

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter XXII

Winter Edition 2019



To Aaron. Thank you for supporting this project from its rugged inception ~ almost before it was even a project and just an idea. You have asked me many questions about the project and it is my hope that after browsing this newsletter you will have a more complete understanding of our intentions for SSAAP. Thank you for the transformational fire you unintentionally burned into me; done right, the burn is an awakening. I Love you and I thank you for healing me.



“All the troubles which dog humanity today throughout the world have arisen because science, physical science, has progressed untouched by human values. Unless there is a reorientation in our scientific study, giving equal emphasis on spiritual growth and its by-products of human values, there is little hope for humanity to survive as a species on this planet.”

~ Swami Ranganathananda, 1992; Kerala State, India





Above: Painted wall: Livingstone Town, Zambia [Livingstone is approximately 3 hours from Kalomo, Zambia, along the Great North Road. From Kalomo, Simwatachela Chiefdom is approximately 80 km, or 4-5 hours driving as the road is quite abysmal.]

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While in Africa, I will attempt to send out one SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter per season. Each season (Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall) should have a newsletter. This Edition XXII, Winter 2019, is one of four newsletters I plan to email out this year. Fingers-crossed I will have enough electricity and communication opportunities to fulfill my mission of four newsletters per year. If I fail, it is because I haven't had ample access to technology to download photos and to type up a newsletter. But I will try my best!

Also, I write the SSAAP newsletters with the intention that everyone has different interests within the framework of the project. Some people would prefer to read; some to look at photography. Others have specific projects they are interested in, or a specific country SSAAP works in, that intrigues them, as well as our philosophy: the current that connects and flows through the pulse of SSAAP. Kindly read and review the sections of the newsletter that pertain to you or interest you. The newsletters are quite long; I don't want to overwhelm but rather wish to inform as many people of as many aspects of the project as possible, so as to give a broad scope.

If you wish to be taken off this newsletter list, please let Heather know. Thank you!

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heatherflower6@gmail.com: Heather's personal email address

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SSAAP Schedule and Program of Events

5 February – 15 April 2019: Ethiopia: Abyssinia (ancient name for the nation which is the Latinized form of the ancient Habash). SSAAP spent 2 months in Ethiopia in 2017 to do an assessment trip. We will be revisiting a few of the sites we visited in 2017, to reassess and – if successful – begin work with water wells/water projects, animal-rearing projects, bee-keeping / honey production and school sponsorships. Sites we will be visiting in 2019 include:

- February 2019: Gambella region with partners CBO (Community-Based Organization) Gambella Children and Community Development Organization; visiting Makuey Village, as well as the area on the river bank of Burebrey in Matar (near to South Sudan).
- March 2019: Burji District with partners Grow East Africa from Washington, D.C., U.S.A.: www.groweastfrica.org; visiting Soyama town (capital of Burji), also Bila village to experience quinoa farming, vegetable gardens and goat distribution project.
- April 2019: Gondar region: Shindi, Bure Woreda

16 April – October 2019: Zambia. We have a lot of work to do when we return, which includes:

- Hosting multiple individuals and groups at SSAAP's Headquarters and Heather/Radiance's home in Sibooli-B Village, Simwatachela Chiefdom; Southern Province:

- ~ Friend, loyal supporter and former Peace Corps Boss (fingers-crossed you can come and see the progress in Simwatachela since 2004 when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer)
- ~ Two homeschool parents/friends from Colorado
- ~ Engineer formerly working with EWB-MSU to monitor and evaluate EWB-MSU water wells
- ~ Representative and her friend from *True Thabo* partnership in September 2019 to observe the drilling of 3 water wells funded by True Thabo and organized by SSAAP in Simwatachela, Zambia
- ~ Potential medical clinic organized by a family coming to visit Summer 2019 in which we will work with a doctor and a nurse to address people's personal health issues in Simwatachela

Additionally, SSAAP will engage in the following activities during this 6-month period:

- Distributing new microloans for the *Zambian Loan Project*
- Collecting existing loans for the *Zambian Loan Project*
- Beginning Forestry Project on SSAAP's land in Simwatachela (we have 60 hectares of land provided by Chief Simwatachela to begin any kind of project to serve his people)
- Drilling 4 borehole wells: 3 wells in partnership with True Thabo, 1 well funded by SSAAP alone
- Sponsoring children to school
- Monitoring and Evaluating current animal-rearing projects: cattle, goats, chickens, guinea fowl
- Working in new Chiefdom of Zambia: Mululwe Village, Ithezhi-Tezhi District; Southern Province, Zambia

New partnerships in Zambia include:

- True Thabo of New York, New York, U.S.A.: <https://truethabo.org>; please also see their webpage specific to the True Thabo/SSAAP Partnership: <https://truethabo.org/current-programs/>
- Friendly Water of Olympia, Washington, U.S.A.: <https://friendlywater.net>



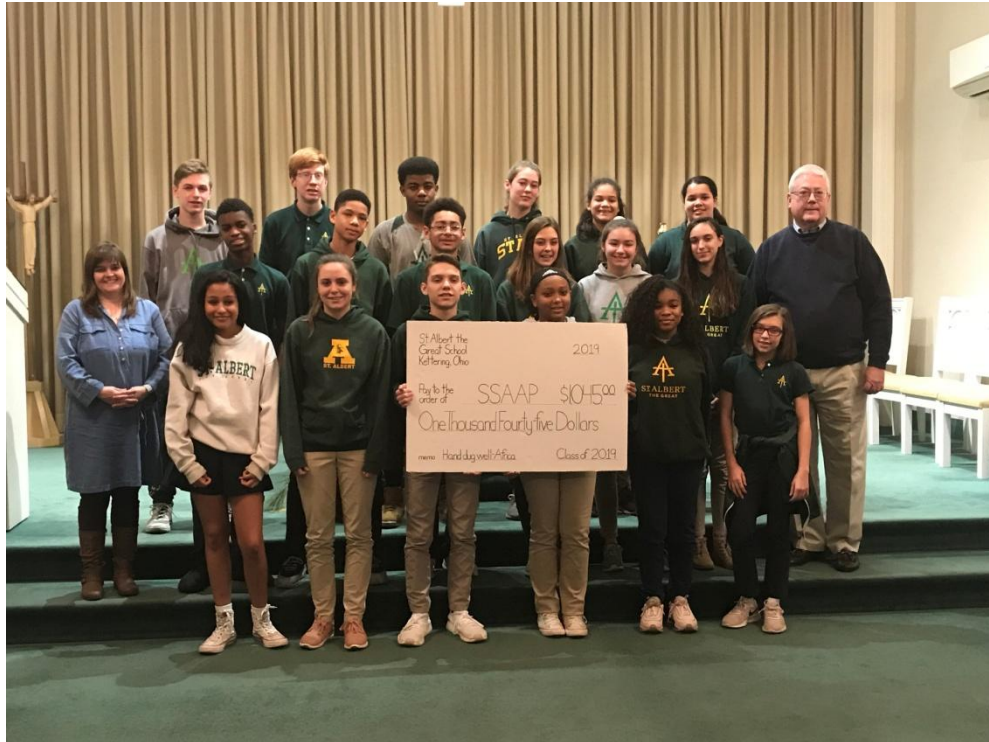
SSAAP's visit to Olympia, Washington in January 2019 to meet with Friendly Water for the World. Friendly Water for the World works primarily with biosand filters (left) as well with locally-made rocket stoves, water catchment systems, and brick-making. Their visit to Simwatachela in May 2019 was planned during our meetings in January 2019.

