcoming contracts: 7 water wells, 3 water reticulation systems (simple irrigation systems, so a water system), and various construction projects for SSAAP, which include security walls with razor wire around the perimeter of the walls (prison model) around both our SSAAP compounds in Zambia.





Thank You for Your Patience: Twalumba kumulindila

Thank you for your patience with me! I always feel so ashamed and embarrassed when I have to write our project supporters emails explaining why their projects are months, possibly even years, delayed.

What I have learned in the hard way, which I have come to the conclusion is the only way to learn!, is that just because a project is funded in Africa does not mean that it will be implemented. In other words, carrying out a project from its embryotic stages, through its fetal stage, and finally: its birth, requires more than just funding. I will try to explain through this example: drilling a water well in Zambia.

I have, in our SSAAP office in Simwatachela Chiefdom, no less than 108 applications from local communities for water wells. How to go through them all? How to decide which communities need water wells, when 90% of them are eligible and possibly 10% of them already have a water well but don't want to spend the \$30 USD to have it repaired or maintained. So, one way I can quickly determine which communities need help and the level of commitment to change their livelihood is the presence of people at my Office Hours. The most persistent people are the ones who care the most, usually. The people I end up helping are the ones at my door at 6 a.m. who I have to tell to leave, as the Office opens at 10 a.m. ;)

When I locate the communities that SSAAP has targeted to help, I still have to travel there to see if they legitimately need a water well, or if their community is part of the 10% who want a new well just because they are too lazy to fix their already-existent well. I typically travel there with our driller, who has a Japanese machine for detecting fractions in rocks (which reveals, most cases, the presence of water). Sometimes, the communities are the perfect beneficiary communities for SSAAP. Sometimes, if they fall into that 10% category, they are not. Another category are people who want a private water well but pretend that it is for the entire community; I can detect this when I go to the site and the person is telling our driller to survey the land just outside his front door. ;)

Once the communities to receive the boreholes are confirmed, the hard work is still yet to come: *Community Contribution*. SSAAP has required 25% Community Contribution in the past; this time around, we are going to see if 50% can be accomplished. Community Contribution can be in the form of cash (though typically, it is not as most people in the village are cash-poor), or in-kind: usually through building a structure, repairing our roof, or putting up a wall around our compound. The communities come to participate in their contribution; they sometimes arrive complaining and I tell them that it is just as difficult for me to get them a water well as it is for them to repair the SSAAP Guest House roof, so we should just work together for the greater good. Others arrive with a cheerful attitude, knowing that in fetching water for our compound and collecting crushed stones, gravel, and river sand, something larger awaits them in their horizon: *a water well (borehole)*. Indeed, water is gold in rural Africa.

When the community has contributed their portion of the water well, it is time to drill the water well! This could be 2-4 years after the donor donates the funds for the water well. All these moving pieces must come together, and then I make a contract with Likumbi, our water well driller. By the time the contract is signed, he is paid, and he organizes the drill rig, we are ready to drill!

I wanted to explain in a straightforward manner the challenges and delays and the reason why our projects run on “African Time”: they serve the Africans, and run on their time, not mine (!), though most times than not I do blame Africa for the white hair that is now appearing at the top of my crown. ☺



Painting by Shadreck Simatete

History is my favorite topic in Radiance’s homeschool, called *Love, Light, and Literacy Academy*, and I believe it is also her favorite subject. What I have learned through studying history alongside Radi: our studies of history should be progressive; we should study history with intent for the future. Otherwise, we remain stuck in the lower energies of the past; if we continue to hold on to what humankind or the planet did in the past, things will stay the same. Change always wants to happen. It is important to let go, release, and open ourselves to the unknown of change: it might be the magic we have been waiting for, and if we don’t allow ourselves to open, we might never find out!

For me, from a historical standpoint, the Africans were never poor. They lived completely with Nature; how can you live with Nature and be poor? The two things cannot exist simultaneously: *Nature and poverty*.

From my humble viewpoint, what made Africa “poor” were the Europeans, who were by Nature explorers and inventors, and who colonized the entire world: Asia, Africa, Central and South America. They introduced systems of currency and the bi-polarity of “rich” and “poor” to people who were unfamiliar even with the dichotomy itself.

