

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter

Holiday Edition XXXI; Zambia, 2020



This Holiday Edition is dedicated to the Village Elders: Grandma & Grandpa Theis and Grandma & Grandpa Cumming. You are with me always, more potently now than when you were alive here on Earth. You have inspired, motivated, challenged, supported and ignited me most effectively from the place in space where you are now. Benedictions to all the powerful mysteries of the unknown waiting to be uncoiled, the sleeping serpent potential within us all.





Happy Holidays to All;

Wishing you Light and Love, not only during the holiday season but all-ways. It has been a challenging year on so many levels, asking us to abandon our comfort zones and testing us to the depths as well the gravity of our beings; how strong we truly are has been revealed to each and every one of us. There doesn't seem to be a country, a continent, a tribe of humanity that hasn't endured hardship over the last year in a plethora of both direct and indirect ways. Opportunity for transformation reveals itself.

The weight of this burden and the ache of collective suffering: mine, yours, theirs - I can feel pressing in on me, refining the gold of my being and burning away the dross: all the dirty tar that is present within that bears no sense of purpose. It is time to let all that no longer serves lift off and float away. This is the time for the alchemy of our beings if ever there was a time. The beauty in the world, in all its multitudes: in humanity, in animals, in Nature, in our everyday lives, in our work and in our personal relationships - the most valuable tool we will ever have on this planet is one another - is glittering in its expanse: on the shimmering seas of possibility. The time is ripe for Love. Love is waiting on us - and not that we are waiting on it.

Thank you for your compelling prayers, your absolute Love, your encouragement through care packages or emails or calls or letters means all to us. You are a part of the meals beside our fire, our plethora of projects, our stories we tell the Africans about you and how much you have done for them ~ and maybe even how much they have done for you, too, in a different way. My hope is that SSAAP will serve as the centerpiece of the braid weaving U.S.A. together with Africa or the various nations SSAAP serves. SSAAP newsletters keep getting longer and longer; the magnitude of what we are trying to do here in Africa keeps growing, its expansion due largely to inspiration you have provided us. My vision for this project is on fire: burning, sizzling through wild, uncharted territory: the potential of rural Africa. The village is smiling, opening its arms and welcoming us, welcoming you too. There is nowhere else in Africa to be.







The Gift of Water



For every person who perishes from the effects of a stimulant, at least a thousand die from the consequences of drinking impure water. This precious fluid, which daily infuses new life into us, is likewise the chief vehicle through which disease and death enter our bodies. The germs of destruction it conveys are enemies all the more terrible as they perform their fatal work, unperceived. They seal our doom while we live and enjoy. A philanthropist can scarcely use his efforts better than by endeavoring to enlighten those who are thus injuring themselves. By systematic purification and sterilization of the drinking water the human mass would be very considerably increased. It should be made a rigid rule – which might be enforced by law – to boil or to sterilize otherwise the drinking water in every household and public place. The mere filtering does not afford sufficient security against infection... as no satisfactory method of sterilizing great quantities of water has yet been brought forward.

~ from The Problem of Increasing Human Energy by Nikola Tesla

Water Wells

We have busied ourselves over the last quarter with *boreholes*, or water wells, for our SSAAP-Zambia 2020 program. As I expressed in the previous Edition XXX newsletter, we began in 2019 with financial support for three wells for the Zambia-2020 program. Through various reasons, such as: growing financial support for the SSAAP-Zambia water well program, our newfound Zimbabwean well-driller more concerned that the people of rural Simwatachela get water than he get rich, and the fact that in Africa the more of something you purchase the less expensive that thing becomes, as well my impressive bargaining skills ;), I was able to get a substantial discount on some of our 2020 wells in Zambia, our budget affording us twelve wells. *Twelve wells*. At the end of our Contract, Likumbi (the Zimbabwean well driller) and I finalized for the twelve wells in Simwatachela, Zambia to be sunk into the ground the second/third week of October 2020.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ☺ !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ☺ !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! ☺

This is eleven or twelve wells more than SSAAP-Zambia usually has on any given year. Some years, we don't have any. Thank you so very much to all who have participated in this.