- Project Hartwork of Denver, Colorado, U.S.A.: <http://www.projecthartwork.org/>. SSAAP will work with Project Hartwork in our mutual initiative to provide commissions and employment to artisans in remote parts of Africa through buying their artworks and selling them at craft fairs and fundraisers in U.S.A.
- A new Board member for SSAAP, who will help with the engineering and irrigation aspect of the project in regards to agriculture

Continued partnerships include:

- We'Moon of Wolf Creek, Oregon, U.S.A. These womyn loyally work with SSAAP every year to generate income for local female artisans in all three countries SSAAP is working in: Ethiopia, Sierra Leone and Zambia. Creating art products empowers the women in their skills, as well promotes traditional arts and crafts – which connects the local people to their indigenous culture while simultaneously teaching those who buy the crafts more about Africa through art: <https://wemoon.ws>

November 2019 – April 2020: Sierra Leone: Serra da Leoa (In 1462, Portuguese explorer Pedro de Sintra arrived in Sierra Leone and named it 'Serra da Leoa': Portuguese for "Lioness Mountains." Also called *British West Africa*, Sierra Leone was colonized in 1787 by freed slaves arriving from England. (Courtesy of Britannica.com)



My father (right) receiving a gift from St. Albert the Great School in Kettering, Ohio for a hand-dug water well in Sierra Leone. We will be in Sierra Leone in November 2019 to begin digging the wells.

SSAAP will engage in the following projects over this period of time:

- Digging of 16+ wells, divided equally between the two provinces in which SSAAP works: Port Loko District (Western Province) and Moyamba District (Southern Province) and potentially a new district: Bombali District. SSAAP works with local contractors for the wells, which also employ people in the village and helps with the incredibly high unemployment rate in Sierra Leone
- Sponsorship of 30 teenage mothers to return to school
- Sponsorship of 100+ primary school children, divided between 8+ schools in Moyamba District and Port Loko District
- Establishment of 2-3 rural libraries in BKM Chiefdom, rural Port Loko, Sierra Leone, hosting literature and productions about Nonviolence. These books are donated to SSAAP through Gandhi's Printing Press in Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Press. There is a great deal of uncirculated literature regarding nonviolence in India – not only M.K. Gandhi's writings, but from other writers in India – that these libraries will attempt to circulate in rural Port Loko. SSAAP's primary counterpart, Taylor Sorie Kamara, currently residing in India, will bring the books back to Sierra Leone with him after finishing his diploma course in February 2019 about Nonviolence at Gujarat Vidyapith, West India
- Establishment, organization, monitoring and evaluating of 3+ cashew farms with SSAAP's partner, CBO (Community-Based Organization – local to Sierra Leone) called Grace Children's Foundation
- Monitor and Evaluate current animal-rearing projects: goats, sheep, chickens
- Introduce new animal-rearing projects: pigs, fishery

- Begin work in new province of Sierra Leone: Bombali District, Northern Province, Sierra Leone
- Attempt to work with government of Sierra Leone, through various channels, meetings with members of Parliament, as well through the help of CBO partners Grace Children's Foundation. In Africa, the local governments (i.e. traditional structure of chiefs, headmen, headwomen, etc.) have the power to get things done-with efficiency and strength! But SSAAP is ready to take our project to another level in Sierra Leone, and with the help of a few personal friends of mine, who are M.P.'s (Members of Parliament), I wish to discuss and advocate more on the needs of the people in the remote villages of Sierra Leone. As per the Gandhian model of Constructive Program, the activism work must not only be done at the grassroots level of the society, but also at the structural (governmental) level of the society where the structural violence is occurring. The oppression of the rural, remote people SSAAP works with which manifests as a lack of voice, lack of communication, and lack of rights is no longer a system that suits Sierra Leone. Being warriors of survival, internal strength and passion, as well as sheer intelligence as the people of Sierra Leone are, they are more than prepared for this *satyagraha*. The learning libraries, hopefully, over time will expand and grow in the remote areas so that people can read books and learn more about Nonviolence: a sustainable, loving solution to conflict, versus violence is never sustainable and always loveless.

April 2020 – October 2020: Zambia. SSAAP anticipates the following visitors at this time:

- Former EWB-MSU student and her friend to work with SSAAP's Forestry Project and potentially organize a Study Abroad Project with her friend
- New Board Member's visit to Simwatachela to assess the project and how he can aid our work with his knowledge and skill set
- Heather Cumming's ten year duration of 5 work permits renewed every 2 years will yield a 5-year residency permit for Heather and Radiance in Zambia. Residency is basically citizenship without the Zambian passport or the right to vote. In 2025, we will have citizenship in Zambia (fingers-crossed) and as the Dual Citizenship Law just passed in Zambia some years back, we will have the right to hold both a U.S. passport as well as Zambian passport. So we will finally be citizens of Africa – after all this time! We will also be allowed to vote – so watch out, Zambia 😊
- During this time, Radiance and I will also travel to India – very cheap to travel to and from Zambia – to study more about nonviolent activism and also for Radiance's home-school.