Therefore, out of compassion, will, and steadfast determination, in an effort to right the historical wrongdoings of the past, I will always work for the simple offering of water. Water is functional as well as it is profound. As a human collective, it is unconscionable that human beings in remote villages would be sharing filthy grey water with cattle and goats. It doesn't make sense. My work in this world is an effort towards human beings healing (both the Europeans, of which I have descended, and the Africans) through crystalline clean water. I don't want to work if I cannot do this work. I can't do anything else. As Likumbi, our water well driller and my highly esteemed friend always says to me: “Drilling is not just my work; it is part of me.” He has reminded me that I feel the same way about water wells in remote villages, feeding the hungry (my daughter and I included), and helping vulnerable people in some of the most disadvantaged societies in the world. I don't

know what I would do in this world were it not for this work; it gives me a profound sense of gratitude to have the privilege to do this project and to do it with all of my heart.



SSAAP-Simwatachela Site: Site ya Simwatachela ku SSAAP



It is my idea as well that the original SSAAP-Simwatachela site can be, as well, in the future a museum heritage site that people can visit, even decades from now. Equipped with many guest houses, toilets, and bathing facilities (please see photos above), it is a wonderful place to bring visitors. I am proud of the site and look forward to having better roofs in the future on some of the structures!





Paintings by Shadreck Simatete, our SSAAP Painter in Zambia. We commission Shadreck to paint for SSAAP, and then bring many of his paintings back to the United States. If you are interested in a work of art by Shadreck, please let me know. He is as beautiful as his paintings, and an orb of light seems to surround him at all times. He is one of the most truly abundant and joyful people I have ever known.



SSAAP's New Site in Cooma Chiefdom: N'ganda ya SSAAP Mupiiya mu Mwamii Cooma

This site was created in 2021 and, although we are still working on it, it is now a new SSAAP site!



With the new SSAAP site in Cooma Chiefdom, Southern Province, Zambia, it was Love at first sight for both Radiance and I!



Built to last 200+ years (!), our house is made of river stone, quartz, and amethyst, of which Radiance and I collected in the bush or on the sides of the road: all local stones, native to Southern Province, Zambia.

Please note the wall fence in the background of the above photo; SSAAP hired a contractor to construct a 2.9 metre wall fence to cover 1 square hectare of our SSAAP land.



My dream for the new SSAAP-Zambia site is to make the site an agriculture and forestry site. We have a loyal supporter of SSAAP who contributes to a program known as the Tree Seedling Program, and together our mutual partnership venture is to grow more trees that will contribute to rainfall production in the area. SSAAP wants to engage local people, one day per week or one day every other week, to bring ten tree seedlings from local trees and plant them in exchange for lunch that day. SSAAP also wants to promote environmental education and training on the hazards of

cutting down trees to make firewood and charcoal without sustainably planting two or three trees in its place.



Taking care of living things makes me overjoyed: raising my daughter and watching her bloom like a well-kept sunflower, watering seedling plants (such as this Plumaria tree seedling above) and watching them grow into trees, or taking care of kittens and watching them grow into old cats feeds my Soul and makes me so happy. My daughter, Radiance, and I went to every tree stub we could find and planted a tree seedling inside of it, hoping for re-growth: even of a different tree!



It is my dream to incorporate Radiance's Animal Rights Initiative with SSAAP's Human Rights Initiative and generate, at a higher octave, a Sacred Earth Initiative. With the Tree Seedling Project, we are helping the Earth to grow more trees which in turn helps human beings with oxygen and to bring rain, thus more water; growing more trees also helps animals for shelter, food, and homes whereby they can reproduce: nesting opportunities abound. Trees also engage animals in hunting and for capturing prey. The fruits of trees lend themselves for both animal and human consumption. Projects that serve the Earth will serve everything that rests upon Her: animals, human beings, and all other organisms. I want to think higher and raise consciousness within myself as well as anyone else who is ready to be connected to the planet in both an organic as well a practical way. Regarding our human relationship to Mother Earth, I would say it is an abusive relationship that needs to be healed. I want to work on healing my relationship to the planet, and anyone else who wants to work hand-in-hand with me: I welcome your ideas, your hearts, your Love.



This is our first house in Africa that will ever have a tap system (using the Water Reticulation System: a 5000-Litre tank resting on a 6-meter tank stand, and a submersive pump which uses two huge solar panels to pump water out of the ground and into the tank) as well, has a septic tank and a Western toilet. My daughter insisted an African pit latrine (local-style) be dug, as she more easily uses a local pit latrine than a Western toilet (which she says constipates her). It has been interesting for me to raise a daughter in a completely different context than I was raised. She prefers a bucket bath to a shower, and a pit latrine to a flush toilet. See the white pipe above: this is part of our septic system.