We are so grateful, elated, excited, over the moon about this – but have had to work strange hours (eating our dinner at 03:00 a.m., sleeping in vehicles, losing nights of sleep, straining our brains as well) to make this happen; thus I am all so much happier about it simply because *it didn't come easily*. I consider myself neither a pessimist nor an optimist but rather a realist, hence I am always slightly wary of things that come easily. And so SSAAP has worked very hard to make these twelve wells happen in 2020, and I wouldn't have it any other way. The centerpiece to our project is water, and practicing what we preach, we must do whatever in our power to make this come true.

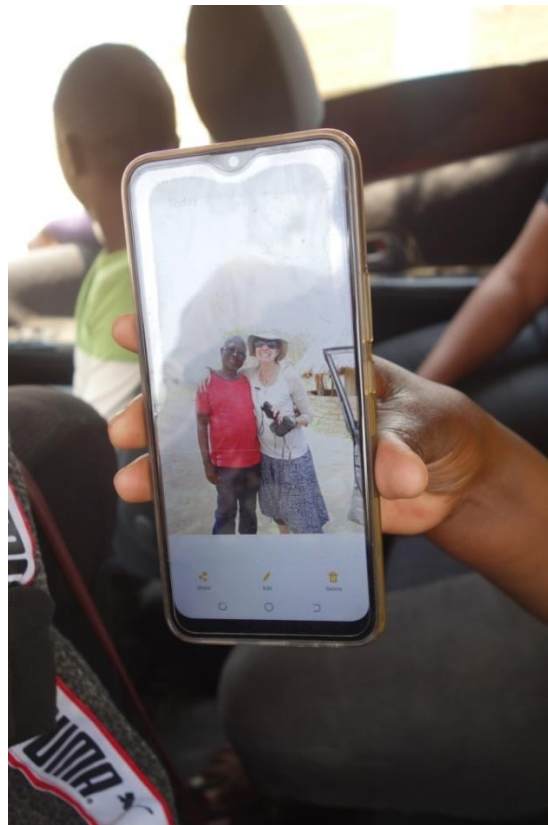


The addition of well #9 (*Lubanze Village*) was added to the Contract on Tuesday, September 1, 2020 (above, left) in Kalomo town; well #10 (*Kabanga Village*) was the final

well added to our Contract on Wednesday, September 16, 2020 (above, right) in my cooking shelter ('*cikuta*') at home in Simwatachela Chiefdom.

Two additional wells (#11 at *Mangomo Village* and #12 at *Sokesi-Extension Village*): two villages that were massive and needed two wells per village, were added during the drilling process (October 18-25, 2020) for a total of twelve wells in 2020.

Development is simply only ever a push, helping people to get ignited ~ water will always be the base of that; no matter what your long-term goals are for a community, without water nothing can be achieved. It is concisely-stated the most sustainable piece of any development model.



And, as is the professional tradition in Africa, through working together with Likumbi, he and I have become friends: spending time with each other's families and talking over meals; the more quality time I spend with him the more I learn about his trade, his skill, and this has deepened my knowledge of drilling these holes, as well broadened my respect for the trade as well as Likumbi himself. No expert am I, but the more I learn the more I will be in a position to serve the people with better knowledge and understanding in a field that is not my own.

We conducted the water sitings at the beginning of August 2020 (sites #1, #2, #3/#11, #4, #5, #6, #7/#12 & #8) and the first few days of September 2020 (sites #9 & #10). Here are the results of Likumbi's water siting data. Please note each site has two potential holes, and if no water is found at either site *he will drill until he finds water at a third, fourth, fifth... location within that same community*. This was his promise to SSAAP.

Water Siting Statistical Data

SIACHIJA VILLAGE
KALINDO ①
MEMO No. 21082020
Date: 2.08.2020
Ward: Spaboyana

ab/a	P ₁	P ₂
10	216.24	429.48
15	141.92	98.42
20	29.93	18.29
25	28.15	10.48
30	16.73	45.67
35	15.46	8.14
40	11.17	73.67
45	7.82	65.76
50	10.26	110.88
55	5.55	136.26
60	8.77	117.48
65	24.91	309.52
70	18.35	251.54
75	27.89	408.50
80	16.34	203.80
85	32.42	223.33