October 2020 – Onward: To be announced as time progresses. I plan to be in Africa, visiting India for educational/homeschool purposes off-and-on, until our passports and my driver's license all expire in 2023, at which time I will be coming back to U.S.A. to renew these legal documents.

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SSAAP's Social Media Presence

- Instagram page: @ssaap.africa
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/ssaap.africa>
 - Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ssaap>
- Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/58816632@N05/>
 - New U-Tube video for SSAAP:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WY_pmZhXO2o

Many, many thanks to those who continuously update both the Instagram as well as the Facebook page for SSAAP. We couldn't do it without you – thank you!



A fancy meal in Zambia, above. *N'shima*, our staple food, which is white and has the consistency of hardened mashed potatoes. It is made of maize and acts as a bread for dipping in the *cisyu*: orange tomato sauce (boiled tomatoes with water), leafy greens, and village chicken: a delicacy anywhere in Zambia, even in town.

This meal, if served in a local restaurant, would probably cost approximately 15 Kwacha, or \$1.40.



*“Education which does not mould character is absolutely worthless.”
~ M.K. Gandhi*

Radiance’s Education

I think I may have learned more from Radiance’s home-school than she has, which is that every moment of being alive holds within it the opportunity for learning, and that the world is a school. And that we are all eternal students. In fact, I think she may have taught me much more than I have her. Radiance’s greatest strength is her adaptability. People ask her where is her favorite place she has ever traveled. She replies with a blank look; she doesn’t think of travel; she thinks we are just living our life together; she has never known anything different. I breastfed her until she told me she was too old (almost age 4); she has the immune system of a crocodile and has probably been sick just a few fingers on both of my hands. One of my favorite things about her is that she is humble and unassuming. She prides herself in cooking, cleaning, sweeping, sewing, and doing daily tasks we call ‘work’ in American culture which in Africa the children think of as ‘play’. She will befriend anyone in the world who is kind and wants to be her friend: any age, any culture. And, like her mother, she seems to have a very low tolerance for people who are cruel to others, or those who do not mind hurting others.

My expectations for her are probably much too high, but I always aim for the stars and then let life shoot me down as it needs to. Speaking four languages as she does (English, *ciTonga*, *Mende*, *Krio*) –although she will tell you she does not! – I would love for her to work one day as a translator at a governmental post, or even the United Nations. She could be president of the U.S.A. and follow in one of my personal heroes, Barack Obama’s footsteps, as her childhood and root is quite paralleled to his. Perhaps she can even be president of an African country – Sierra Leone (her father is Sierra Leonean) or Zambia (she will have citizenship in 2025) if the laws change and a

naturalized citizen or a citizen with one parent who is a foreigner can become a president. Or – she can work at a grocery store in rural Iowa, U.S.A. I want her to be happy and to love life as I do – even if it means she chooses a different path than I have [she probably will] – I want her to know I love her not only without condition, but also more than I love anything of this life.

In fact, she *is* SSAAP. She is one of the Africans I strive to serve in this work.

Radiance is currently straddling grades 3-4. She is excelling in reading – which I couldn't have said even six months ago – but only now because she finally found something she enjoys reading. She is significantly behind where we would both like her to be in mathematics; she hates subtraction. She prefers art to all other things. In Ethiopia, we plan to visit Sashamene, Southern Ethiopia, to have her apprentice with a professional and famous Rastafarian artist known internationally who creates art from banana leaves and bark from the banana tree. In Zambia, I am going to put her in charge of working with the Forestry Project. The project involves clippings from trees, is incredibly low-cost, and will require she organize who is going to assist her and to learn whom she can work with successfully, and with whom she cannot. She can make food lists for me to purchase the food to feed the people working on the Forestry Project, and this will teach her to organize her resources, plan ahead, and determine how she will prepare the food for the workers every time they visit the SSAAP land. I don't believe she is too young to take on a program within the project framework of SSAAP. In fact, I believe this will be a significant part of her home-school.

Radiance would like to be a veterinarian; she will need to brush up on her mathematics skills for this. I realize I have mentioned this in many of the SSAAP Quarterly Newsletters. I hope to provide everything she needs to do this. I have already organized an apprenticeship for her in Dayton, Ohio when we return to U.S.A., when she is around the age of 12 or 13. She can work with small animals (dogs and cats, primarily) to determine if this is something she is truly interested in. As well, in Africa, because of the access to large hooved animals that we have through our animal-rearing projects in both Zambia and Sierra Leone, she can have hands-on experience with larger animals as she ages.

In Africa, we aim to educate people so that they can make informed decisions and educated votes. With unemployment rates exceeding sky-high in some African countries (such as our beloved Sierra Leone), the focus on education is not on employment so much as it is on changing the dynamic of the nation when educated citizens exist within it. I do not personally believe that education should be only for the elite, nor to perpetuate a cycle of monetary gain. While earning money is important (money is a resource not a power tool for discrimination against others), it should not be the sole purpose of education.

When it is insinuated that children who are home-schooled or have an alternative education lack social skills, I invite those who hold this opinion to regard the fact that most children home-schooled are very mature and learn to enjoy people who are not of their age group as well as those who are. They are also disciplined in a manner in which they can learn to work from home from a young age, which requires focus.

Radiance is now nine years old. The kid can run on three hours of sleep, jet-lag, and airplane food better than I can. Her schedule is irregular and she has learned to adapt in this context. She has tasted the feeling of being full within her stomach, also the feeling of hunger and how it hurts when the stomach is empty. She can sleep with noise and in extreme temperatures of heat; she has learned to rest in airports and airplanes since her babyhood. She is a better traveler than I am and now she is helping me to move around these airports with the long layovers. She can make a toy out of a piece of string and a stick. She has been cutting vegetables with a sharp knife since she was three. I hand her the veggies and the knife and she sits on a brick on the floor of our house and cuts the food using our cutting board (meal tray from South African Airways) which she puts on the floor. She can make our food in Africa over an open fire or a brazier; the brazier is much better for her lungs. She has been taught to sew, embroider, quilt and weave. In Zambia, she has her own garden and has learned how to cover it with a mosquito net so that goats and cows don't invade it. She grew a mango tree in our backyard. She can milk a cow (which is actually quite difficult to do), has watched multiple goats, cows, and cats give birth, and knows how to take care of our goats. If learning how to live without technology and knowledge of living simply off the land with daily practical survival skills isn't an education, then I do not know what is.