Future building projects to this site will include a kitchen shelter with screens to overlook the river, a screened-in veranda suitable even for sleeping, an office/storage unit/toilet combined into one building, and a signpost on the main road pointing project participants in the direction of the SSAAP Office.

Our house roof, featured below, was thatched professionally; every blade of grass was cleaned to ensure only thick grass covered the roof of our house, which will last 20-30 years. The local thatch, in comparison, which covers our makeshift kitchen, will last 6 months to 1 year at the most. I am going to have, one by one, all of our SSAAP structures, in both Simwatachela and in Cooma Chiefdoms, thatched professionally. I am so tired of going to Sierra Leone or U.S.A. and coming back to Zambia to find that the roof on the guest house or on our toilet or on our house has blown off, and the rain has destroyed a section of our wall, and our house is unlivable. And yet, I cannot bear to live in the village without a local roof; here is why: *a properly thatched roof regulates temperature.*



A thatched roof is also a work of art, I believe.



But practically-speaking, in extreme heat, the inside of a house with a thatched roof will remain quite cold and extremely comfortable. In contrast, when it is cold outside (our cold season here gets very cold!), the house is warm inside.

I am still in a state of shock that such a beautiful home, made of hand-collected, local stones, and so sturdily-built, could be our own. There are no neighbors for many kilometers away (possibly 2-4 km) and after 20 years of living in Africa, I am exactly where I have always wanted to be but have never been able to be: on my own. The United States Peace Corps, countless African families, and many local friends trained me on how to live alone and take care of myself in the middle of the African bush. This is a privilege and an honor that, for two decades, I have worked tirelessly to achieve.

The house overlooks a deep river, which has water in it year-round, and local (raw) palm trees are even growing from its banks! During the rainy season (November-April of each year), we expect to be able to hear the sound of natural running water. As I said, this site is a dream come true for both Radiance and I. Surrounded by river water and trees as our neighbors, I couldn't be happier. ☺



Living deeply within and submerged with Nature has tremendous psychologically-healing affects, and it is my belief that the human condition suffers most when we deprive ourselves of our relationship to Mother Earth, and lose connection to Her.





C3: Connectivity, Collectivity and Consciousness

I didn't translate this next topic into *ciTonga* as these words do not exist in our Bantu-based language!

C3 is a group that emerged through the need to discuss water: a group to bring presenters from all around the world together to collaborate, share ideas, respectfully learn and grow from, all united under the common theme of: *The Weight of Water*, which I came up with during an email exchange with our SSAAP- U.S.A. Technology Guru in Pueblo, Colorado. I was explaining to him how heavy water is when you have to carry it: either in your hands with your arms, or on your head (which actually feels good and makes bad headaches, even migraines, go away!). Anyhow, the theme was so powerful: "the weight of water" and the logistical, practical, holistic, scientific, and metaphysical principles that are all at-play when discussing this imperative subject are also worthy of discussing. I presented in June 2023 about the water situation in remote villages of Zambia and Sierra Leone and how water is gold in Africa; people will lie, cheat, and steal to get it and the corruption surrounding it is largely what has prevented me from having higher SSAAP statistics for the amount of water wells we have provided in both of our nations. Funding is not our greatest obstacle; finding reliable contractors and people who are willing to work honorably with SSAAP is.

After my presentation on June 23, 2023, my mother and I had a four hour Zoom conversation (not uncommon for us) and she had many things to say about how her move from Colorado back to Ohio in 2022 was due, largely in part, to Colorado drying up in terms of both the Colorado River and Lake Powell becoming less abundant, and her desire to live somewhere with an abundance of water: the Great Lakes states, Ohio being one of them.

After this discussion with Gail, we created C3: *Compassion, Connectivity, and Consciousness*. It is our activism movement in bringing people together internationally who can teach one another and that we can all benefit from. Please let us know if you wish to be part of the group. The more, the merrier!