P₁ 17.19393
26.63009
P₂ 17.19714
26.63154
3km for Shops

Siachija Village: 2 August 2020

SIMBENZU VILLAGE
ROMBOZI MUDUMA ②
MEMO No. 03.08.2020
Date: 03.08.2020

ab/a	P ₁	P ₂
10	157.25	217.61
15	20.37	44.19
20	3.94	16.49
25	44.53	4.62
30	26.06	85.72
35	3.56	17.49
40	28.83	104.50
45	10.70	3.11
50	23.49	24.67
55	37.35	80.67
60	45.71	26.32
65	15.37	80.59
70	17.35	237.86
75	34.13	110.26
80	122.71	144.57

P₁ 17.54135
26.66792
P₂ 17.53948
26.66226
16km for Kati

Siabenzu Village: 3 August 2020

MANGOMO VILLAGE
GOLANTANKWA ③
MEMO No. 3.08.2020
Date: 3.08.2020

ab/a	P ₁	P ₂
10	113.94	105.51
15	3.97	50.46
20	13.27	33.51
25	23.64	13.37
30	38.62	24.27
35	44.21	3.38
40	30.49	14.94
45	4.60	4.19
50	28.17	11.91
55	26.18	3.51
60	11.23	19.95
65	34.87	14.27
70	14.13	15.26
75	38.89	7.31
80	124.16	2.47

P₁ 17.62210
26.60737
1173m
P₂ 17.62181
26.60992
1154m
20km for Kabaya

Mangomo Village, Site A / Mongomo Extention Village, Site B: 3 August 2020

SSAAP LAND
KALINDO ④
MEMO No. 04.08.2020
Date: 04.08.2020

ab/a	P ₁	P ₂
10	-	153.02
15	-	43.49
20	44.82	20.03
25	16.14	18.87
30	10.29	10.25
35	8.11	6.41
40	9.22	12.26
45	12.13	13.69
50	24.87	3.63
55	10.62	23.36
60	5.09	20.16
65	29.79	6.73
70	20.28	5.16
75	26.67	28.16
80	44.59	6.29

P₁ 17.50076
26.73513
P₂ 17.50114
26.73427

SSAAP Land: 4 August 2020

NAMUNUMBWA VILLAGE
MEMO No. 04.08.2020
Date: 04.08.2020

ab/a	P ₁	P ₂
10	437.88	107.19
15	106.81	8.64
20	14.72	24.61
25	21.67	13.26
30	41.59	5.83
35	29.70	4.62
40	47.53	28.96
45	5.57	3.12
50	3.92	11.27
55	77.89	36.26
60	50.95	1.07
65	14.26	4.77
70	38.94	16.84
75	103.30	2.78
80	120.50	11.23

P₁ 17.59633
26.71449
1203m
P₂ 17.60001
26.72216
1235m
13km for Kabaya

Namunumbwa Village: 4 August 2020

LUSUMPUKO VILLAGE
BULAMBWA ⑥
MEMO No. 04.08.2020
Date: 04.08.2020

ab/a	P ₁	P ₂
10	339.58	241.12
15	60.78	67.49
20	39.16	13.38
25	33.60	69.41
30	38.41	89.67
35	55.18	98.63
40	66.48	25.50
45	75.43	109.88
50	38.65	74.94
55	3.71	11.00
60	50.15	19.48
65	26.97	11.98
70	4.65	67.01
75	9.61	42.45
80	71.23	55.92

P₁ 17.67805
26.60241
P₂ 17.67205
26.60148
27km for Kabaya

Lusumpuko Village: 4 August 2020

Sokesi Village

Depth	P ₁	P ₂	
10	390.07	442.82	
15	29.46	68.94	
20	42.81	51.16	P ₁ 17.45072
30	6.55	40.75	26.5740
35	26.51	35.52	
40	17.40	28.81	
45	82.41	16.66	P ₂ 17.45735
50	27.35	17.11	26.57451
55	2.49	26.65	
60	13.26	32.56	
65	1.92	24.18	32.6m from Log
70	10.25	23.67	
75	21.54	44.27	
80	36.21	99.17	