And if she recognizes that I love her more than life itself (I do), then being happy will just be all the more easier for her. All we need in this world is at least one person who thinks we are the greatest thing that ever walked upon it. As parents, this is always what comes most easily, I believe.☺ In fact, it is difficult to conceive that our child[ren] aren't the most incredible people on the planet. This should be one of the strongest bonds of Nature within the human species, in my opinion. I love being a mother to this child more than I love any other part of my life.



I am of the mindset that home-school holds within it many loopholes – probably part of why I chose it in the first place – and because of this, there is room for a lot of creativity and interpretation not only on Radi's part, but also on mine. I don't want Radiance to be part of a statistic, nor her education to be a standard set by the social norm of the society. Rather, I would desire the standard to be set by her. I wish for her to learn how she wishes to contribute to her society – whatever that society will be. Knowledge to me is quite useless if it cannot be applied; knowledge becomes of great value when it is applied; then it is actual wealth. If she is unprepared for her SAT's or ACT's and needs to score well on one or either of these tests in order to be accepted into the university of her choice, because of the advantageous openness of homeschool, there is no reason why her entire senior year of high school cannot be devoted to studying for and learning how to take these standardized tests. She can take a course or obtain books on how to take the ACT or SAT. Homeschool will give her the freedom to learn how to take these tests or to find the resources which will teach her to take the tests, if the tests are even necessary – in many cases, they are not.

The bottom line on what I want for this lady: she should learn to rise to her highest Light and find great peace and confidence in doing so. This will also teach her how to find her own humanness, and to be humble. Being humble teaches one more about his/herself and opens the mind to growing more wisdom, and education should aim toward the wisdom of self-realization.

"Nothing ever goes away until it has taught us what we need to know."

~ Pema Chödrön: Nova Scotia, Canada

SSAAP IRS Reports 2019

I am pleased to report that when I did the reports for SSAAP for 2019 (990EZ, Schedule A, Schedule G, Schedule O), that 81% of the project's funds went towards the project itself! And only 19% for Administration! These are the numbers I work for – also in my personal boycott of large-scale charity organizations that drain the project funds for salaries for its directors, leaving the project itself with very little funds to accomplish the mission of the organization or to benefit the very people the organization claims to assist.

SSAAP accomplishes these numbers in two ways: donation of air tickets/bonus mileage points to/from Africa – so thank you deeply to the donors who have provided this for us! – as well, while in Africa, surviving on very, very little monetary funds. Why? Because Africa is very inexpensive, first of all! And second of all, because SSAAP uses (and believes in) an Old World bartering system. Any beneficiary of the project – be it an individual, group, association, village, community, etc. – must give back to SSAAP through in-kind means: repairs on the SSAAP home and office (specific to

Zambia), providing local lodging for SSAAP while in-country (specific to Sierra Leone and Ethiopia), assisting with transport to/from beneficiary communities (if possible, sometimes it is not), etc. This model not only assists in saving SSAAP's funds for SSAAP's projects in the nations it serves, but also offers its beneficiaries an alternative model to sustainable development. *Sustainability* as SSAAP believes, is a model of sharing. SSAAP provides a resource to the community; the community provides a resource to SSAAP. One party is not giving more than the other. This also assists in teaching Africans that Westerners also need help (!) – and I tell the people I stay with and work with on a weekly basis that were it not for them, there is absolutely no way I could survive in Africa – be it 15 years ago, be it present-day.

SSAAP provides food for Heather and Radiance, but as we prefer to cook for ourselves, and food is so cheap (we can buy a bag of tomatoes, organic as well!, for approximately 12 cents in the village; cabbage head costs 20 cents; 1 kg of dried beans costs about \$1.50), then our overall survival expenses are minimal while we are in Africa.

Tunsiya-Nsiya: Culture



Zambian Ministry of Tourism; Livingstone town, Zambia.



Zambian police post: Livingstone, Zambia. Kindly note that Livingstone is one of Zambia's largest towns. The officer handwrites each report and if unfortunate enough to land in the police office (usually I visit the police station to report a crime), one must wait hours just for the single piece of paper with the handwritten police report and its date stamp.



*“Faith transcends reason, but is not opposed to it.”
~ Mohandas Gandhi, India*





Clay art in the village. The children find clay from around the water holes and use it to make little animals, dolls, and houses to play with.



The things I fear most about going back to our home in Africa (Zambia) after having been away for so long:

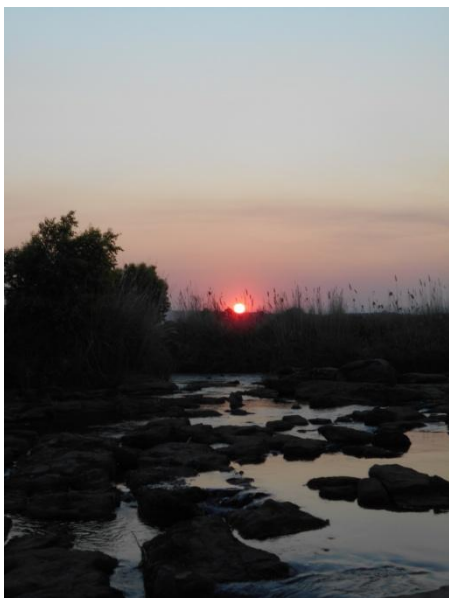
1. What we might find in our house: dead rats, dead cats. Termite destruction (books, walls, roof, clothing, shoes, office paperwork). Theft. Fecal matter from animals. Many things that will make me not want to eat once I get home
2. Who of my counterparts/friends in the village have died
3. Which children who are Radiance's companions have died
4. How many goats for the project perished while we were away
5. How many of our cats ran away or died while we were away
6. What force of Nature reclaimed itself in our home while I was gone: bugs, bees, snakes, scorpions, etc.
7. Homesickness. I always anticipate homesickness when I leave U.S.A. – sometimes it lasts for a few weeks or a few months; I have noticed this never becomes easier, no matter how many years I have worked with SSAAP, and no matter how many times we weave back-and-forth between Africa and U.S.A.



Livingstone, Zambia. Above, left, a hippo's skull, Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park, Livingstone, Zambia. Above, right, sign at a reptile park – I can never determine whether they are being serious or not 😊.