I (Heather Cumming) presented in June 2023 and again in September 2023 (our recording was defective so I had to do it twice; we have a presenter who we are eagerly waiting to speak in December 2023 about elephants and their existence/extinction on the planet and how human life cannot survive without them (she is also featured on *Ted Talks* so let us know if you are interested and I will put you in touch with her). In 2024, we are hoping to have a guest speaker teach us about permaculture, a scientist presenting about how eating animals is using too more water than some large cities do in the U.S.A. in order to grow alfalfa (which is what the cattle feed on in the United States), a couple in Europe presenting about the implications of water on planet Earth (the only planet in our solar system that has water) with an intergalactic perspective in reference to the star constellation Pleiades, and one of our SSAAP supporters who is the best handyman I know who is yet to reveal to me what he will present about – I can't wait! Here is the link to the presentation I gave on Friday, September 29, 2023:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UY55PqceaMY>



Projects for SSAAP-Zambia, 2023-2024: Coolwe ya SSAAP a ma Projecti, 2023-2024

Our projects for SSAAP-Zambia, beginning from August 2023 and extending into 2024/2025, are as follows:

- *School Sponsorships: Adult Literacy for Women Ages 35 + (G-MAP Program): 81 women assisted to go to school*
- *6-7 machine-drilled water wells (60-90 meters deep)*
- *4 water reticulation systems (simple irrigation systems)*
- *Forestry Program*
- *Tree-Planting Program: 15 months of feeding people once a week for each person to bring 10 local tree seedlings and plant them on SSAAP's land in Cooma Chiefdom*
- *Microloan Project: used to assist over 380 individuals/groups/associations*
- *Cattle Project: 10 female cows, 1 male cow ("bull") to assist 10 groups of 4 people each*
- *Village Feeding Program for Hungry Children*
- *Agriculture and Water Projects and/or Materials*
- *Radiant Street Beasts Program (Animal Rights Program headed by Radiance Cumming): Animal Rights Initiative to collect and nurture stray cats from the streets, abused animals, etc., as well to provide food, vaccinations, vitamins, medications (when needed), syringes, housing, and general care*

What a gift! This list of support is nothing short of exciting, impressive, outstanding, and unbelievable! Thank you all for providing the monetary resources to support such meaningful projects to local people here.



Seeing this kind of display in the urban towns and cities of Africa is always a gentle, subtle, yet powerful reminder of that I don't want SSAAP to ever become. Fancy vehicles, housing, gadgets, office structures, and salaries for educated persons who don't have a heart for service of their fellow man living under less fortunate circumstances than her/himself is not the way that SSAAP's resources are to be utilized. Most of these projects, when traversing the rural areas, you will see not even a hint of their presence. Their funding is astronomical as most times, with these large-scale NGO's (Non-Government Organizations), they are funded either directly through governments of Western nations or through grants from Western nations. In

all of my years in Africa, SSAAP and U.S. Peace Corps combined (clocking 20 years in Zambia in January 2024!), I still could not tell you what World Vision does: its projects, its mission, its results. But I have seen a great many of these flashy vehicles being driven around town by people so prideful that they can barely muster up the humility to greet those they deem below them: villagers, service workers, uneducated persons who are in fact largely the people running the nation on the ground. I am very thankful every time I am reminded of these kinds of projects and their inefficiency, and make a vow to myself that SSAAP should never be in a position where I don't find myself hitchhiking along the side of the road. ☺ And while 2023 has been an incredible reminder for me of the inherent balance of running a large-scale grassroots development project such as SSAAP: my family and I must have a home and basic amenities in order to survive and be functioning at a level above survival in order to have the energetic capacity, passion, and joy required to run such an operation, we also need to use as much of our resources as possible (without Radiance and I being homeless!) on the projects themselves, as that is ultimately what our resources (specifically our monetary resources) have been intended for. Rather than giving individuals salaries or fancy vehicles, the same funds plunked into the ground to drill a water well may potentially have long-lasting, sustainable, and far-reaching results that these funds could not have if, rather, used to buy an expensive vehicle and pay one man a salary in town.



Aunt Connie's Volunteerism Visit to Zambia-2023: Ba Connie Auntie Sikuulyaba Baswaya mu Zambia-2023

I am thrilled to announce that two consecutive years in a row, we have had a visitor come to assist SSAAP! From November 4-18, 2022, Mike Edwards was our volunteer for SSAAP-Sierra Leone; from November 15-25, 2023, Aunt Connie Shaw will be our volunteer for SSAAP-Zambia.