Sokesi Village, Site A; Sokesi-Extension Village, Site B: 5 August 2020

Keele Village

Depth	P ₁	P ₂	
10	128.4	210.44	
15	44.12	49.47	
20	35.82	2.58	
25	31.16	31.14	P ₁ 19.5927
30	30.92	38.69	26.7978
35	29.43	4.55	1261m
40	11.41	3.42	
45	8.86	11.02	
50	7.84	9.12	P ₂ 17.57777
55	16.66	22.57	26.7979
60	19.19	22.92	1272m
65	15.59	7.96	
70	60.11	87.27	
75	39.96	30.38	
80	56.52	153.73	

Keele Village: 5 August 2020

Lubanze Village

Depth	P ₁	P ₂	
10	49.00	65.99	
15	52.82	30.20	
20	42.7	59.62	
25	39.4	30.68	
30	40.83	30.99	
35	38.5	29.86	
40	35.2	20.63	
45	29.09	19.59	
50	21.51	25.03	
55	20.39	30.95	
60	19.39	36.55	
65	20.48	20.19	
70	42	10.46	
75	49.2	11.76	
80	31	13.36	

Lubanze Village: 16 September 2020

Kabanga Village

Depth	P ₁	P ₂	
10	244.31	200.19	
15	197.28	100.58	
20	80.62	72.49	
25	145.36	90.39	
30	118.55	89.36	
35	100.22	67.78	
40	25.16	70.38	
45	27.20	20.01	
50	25.22	30.67	
55	18.57	29.20	
60	29.15	31.58	
65	30.67	37.40	
70	31.72	47.92	
75	428.40		
80	170.75		

Kabanga Village: 17 September 2020

*

In the attachment adjacent to this newsletter in the same email, you will find a mini-report pertinent to details on the well-drilling process in 2020; this report contains short excerpts for the drilling process for each of our twelve SSAAP-2020 wells. Please feel free to skip through this attachment if it doesn't interest you; and if it does, then feel free to ask me more questions! I will forward whatever I cannot answer to Likumbi: the expert of borehole-drilling. ☺



When I say 'become water' I mean become a flow; don't remain stagnant. Move, and move like water. What is the movement of water? The movement has a few beautiful things about it. One, it always moves toward the depth, it always searches for the lowest ground. It is non-ambitious; it never hankers to be the first, it wants to be the last. Water goes down, it searches for the lowest ground, it wants to be a nonentity. It does not want to declare itself unique, exceptional, extraordinary. It has no ego idea.

~ from "Going with the Flow", an excerpt from The Transcendental Game of Zen by Osho



The Gift of the Village



I have no doubt in my mind that we add to the national wealth if we help the small-scale industries. It also provides an outlet for the creative faculties and resourcefulness of the people. It can also usefully employ hundreds of youths in the country who are in need of employment.

The idea behind the village industries scheme is that we should look to the villages for the supply of our daily needs and that, when we find that some needs are not so supplied, we should see whether with a little trouble and organization, they cannot be profitably supplied by the villagers. In estimating the profit, we should think of the villager, not of ourselves. It may be that, in the initial stages, we might have to pay a little more than the ordinary price and get an inferior article in the bargain. Things will improve, if we will interest ourselves in the supplier of our needs and insist on his doing better and take the trouble of helping to do better. This is a constructive, not a destructive, programme.

~ From Village Industries by M.K. Gandhi

The Village



Alone and by yourself you manifest yourself when you come into being above the sky.

~ from The Egyptian Book of the Dead, Translated by E. A. Wallis Budge













Our three-dimensional reality is based on dualism; all things travel as twins, or complementary opposites. These polarities, whether designated as light and dark, masculine and feminine, visible or hidden, or positive and negative, are not to be confused with moral opinions such as good and bad. The Egyptian pantheon is made up of twins, energies doubling up like the double helix. These twin energies of light and dark tell us it is only half-truth to try to deal exclusively with one or the other.