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Below, left, sunset on the Zambezi, dry season. The river is quite low during this period, probably I took this photo in mid-September/early October. Below, right, sign on the side of the road in Livingstone. Elephant trappings are problematic certain times of the year, and every year local people die from getting in the way of an elephant herd. Herds of elephants are groups of deeply-intimate animals and led by the oldest matriarch in the group.





*“Being a slave to fear and selfishness is the worst of all slavery.”
~ Mohandas Gandhi, India*





Above left: Radiance in our bed with the cat, reading with her headlamp. Above right, Radiance playing with her best friend in the village, Betty.



Above, Heather in SSAAP Office Hours. Two women have come for a loan for SSAAP from its Microloan Program. Yes, I am wearing my pajamas. Also, please note the buckets of water, uncovered. This water, unfit for drinking, will be used for washing clothing and – if desperate enough – we will also use it to wash our dishes or our bodies, but we won't drink it.

“When the inner lamp burns, it illuminates the whole world.”
~ Mohandas Gandhi



SSAAP’s Office. We have Office Hours every Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00-13:00 (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.), then a lunch break, resuming again from 15:00 – 18:00 (3 p.m. to 6 p.m.)



These women – Christine and Irene – have come to work on the floor of the Office. Termite mounds, mixed with water, is the material they use to make a floor with “African Cement” as they call it.



The innards of our home, which contains two rooms: a sitting room and a bedroom, which has two twin beds inside. We have books everywhere – as I value literacy above all other things— candles, lots of sloppiness. My plan is to organize the house when we return as well. It will be trashed and filthy, no doubt.



When we left Zambia in October 2017, we had eleven cats. I am warning Radiance that if we are lucky, three or four of them will be alive when we get back. There is no buffer to avoid Nature in Africa, and so if disease strikes or the cats (essentially scavengers) cannot find food, they die. There are very, very few veterinarians in the African countries I have lived in – and even if we came across one, he would scoff at the idea of wasting precious medicine on a cat or a dog: both considered almost entirely worthless in the village. Many of the Simwatachelan residents have shaken their heads at Radiance and I kissing our cats or feeding them our food off human plates, which I explain to them is often a part of our American culture.

It would be a good idea for Radiance to become a vet and use her skill set to help animals of all sizes in the village – where people depend on the cattle, goats, sheep, etc. for their survival. She could help animals and humans alike, and maybe one day SSAAP could even afford to pay her for her services!



Newborn kitten. Radiance adores cats the most, as well the entirety of the *Cat Felidae* species. Wildcats intrigue her. Additionally, she loves goats, camels, giraffes, peacocks and fish.

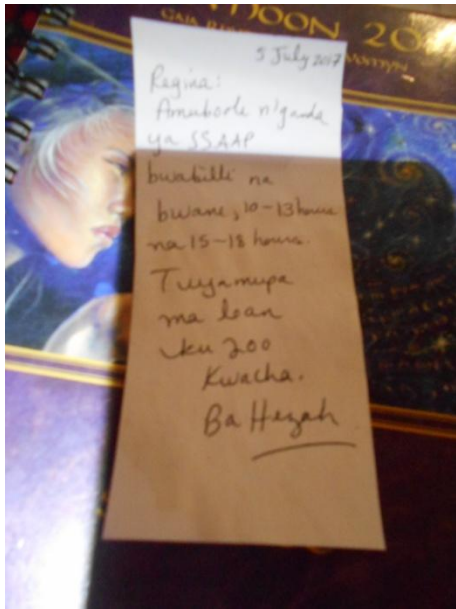


Being a mother in Africa has been my favorite part of Motherhood. I have learned from personal observation that all over the world children play together the same way – only that what they play with varies depending upon context and culture. But the universality of enjoying, having fun, learning through play, socialization, and interconnectedness seems to weave through every society among children. I believe it has less to do with formal education and more to do with the spirit of Love in which children are raised that determines how well they socialize into a society.



The women are having fun chatting and laughing while they wait for their turn in line for SSAAP's Office Hours.





Bush Note delivery system: In the village, we hand-write our communications. Then, we find someone who will see someone else who will see another person who will be traveling near the person's house who will receive the letter, or who will see the recipient of the letter at a meeting or a school, etc. There is very poor – if any – telephone communications in most parts of Simwatachela Chiefdom. Above, Bush Note to Regina written by Heather: “Amuboole n’ganda ya SSAAP bwabilli na bwane, 10-13 hours na 15-18 hours. Tuyamupa ma loan ku 200 kwacha. Ba Hezah.” English translation: “Please come to the house of SSAAP on Tuesday or Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. or 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. We will give you a loan of 200 Kwacha.” ‘Ba’ is a term of respect in ciTonga, and ‘Hezah’ is the name the people in the village call me, as they cannot pronounce the ‘th’ sound in ‘Heather’.



A group of girls coming to deliver a Bush Note to my house (girl in yellow shirt delivering letter).

“Man is the image of his thoughts.”
~ M.K. Gandhi; Porbandar, India



Our two most trusted transportation systems in Simwatachela, Zambia.



Our transportation into and out of the village. The transportation usually takes 4-5 hours and it comes to the 'bus stop' nearest to our house (2.5 km from our house) between 3:30 and 4 a.m. On days we want to leave the village, we leave the house around 2:30 a.m.



This simple and seemingly innocent photo answers so many fundamental questions about SSAAP: Why is the development rate so low and slow in Simwatachela, Zambia? Because of this horrible road. It is the only road that leads to our chiefdom from town, and look at it! It is barely safe, let alone conducive to large-scale development.

Why isn't the road paved? Due to age-old Zambian politics. The ruling party in power does not wish to develop nor promote Southern Province, Zambia.



The Mapatizya Road, or the road connecting Simwatachela Chiefdom to Kalomo town. We live 80 km from Kalomo town (which has little electricity and no internet) and because of the poor quality of this road, we try to leave the village as little as possible.



The Burn – which is also the Awakening – of Africa

Africa is a difficult place to live – not only because of the raw Nature we live with when we live there, but also because Africa forces you into a space in which you can no longer avoid yourself. In other words, the honesty of life there has a way of dragging you into your deepest – and probably darkest – inner places. And this is never a comfortable process. It is necessary – but not comfortable.