Aunt Connie, like Mike Edwards, has gone above and beyond for the project. She has extended her mailing address in Boulder, Colorado to be used as SSAAP's official mailing address with both the IRS and the Colorado Secretary of State as well as to receive paper [check] donations by mail. She has shown a great deal of interest in not only the SSAAP Forestry Project, but also the SSAAP Tree Seedling Project. An Environmentalist and Planet Earth Green activist, Aunt Connie (who is technically my mother's cousin and my second-cousin, but as her mother and my mother's mother were identical twins, she reminds me more of a sister to my mother than a cousin, thus I have always called her my aunt) is a great asset to SSAAP-Africa as well as an incredible friend and trusted ally to me. Before her visit here, I made her various itineraries for her stay (so she could choose our activities), prefaced by the following:

Motto #1: *Let's squeeze every ounce of passion into this journey that we have; let's waste no time!*

Motto #2: *Time in Africa does not exist as time in U.S.A. does. Take your watch off and leave it in your home in U.S.A.; there are clocks all over the airports all over the world. You don't need your watch here and trying to keep time will cause you to lose it and your sanity in the process.*

Aunt Connie's visit to Zambia was inspired by our robbery in Sierra Leone in 2023. So many people came to our aid to donate things like a replacement camera, replacement laptop, jewelry-making materials for Radiance's *Radiant Street Beasts Program*, replacement phone, etc., and since our next visitors are not expected until May 2024 (after we get back from our trip to India/Nepal), and we knew we would want our camera for our trip to Asia, Aunt Connie volunteered to hand-deliver it (along with two suitcases of other items!). Aunt Connie to the rescue! Thank you and we Love you!



Sabbatical to Asia: Kuswaya a Kupumulo ku Asia

We are eager to spend time, from mid-January 2024 to the first few days of May 2024 in India, with a month's stay in Nepal, to take Radiance to visit my old village where I used to live in Lower Mustang, Nepal (near the holy pilgrimage site for both Buddhists and Hindus called Muktinath): Jhong (Dzong) Village. During our stay, we will be volunteering at some ashrams in India, as well as a center for Gandhian principles and Gandhian values, and our old university where we attended our Nonviolence course from October 2017-January 2018. We have been invited to participate in a seminar at the same university: Gandhi's University which he established for alternative and non-formal education. Please see my invitation letter below; as well, I will inform you of updates with SSAAP as well as our journey in India in the Spring 2024 newsletter (due out March 2024). Thank you!

*

Prof. Nimisha Shukla
Head
Department of Rural Economics,
Gujarat Vidyapith, Ahmedabad-09

30 September 2023

Dear Heather Corinne Cumming,
Greetings from the Gujarat Vidyapith, a deemed to be University founded by Mahatma Gandhi in 1920.

It is with great pleasure that Department of Rural Economics, Gujarat Vidyapith with collaboration of Gandhi Research Foundation (GRF), Jalgaon, Maharashtra is going to organise an International Seminar. I extend this formal invitation to you to participate as a Delegates/Chief Guest/Expert/Speaker at the upcoming seminar titled as **An Alternative Paradigm for Contemporary Rural Livelihood Issues**. The event is scheduled to take place from **11th January to 13th January 2024** at Department of Rural Economics, Gujarat Vidyapith, located in Ahmedabad-380009, Gujarat (India).

The event is going to be a productive academic gathering of experts, scholars, and professionals from around the world, dedicated to the exchange of knowledge, ideas, and experiences in the field of experiments/experiences regarding **alternatives to resolve contemporary issues in rural livelihood**.

We believe that your expertise and insight would greatly enrich the seminar and contribute to its success.

As a speaker/expert/presenter, you would have the opportunity to address a diverse and engaged audience, share your expertise, and get engaged in meaningful discussions with fellow participants. Your contribution to the seminar would be a valuable addition, and we are confident that your involvement will enhance the overall quality of the event. In addition to your presentation, we would be delighted to facilitate your accommodation arrangements during your stay in Gujarat Vidyapith. Our team will work closely with you to ensure your needs and preferences are met, making your experience as seamless and comfortable as possible.

To confirm your participation and discuss further details, including the topic and format of your presentation, as well as any logistical considerations, please contact us at your earliest convenience. You can reach our organizing committee. We sincerely hope that you will accept our invitation to be a part of them seminar. Thank you for considering our invitation, and we look forward to your positive response.

We eagerly await your confirmation and the opportunity to welcome you to Gujarat Vidyapith, for the event.

Sincerely,

Prof. Nimisha Shukla



Radiant Street Beast Program: Banyama a Mugwagwa Tajisi pe N'ganda



Radiance (called “Amara” in Sierra Leone, “Mumunii” in Zambia, and “Radi” in U.S.A.) has been hard at work! Her Radiant Street Beast Program art is no longer limited to beaded wire jewelry; she now hand-stitches, using African *lapa / chitenge* fabric to make bookmarks, holiday ornaments, earrings, and a beautiful collection of assorted goodies.