~ From The Anubis Oracle: A Journey Into the Shamanic Mysteries of Egypt by Nicki Scully and Linda Star Wolf



Your support for SSAAP ensures:

- ***Undeniable human needs are being met in some of the poorest parts of the world; basic human needs of people without adequate, clean, or year-round drinking water and without adequate food are satisfied.*** Over the years I have even become skeptical even of schools and clinics in Africa; a school is only as good as the teachers inside of it and for a clinic the same is true of its healthcare workers, nurses and doctors. I have begun to look past the grand, shiny exterior of many schools and healthcare facilities provided by governments, aid organizations and funding from private sects and have seen too often than not that what is inside these facilities are officials lacking training: teachers, principals, headmasters, clinic officers, healthcare workers, nurses. Better to have skilled professionals inside the walls of institutions rather than fancy buildings with nothing going on

inside. I am skeptical of technologies in Africa: projects aiding children in rural villages with laptop computers when there isn't even enough food at home for them to eat breakfast before going to school; projects teaching about the importance of education when children are asked to go to school where there is no water even at the school. I believe so fully that the root cause of all sufferings in Africa are due to a lack of access to potable water as well to food (both of these issues leading to lack of nutrition), and until these issues are first addressed and then crushed on this mighty continent, than all other forms of development will be squandered as they have not been conducted in the logical order of human needs. *Let's not look classy, I say; let's not strive to look good on paper or to be politically-correct but rather let's be humble and simple and honest and start first with clear-cut human needs: food and water. Nutrition and health.* I am unaware of any form of development that would not need these basic building blocks as the foundation of its pyramid, the DNA blueprint of its creation.

I am skeptical of all schemes that appear well on paper, burying evident attempts of the re-colonialization of Africa. The red flags that crop up, for me, are usually technology-based programs and ideas that wish to 'develop' Africa with high-tech phones, devices, and other technology-based schemes prior to focusing on the simple issues which keep Africa destitute and in darkness: no water, lack of food (food shortage), no electricity/power/lack of access to solar panels which could be potentially the best source of electricity everyone on the continent could access, without discrimination. My rule of thumb where Africa is concerned is that if it doesn't involve food or water, health or education, art and keeping the tradition of the village alive then leave me (and SSAAP!) out of it ~ because without these things than any other scheme for development is simply done with self-interest or in vanity. Africa needs water and Africa needs food. It is so simple.

I am weary of any scheme that does not include all, that is not for the masses; elitist methodologies which ensure the survival of structural violence woven within societies: either blatantly or discreetly. I have never trusted technology for this simple reason: it doesn't include all. It doesn't survive in parts of the world where people are struggling simply just to survive. Why not rectify these modest requirements first, as a human collective, and then we can all advance together? Why leave so many behind; why not work together to progress the collective rather than a few striving to be first?

- ***Embracing human dignity.*** All development, no matter where in the world we land, starts with water. If you don't believe me, try not using water for a day and see how you feel at the end of that day. Try bathing without water, cooking without water, washing your hands without water, getting through a day without using or without drinking water. I have performed this experiment from

time to time. Just to remember how it feels to be the victim of this tragedy. I become monstrous by the end of the day when I have no access to water; I cannot brush my teeth, cannot make a cup of tea or coffee (and cannot survive without tea), cannot wash my hands or my feet. Water is the centerpiece not only of human life, but also for development and the human spirit. We need water to cleanse, to purify, to transcend. Flushing our bodies out with a waterfall of clean, clear, healthy water on a daily basis is one of the keys to good life, long life, healthy life.

I can live without electricity but not without water. Sometimes the way forward is ironically what appears as the way backward, and if we want to help Africans (specifically in remote areas of Africa where the people are living in villages – which is the majority of Africans) in a deep, life-changing way then we have to go backwards. We have to tap at the root. The root is water. The root is food.

- *Work being done directly in the field and SSAAP overseeing it because we stay here, long-term.* SSAAP's commitment to Africa, to our beneficiaries here, to our supporters around the world (who are also our Visionaries) is to be here, with our project, as much of the time as possible. The type of project we wish to run in Africa involves – and dictates – that we be here to implement it. Not in America. Not in India or Greece or any of the beautiful places on the planet that often sing to our hearts, but rather here. In the dust and the dirt and the grit of Africa SSAAP has found its true calling.



The barren turnoff from paved road ('tarmac') to our road, the Mapatizya Road, which eventually leads to amethyst mines at its end; we live approximately 70 kilometers down this road, from the turnoff. The road is not paved, save for its beginning (500 meters).



The Gift of Human Beings

Mankind's progress has been in two directions. It has tried to develop its inner faculties through study, inner search, meditation, Yoga, etc. This progress is concerned with the journey within. The other direction has been in the line of social change through reforms, legislations, revolutions, etc. This progress is concerned with the journey without.