We are always taught to follow the rules, but sometimes the rules are rigid and not Love-based, which don't allow for the spark of creative intervention to intertwine. These rules instead squash our spirits. Sometimes playing by the rules is beneficial.

Other times they force us to downplay ourselves, be less than we could be. And then our greatest spirit within is squandered away, and we are a lower version of ourselves.

This work we are chiseling away at in Africa is a redistribution of resources. Someone may choose to work with SSAAP – not through force, but by choice – and then s/he is trusting in my expertise and humanity to properly distribute this resource. But why? Why should anyone donate their time, treasure, or talent to serving others who they might never see, know, or befriend? In other words, why care about the people of the world who are the worst-off? Why should we care at all?

Being over-resourced has the potential to generate great unhappiness. It helps us to give, share, and then receive – the ever-flowing cycle of Love. Capitalism, in its current condition, is not a system that will fail; it is a system that has *already* failed. Why? Because we, the students of and the owners of the system, have not learned the value of money. Money itself is innocent; it holds value only when it contains intention. It is not how much money we have; it is what we do with what we have. In a traditionally Capitalistic culture, our children are taught to earn money – but they haven't been taught what to earn the money *for*. That essential piece has been left out of the equation. Without meaning, the money as a mathematical figure alone becomes empty – because we haven't placed a worth on it, so it has no value: it is a mere number. And that number leaves us the moment we leave this life; it matters not at all once we have left this soil. But money also has the potential of great spiritual value – great intentional value, that is. With pure intention, money gains in spirit value. *What are you working for, and what is the money being earned for?* What is the intention behind the work? Is it for food? For medicine? A good pillow for your bed? A book you will learn from and enjoy reading? For your child's education? A dress that reminds you of how beautiful you are? A trip to somewhere in the world you have always dreamed of going? For rent for a house that provides safety, comfort, and rest? And so in Capitalism – in order to bring spirit and life back into a system capable of deep lovelessness, it must be fused with Love and intention: *what is the meaning of the money?* Without meaning, the money is worthless. With meaning – and purpose – the money gains worth, and spirit value. Only then, ignited by spirit of purpose, does money hold worth.

I am touched when supporters think of helping alongside or working with SSAAP and want to make sure they realize the ripple effect of this intention. When you service one individual, one child, one family, one community, one hungry person, you help the entire world through your intention and simultaneously give yourself back something; whether it be a gift of inner peace, a consciousness about sharing and distributing resources, or a contribution to the great flow in the ocean of oneness we all arise from and eventually descend back into. I am convinced that what we do in this realm, on planet Earth in this life, matters. Our actions here send a trajectory into a deeper and higher realm that through sleep and death, we touch and dissolve back into. I have come to learn that inner peace is everything and that without it, world peace is absolutely impossible. 'World Peace' is a collective intention of Love and Light in the Universe – everyone does his/her part through individual work in the inner Universe within ourselves. This isn't a choice; it is the social responsibility of each and every one of us. Only then can we be active forces in the external realm: the outer Universe. It is a daily task and something made so much easier through opening our hearts and

surrendering and softening to Love. It doesn't make us weak to have an open heart vulnerable to sometimes breaking; it makes us incredibly strong in fact: powerful beyond measure. This is the transition of matter (material) back into Light (energy).

SSAAP: knowledge + sharing + training = self-esteem project. 'Charity' seems a false word because within this word there is a hidden denotation of pity – and because I do not pity the people of Africa, 'Service' is more accurate: I serve others, and I in turn have been served. I have been told that I give and receive charity. When I am in Africa, I give charity. When I am in U.S.A., I receive charity. I believe this is a fundamental piece of SSAAP that has granted it its success: because I understand what it is to receive charity, not just to give it. I am the giver and the beneficiary. I know what it feels like to be desperate and to ask for help, the position I find myself in whereby I receive the help and the abundance of others. I have witnessed much kindness and Love in the last eleven months of living in U.S.A., and have opened my heart to receiving help. I know that I need it. Then when I go back to Africa and find people outside my door, dressed in their best and nervous to make themselves vulnerable and ask me if SSAAP can sponsor their child to school or assist their Farmers' Association with a microloan for \$20 USD, I understand how hard it was to ask. I have been in their position, too – in my own country. And because it is this way, the energy isn't stagnant, and has the opportunity to flow, to move between giving and receiving. If the energy sticks in either side for too long, ego occurs. The receiver of the charity tends to become entitled or expectant, and the giver tends to become resentful or burned-out.

It is difficult – if not impossible – to work with, serve others, and have oneself not be helped simultaneously. If one is in a balanced, healthy state to begin with, then it becomes easier to receive as well as to provide Love [Service], which is why I am constantly striving to get back to my center: my balance point, the Zen state within. Therefore, the motivation behind this project is not to help others because it sounds good or looks good on paper; rather, I aim to serve because I think that is the central Truth of why we are here: to heal others and to be healed, to Love others and be Loved. I recognize that usually the hardest person to Love is oneself. But because I believe we are *all* healers: of ourselves, and of others, with Love and Service we must always keep trying, keep going, give it just another shot. Why not? As far as I am concerned, Love is the only tangible reason any of us come here. And it is the only force in the universe powerful enough to make real change: within ourselves, without others, and to Mother Earth herself. Finding inner peace within builds strength, wisdom and character; I believe Nature will be able to accommodate us more on this planet if we choose to have inner peace, each and every one of us. We will receive Nature in a new light, a new realm, when we work towards inner peace.

Why are you doing this work? Because I love it – simple answer. Because I want to! – even simpler answer. Because I naturally flow into it; I have a gift which is very specific to this work: ample patience fused with a deep, natural Love for the people of Africa. I like the slowness of Africa, the way that time is told by the sun. My brain immediately sparks with interest, inspiration, and ignites with ideas whenever a problem in the field is created for me; I ask the computer program of my mind (I believe our minds are computers but without our hearts and instincts, the computer is slowed down if not stunted entirely) how to cut and paste what resources SSAAP has into which slots the help is needed. Sometimes the answers come to me

instantaneously. Other times it takes sleep for the solutions to bleed in. Still more, it could take days. But I am always working, hunting answers to impossible questions. I like to find the possibility in what appears to be impossible. This keeps my mind sharp.