If you are looking for a unique, heart-made and hand-woven gift for a Loved one for the holiday season which supports the health, well-being, and welfare of street animals, as well boycotts the Zambian tradition of beating street cats to death (believing that they are “witchcraft”, called “*bulozi*” in our native vernacular language called *ciTonga*), then please visit SSAAP’s website, specifically the Radiant Street Beast Program section of our website:

www.ssaap.org/radiant-street-beasts

Or please email Radiance personally:

radiancemara@gmail.com



Thank you for supporting Radiance’s Animal Rights Initiative!





The Theme for 2023: The Extreme Discomfort of Accelerated Awakening

When things do not go as expected, that is when we *really* grow. It can be crushing on every level. But when life is comfortable and milquetoast, our limits are not challenged. While we need some stability and some comfort for growth, too much of it handicaps us.

I am in favor of what I term: “*Light-year Growth*”, meaning that if my consciousness can expand in light-years while my physical body is expanding in Earth years, I have made use of this human incarnation and the purpose of my existence on the planet: not in haste nor in waste. I would never want to add to the wasting of resources on the planet by not giving back all of me to this sacred orb.



I Love Africa so poetically, so profoundly, so perfectly that I chose Her above everything else. On a daily basis I forget this. Submerged in water, I remember. As a testament to how much I trust, believe in, support, and honor Her, I brought my child – who I Love more than life itself – here when she was seven months old (she was born in Louisville, Colorado). Much to the shock of those who warned me not to do this, who thought I was ruining my daughter’s life in doing so (her Sierra

Leonean father being one of these people), she has grown up healthy. She has grown up mighty. She has grown up without a filter and without the bias that those of us who are part of one country have, myself included.



I never really considered it before, that I had given up anything or everything to be here. It doesn't feel like a sacrifice, or I would have called it one. A sacrifice is selfless; an act of Love can never be. We are the Love that is part of its act. I am not in Africa selflessly; I am in Africa because I want to be, and because I believe in the continent Herself, and in the people of Africa.



Here is one reason I respect Africa, and Africans, so deeply. It is so difficult, when plans change, it is hard to accept them. Africa has helped me so much to deal with what is, and to trust the Divine in whatever happens, it being the most benevolent outcome, even if I cannot see why something happened; maybe it isn't the right time (Divine Time) for me to see it, or to understand it, or maybe I never will. The Universe Loves me and has a better plan for me than even I know, and so I have to trust that. Africans are highly competent in dealing with crisis, panic, pain, etc. They have helped me calm down in so many scenarios. Africans make everywhere feel like home... even a filthy bus stop in the middle of the night. I always say: "On The Continent, and there is a different energy here. Everything flows. Everything is Nature; Nature is the only law here. There is a tangible rawness here unlike anywhere else I believe exists on planet Earth."



Radiance at the airport in Ghana in November 2022. I showed her this photo and she said: "Wow, Mom; I really gained weight when we were in the States!" I said: "Good! We both did! It makes up for the starvation we have while we are in Africa!" This woman, bubbling with African pride, was so unique that when we saw her while waiting to enter our boarding gate, we asked her for a photo. She said: "You have the most beautiful girl I have ever seen; she is an African goddess," to which I replied; "I was just going to tell you the same! Thank you for not selling your African Soul out to the West. African pride is the only direction that we need to be heading right now. I'm in if you're in! I'm proud to be an African, and grateful to live in Africa, too."



Our Tech-Guru in Pueblo, Colorado, one of my closest friends, bought this photo of Radiance and I from one of our SSAAP fundraisers in May 2018. It is my favorite photo of her and I, sitting on the banks of the Zambezi River, overlooking Victoria Falls; she is four years old and putting on her own shoes, half-naked from a day of bathing in the sun on the rocks after taking a dip in the chilly waters of the Zambezi; I am taking a shot of whiskey that I took from an airplane for my mother and I; my mother took this photo. I am wearing the best dress I ever had that was stolen in a suitcase that never arrived in Freetown in 2014. To a woman, a good dress is hard to come by ~ it must both decorate and provide comfort like a second skin. ☺



The robbery in Sierra Leone, had incredible impacts on me. This is the gift of life-changing, challenging experiences in our lives.

I feel **profoundly** energized, healed, and restored through the loss of these items (our SSAAP office which was robbed: laptop, phone, headlamp battery & accessories, camera). This is not to say I do not need the items: I need them, and I need them replaced in order to continue with SSAAP, as it was our office, but healing through the loss as well the invasion and raping of our comfort zone has profoundly impacted me.