A Satyagrahi does not treat these two journeys as distinct or separated from each other. To a Satyagrahi the purification of the self and the change of the society are not only mutually exclusive, but they are inter-related and interdependent. To a Satyagrahi the individual search for truth must end in social change and the medium of social change should be individual search for truth.

For a Satyagrahi the revolution begins with him/herself. He/she cannot dream of changing the society without changing him/herself. His/her march towards Total Revolution, therefore, begins with his/her total personality. The personality consists of a number of factors. But for the sake of convenience we accept the three broad faculties: 'Jnana' or knowledge, 'Karma' or action, and 'Bhakti' or devotion. A Satyagrahi tries to develop all these three faculties in a way which will create a balance between them and result in harmony of his/her personality. He/she constantly strives to broaden his/her horizons in all these faculties in order to make him/her a more accomplished instrument of Total Revolution. A Satyagrahi will keep his/her windows open to all influences from all directions but would refuse to be swept away by any one of them.

~ from Handbook for Satyagrahis by Narayan Desai



Community Contribution

No, you carry your wound. With the ego your whole being is a wound. And you carry it around... The word 'heal' comes from the whole, and the word 'holy' also comes from the whole. Be whole, healed, holy. Be aware of your wound. Don't help it to grow, let it be healed; and it will be healed only when you move to the roots.

~ From "Healing", an excerpt from The Transcendental Game of Zen by Osho



Community Contribution, as defined by SSAAP, is always two-fold. One is the community giving back to SSAAP itself, 25% of the net worth of any project. This may be in-cash or in-kind, but 99% of the time community contribution exposes itself in-kind through labor. For every borehole SSAAP is giving a community, each community has a designated job on SSAAP's compound. We are re-roofing the SSAAP house and so two community's jobs are helping to locate the dried grass, then braiding it together (called 'masasa' in our local language) to place upon the roof. Another community contribution, as with the Microloan Project, is that anyone receiving a microloan has a designated day between each loan cycle to bring us water for our home use (washing dishes, bathing, cooking, drinking, laundering) as well to water our garden.



The arrival of our new roof! On the 10th of September 2020.





An example of 25% Community Contribution is assisting to repair the SSAAP-Headquarters roof. Pictured above is our home and the roof has blown off in a few sections. Also you can see the way they knit the dried grasses for the roof, 'masasa' we call it, as it is woven together in pieces so that when the wind blows it off it blows it off in chunks.



Handouts in Africa translate into: *'You are not my equal.'* They are an indirect way of telling someone that s/he has nothing to offer in return. SSAAP refuses handouts. Our philosophy: SSAAP helps you, you help SSAAP. *Tu ya antoomwe*, as we say in ciTonga: *'We are together'*. And being together with someone through equality means you cannot pity him/her. Pity is the antithesis of Love, thus SSAAP does not work through pity or handouts.



SSAAP believes wholeheartedly in the concept of community contribution which gives back to the project ~ somewhat like the bartering system found endemically within the village culture of Africa. To give local people something without asking for anything in return [what is within their means, I might add] is somehow degradation, indirectly insinuating: *There is nothing that you have that you can give back to this project to ensure its sustainability.* When in Truth, we can all give something back to something else.

I would even take this a step further and comment that I believe most failed projects in Africa are a result of 0% community contribution and 100% hand-outs. This structure simply doesn't hold up: the 'hand-out' system, as I call it. Nothing in the Universe is about receiving without giving, or giving without receiving. This is the cycle of all production and therefore reproduction on the planet. Service projects in developing communities of the world should bear no exception to this Law of the Universe!



What Radiance, my daughter, and I have also discovered which is most-beautiful about this model is that people seem to take excessive *joy* in being able to give back. Re-roofing a house, or building a guest house, or putting cement on a floor are some of the skills that they not only can perform – but can perform well! The makeshift ladders shown above on both sides (left and right) of our house are so heavy I can't even move one, much less begin to climb on my roof in order to thatch it. *I need your help!*, I tell the beneficiaries in all our communities. *I cannot do any part of this project without you – and don't want to. I didn't come to live in the village because I wanted to stay in the Hilton, but*

rather because I wanted to be with you. So please help my daughter and I to have a safe shelter not only for the two of us but also for all of our visitors; I hope and pray they will begin to come in numbers when they see we have made nice preparations for them ☺



Other borehole recipient communities are making a new guest house on the compound alongside an adjacent guest toilet, making a formal garden to Radiance and I, putting a door on our old toilet (from 2010! And it still doesn't stink! We put ash from our daily fires in it and this keeps our pit latrine from absorbing bad smells), making a small structure to store our charcoal, and repairing our old guest house built in 2017.