It is an injustice to the entirety of the planet that a very large percentage of the human beings living here are starving and have no decent water to drink. This hurts the whole of humanity although one may not know it at an intellectual level; it is stored in the subconscious, rather the unconscious mind, the Universal Consciousness which is essentially a web, connecting us all, which we are bound to whether we like it or not.

I do not see that there is any space we have – as a collective humanity – century after century, millenium after millenium – to continue the same old, exhausted ways that have proven themselves ineffective: hatred, greed, power, control, war, oppression, fear, injustice, cruelty to others. When we mistreat another person, we do an injustice to that person but an exponential injustice to ourselves. Our humanity is not evolving, because for whatever reason we have failed to learn this lesson throughout the eons of time we have existed on this planet: hurting others is the same thing as hurting oneself. Along the same vein: *How much I can love you is a direct result of how much I can love and honor myself.* But while we are continuing in selfishness and refusing to accept the ultimate power of Love, Mother Earth has become less and less able, capable, and willing to support us. The responsibility lies within each of us. It is both individual and collective. *Or, none of us are to blame, as we have followed our instincts which are fear-based and the age-old sentiment of ‘each-man-for-himself’ has crippled us.* Let’s move forward: forgive ourselves and each other and journey on, to a better way, a more productive way of living which encompasses the daily nurture of sustainable and healthy Love.

How do we reach out beyond our own self-interest? And is this even possible, as human beings and part of a collective human species?

I will suck the wisdom out of any situation similarly to the way I will eat a mango, overripened, which has just fallen from its mothertree. I would not just eat the mango and enjoy it for its taste; I would rather appreciate it for its nutrients, how the tree has just fed me, and how without the sun and the moon the tree could never have even nurtured itself – let alone me – without the vital source of something so far beyond my comprehension it seems almost funny to think I have any business being eating it at all.

There is no part of us, as human beings, that hasn’t evolved from sun, from moon, from earth, from tree. All the vegetables and grains we eat come from beds of terrestrial sun-stain, and the fruits which drip from the trees are nothing short of the trees’ gift to us, to the insects, to the earth. We are all part of this incredible, Nature-bound, sensual and sensitive cycle – we need only tap into our instincts and our inner universe to receive this bounty.

The inner universe, or my term for it, is the space in which we create: in which we manifest, heal, journey. That’s where the metaphysical, metaphorical, and physical dreams all collide, and the fire burns. The whole world is inside of us. Each of us has

an inner infinite universe. The external world serves only as a measuring stick for how far we have come or how far we have still to go: the progress we have made within. The only competition lies within the self: to rise to one's highest self. There is no use in hating a situation, a person, an issue externally as it was only put there through ourselves, by the deepest parts of our humanity – also a collective – that always yearns for Highest Light, like the canopy of trees aching and arching themselves for another level of truth. There is nothing possible externally if it has not already manifested internally.

I feel a push within me now – stronger than anything I have ever felt before – to overcome the darkness within me and in doing so find an inner Light that eternally burns, regardless of situation or context. It is a daily work, I do for this; some days I feel good about myself and other days I am hard on myself – but at the end of each and every day I feel this life has been a gift, and that has made this journey worth it - above anything else.



Photo credit: David Lynn Photography, 2018

Please do not misinterpret: our work in Africa is not a sacrifice – it is an *honor*. Very specifically, it gives me strength; it does not deplete me. It is my privilege to have access to Africa and to be able to try to relocate the resources of the world to such a strong, brilliant, and beautiful population of this world.

We are motivated to return and so happy to give back to the African people all of the resources we have worked very hard to gather in the last eleven months of being home in the States.

Thank you intensely for helping SSAAP to accomplish this!

Please keep in touch. Your handwritten letters that arrive in SSAAP's P.O. Boxes are one of the best parts of our life in Africa. I indulge in them gluttonously. Your photos will dangle on my mud walls. And when I can, I will email. Due to limited connectivity (in Zambia, it sometimes takes 5 minutes to open one web page to the next, depending upon weather or politics), I use handwritten letters as my main source of communication for SSAAP when I am overseas.

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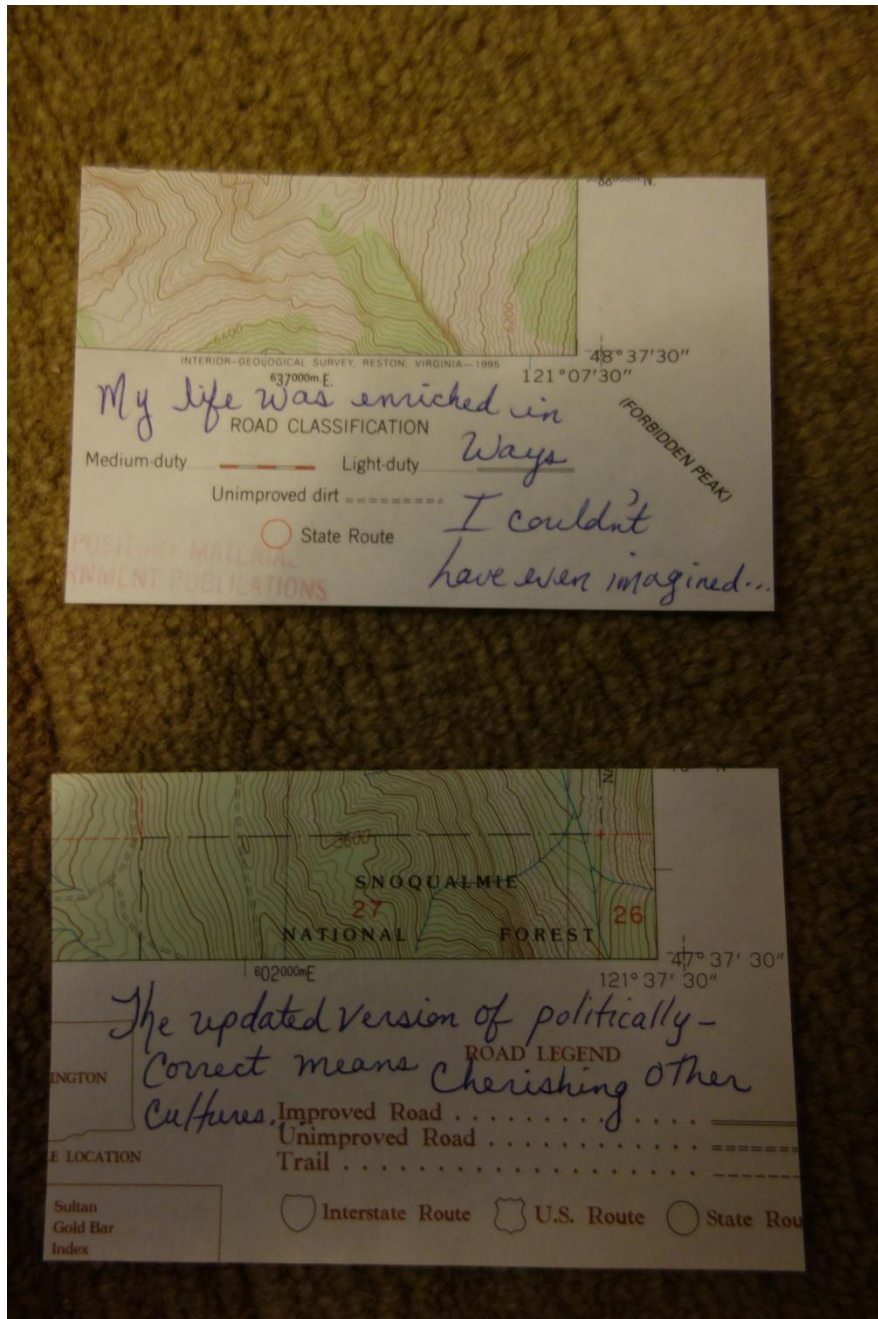
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Your letters will reach us! They might take 4 months, but they will reach us!