I feel closer to Radiance than ever before. I feel disconnected from mundane, predictable human behavior that results from fear (jealousy, egoism, ownership of other human beings, control and power issues), and more connected to true Source energy. Which then in turn means I can Love beings (animals, plants, humans, Nature) at an even deeper/higher/more profound level, but it does **not** mean that they can Love me at an even deeper/higher/more profound level - this is what I am struggling with now. ☺ And this is the infinite challenge: can we Love others, even if they do not Love us in return? I struggle with this in the field in Africa, and with my personal relationships in North America.

I intuit we were meant to be put on this Earth to Love each other vastly and deeply, and to be with the Divine in whatever ways/shapes/forms Source energy has for us. I know that if we choose to work for the Divine, there is no salary, as our borehole driller Likumbi puts it. I know that in standing up for Truth, there is often controversy. If I can stand the path of controversy, met with rejection, then I am glad to walk this path [if I am strong enough], for it is the path of the Divine. It requires me to be stronger and stronger, every day.

I have learned that in order to heal, one must traverse pain first; I have learned that in order to get to Nonviolence, one must first pass through violence. When we walk through the darkness in our lives, this becomes the Light - later. We have to be patient! This is what I have learned.

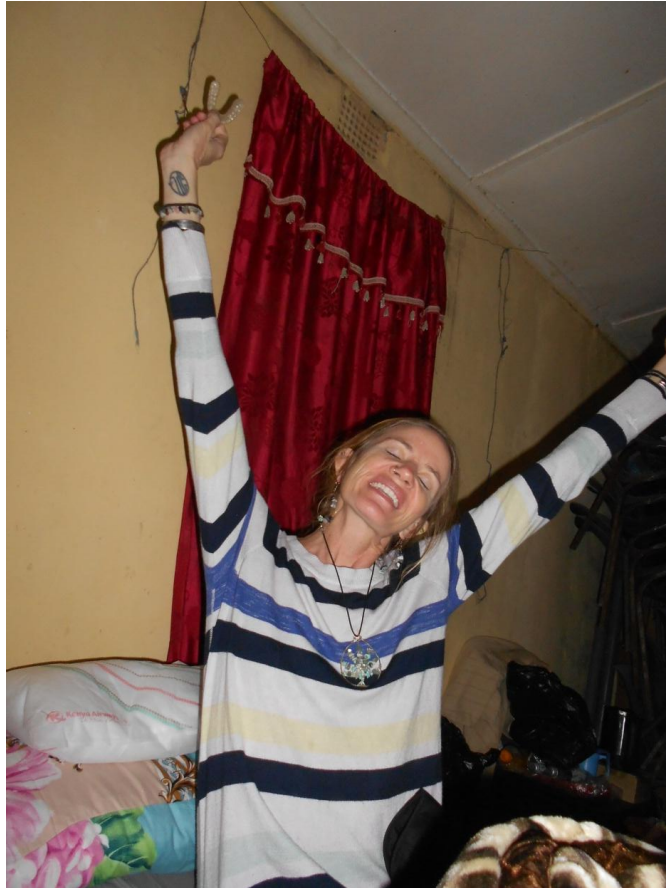
I have also learned that life is 50%-50%. All partnerships, whether project partnerships, SSAAP with its local beneficiaries partnerships, parent/child partnerships, friendships, romantic

relationships, marriages, and our relationship with energy itself: 50%-50%. We cannot expect the Divine to make magic and miracles for us if we are not willing to go out on a limb! We also cannot expect to make the magic and miracles for ourselves without the Divine! It is a partnership! My work, and the way we were not appreciated/mistreated/abused in Sierra Leone, through not only the robbery but also our house never being built, has taught me that a project, a sustainable healthy partnership, is not possible if I give everything and the local people take everything. No way! The more I give, the more we *all* lose. The more they give back, the more we *all* win. That's how that works. Sometimes, if we give everything, we think we are helping: we are not. We are helping when we refuse to continue cycles of abuse, of ancestral violence, of anger, and of hatred. Poverty is a result of these things. I am refusing to continue these karmic cycles; I want to break the karmic wheel. Out of unconditional Love for the people of Africa, this is the direction the Universe has taken us with this project: 50% SSAAP - 50% community participation/community contribution/community giving. If this isn't there, then there is no project. As you know, SSAAP used to operate as giving 75%, Community Contribution 25%, until I realized there is no reason why they cannot give half. The project is for them. The project beneficiaries should be giving/participating minimally half - anything else is a weakness or a flaw on their part.