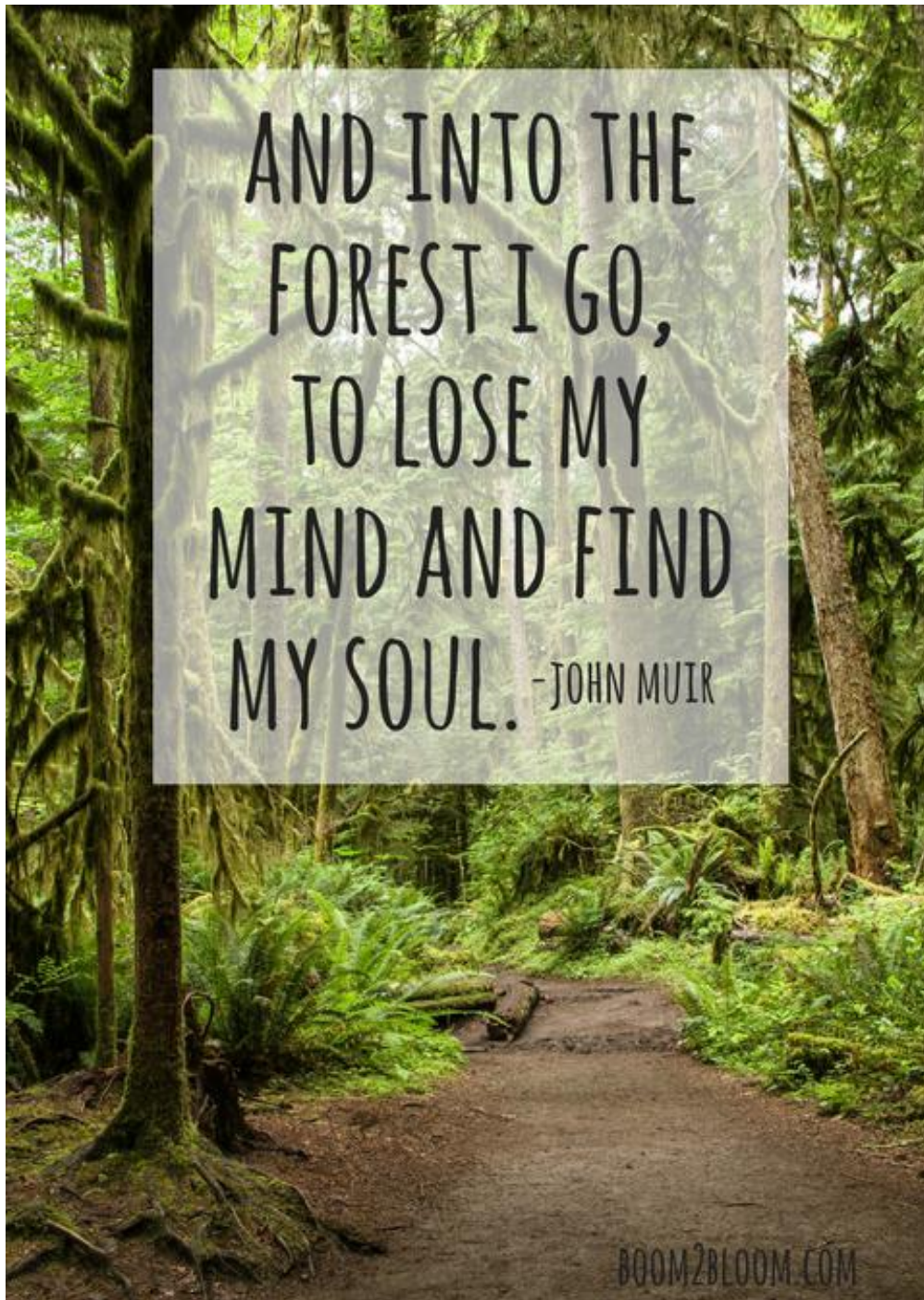
Photo credit: David Lynn Photography, 2018



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

We work at the base, grassroots level of the society in both Zambia and Sierra Leone, our philosophy being that if you can't help those who need your services the most, at the base of the society, then why bother – what's the point? The village is the deep fibrous root of Africa, the taproot upon which everything else feeds.

Our work is solely committed to working with the most remote communities, with the people who *are* the statistic: undereducated and lacking the basic resources of food and water: which are almost one-in-the-same.



Your Love, Light and support has moved this project in its evolution: once a dream is now a concrete, actualized, sustainable reality. Thank you for the patience, kindness, and time you have invested not only into SSAAP, but also into Radiance and me. The world has turned out to be a perfect balance between being vast and being small; it is easy, in the end, to get back to the people you Love rather quickly. Please keep in touch. Life is short, but Love is timeless.