It is hard... balancing Love with our feelings and opinions. While we don't want to judge others and strive to Love all, we should have a filter on ideas that we believe are far-fetched or don't settle right for our own liking, without making it personal to the person with the ideas (if we are able to do that). I have learned that in honoring other people's beliefs, even if we don't take them as our own, or want to accept them, we learn from them and inevitably: we grow. In honoring people's belief systems even more deeply and recognizing that whatever I think is just my individual self, I see too that it is good for me to have my own personal lens and filter, but that what I believe shouldn't hurt another. A wise woman (my incredible Aunt!) told me once that a disagreement should never be more important than a relationship; she was right. A relationship should always outweigh the disagreement it has been subjected to. Disagreement between human beings is not only natural, but it is healthy; conflict is healthy. It's how we deal with the conflict that makes us warriors of Love and Light, is what I believe.



Human heart is made for forgiveness. Without it, we can even doubt the presence of its existence within us; the human heartbeat keeps us alive in our bodies, but without listening to its subtle rhythm we are asleep in our consciousness. We are human: perfect in our imperfection, tragically-flawed, and poetically-bound because of our innate capacity to keep growing within the heartspace. Our bodies change with age involuntarily but listening to the heart must be a voluntary, conscious experience. Forgiveness reminds us that we are alive and that we always have room to grow; in my experience, forgiveness is the highest form of Love. It requires that we abandon our ego in order to attain it.



Radi took this photo of me our first night back in Zambia (in Lusaka), holding my dental night guard (!), just before bed. I Love Zambia, the way that Radiance Loves Sierra Leone. Zambia is my African home; Sierra Leone is hers. She and I compromise and find the things we like the most that keep us going while we are there. I Love the water in Sierra Leone: there are rivers and streams and ocean everywhere you look in Sierra Leone. I Love the street food in Sierra Leone, creativity and variety: banana cakes, plantain chips, groundnut cake, cayan cake, bean chakara, yams with palm oil. Radiance Loves the cold season in Zambia (I detest it), how quickly clothes and sheets dry on the line after you wash them in the arid climate of Zambia, all our cats in the village, and how easy it is to buy Indian spices and food here that we cook in the village. The constant fighting and violence of Sierra Leoneans is what unsettles me about Sierra Leone, the same way that the passive demeanor and even sometimes passive-aggressiveness of Zambians frustrates Radiance such that she never really to feel at home in Zambia. Radi always says that she is fire (Sagittarius) the way that I am water (Libra/Scorpio cusp) and as a result: she is attracted to spicy food, and heat, and people arguing and fighting and then making up (passion) the way that I am attracted to water in all its forms: oceans, rivers, streams, swimming pools. All of life is a give and a take, a flow: the tide of the ocean doesn't come in unless it recedes, and this patterned process is as ancient as the memory of the planet Herself.

This is the season to embrace, celebrate, and rebirth all the gifts of this human experience: material abundance becomes spiritual abundance when consciousness is infused with our daily, waking lives. The deeper the path, the more beautiful; the more terrifying the path becomes as we realize we walk it alone, no matter how vast our support system. As we become more comfortable with this level of discomfort, we awaken to the knowing that the material realm is the spirit realm and that all spirit has gifted to this realm through gravity and form (density and matter). A piece of cheesecake with whipped strawberry topping has tremendous spiritual implications just as the construction of a school toilet has in West Africa; a bird or the tree branch it resides upon begins to take the shape of a friend who speaks a different language; the bird's home – the tree itself– evokes miraculous vibrations of the heart. Once we connect to the intimate language of Nature, which we all have imbedded upon our tongues, we connect to all things and most deeply to ourselves.



SSAAP is a Love-based project with a human initiative. Thank you for your support in raising awareness of Africans for the West and of the West for Africans. It is my hope that through this transformational cycle of healing, growing, and flowing, we can nurture the quintessential elements of our collective humanity which makes being alive the best gift on the planet.



May the haunting beauty of this season be yours to cherish throughout the rest of the year. Thank you for everything you have done to make this project a lifelong experiment in Truth, and for flowing with the ups and downs with me as eloquently as water flows through the timeless veins in the Earth; water is the sacred blood of Mother Earth. We have nothing in this world without water; it is our source of life and connection to our roots. It heals us internally and externally.



Be Love,

Heather