SSAAP purchasing bricks ('zitina') in our local language assists the local brick-makers in the village: three boys age 20, who have finished only grade 7. This has given them a source of income. SSAAP has bought many bricks from them, as well is on-going as we continue to build up SSAAP's Headquarters so that visitors can now sleep comfortably, i.e. not having to sleep in tents on sleeping bags on the hard ground any longer!







Without participation, project is a hand-out: stale and out-dated now in Africa ~ its downward spiral and ultimately its way backward.
With participation, project is human development ~ each party serving the other; with participation, project is growth for the local people and thus growth for SSAAP.



If people are not ready to work together to develop themselves by themselves, through merely a gentle, silent push from SSAAP, then these are not communities compatible with SSAAP.

☆

SSAAP can only work with communities who are interested in giving back to the project ~ which in-turn will be an investment in themselves.





When people come to me, asking for SSAAP's help, and I ask them how they will also participate in their own empowerment; I wait to see what they will say. Sometimes they say they don't want to help SSAAP but want SSAAP's help. So I tell them to find another aid organization to give them a handout because SSAAP does not and never will work this way: through pity, through handouts. Handouts are dis-empowering and that have destroyed this continent: slowly and clandestinely, forcing the Continent to be dependent which is dis-empowerment. *Love is participation*, I tell them, *Love yourself as much as I Love you and participate with me to improve your lives through clean water and food, nutrition and better energy moving through your bodies. You deserve it.*



My African father, Gibson, asked me just the other day why I have chosen to live this way. *That's a great question*, I told him, *and to be honest with you I don't even know if I know the answer to that. I think this life found me – I don't think I ever even chose it.*

Today I woke up and realized that I spend every waking moment of my day, as well as at night, keep working in my sleep as sometimes the night unweaves various puzzles of

the day, – whether directly or indirectly – in this effort to help Africans get clean water for drinking. I think my brain never stops trying to unravel that puzzle.

That in living in Africa with the Africans and having asked them what they needed most for the improvement and sustainable freedom, health, and happiness in their lives led back to me helping them get something so simple as *water*. I didn't even realize this until I woke up today – that this was what I have done with my life. This work I have done every day has become my life. And every day I have just lived, until it got me to this point where I am now, and today I have reflected that the essence of all of my life's work has been funneled down to this centralized and collective point: *I help Africans get clean water to drink*. Something so simple, and yet this has been the greatest challenge in all of my life. It is a daily challenge on so many levels, with countless obstacles.

And so, to answer Gibson's question: why do we live in a grass house made with mud walls and bricks burned into rectangles by the sun and a makeshift oven in the African bush? Because this is what makes me happy. I looked back on all of SSAAP's reports to the IRS, beginning in 2009. Since 2009, SSAAP has spent \$174 USD on its home/headquarters here in Zambia. This total amount includes: cement floor, dried grasses for the roof, plastic tarp for the roof, string to tie the plastic tarp to the dried grass. So, from 2009-2020 this is an average of \$15.81/year to maintain this house, which comes out to about \$1.32/month. That sounds just about perfect to me! We can afford a house that costs \$1.32 per month. ;)

I explained to Gibson that I don't take a salary from SSAAP. If I did so, we would have so much less funding for all of our projects: our water wells, microloan program, sewing endeavors, gardening projects ~ our modest living expense budget gives us everything we need, and just enough that we are happy without spoiling us, so that we still appreciate the simple things: having lemons for our tea or ketchup for our potato fries or syrup for our pancakes. Our largest expense by far is in air tickets, which are generally exorbitant, but we get our tickets at a reduced rate with humanitarian airfare that many of the missionaries also use, as we are here doing service projects not simply being tourists. I also try to reduce the heavy expense of air travel by staying in each of our African SSAAP nations at least 8-12 months at a time. Rapid air movement pollutes the Earth in a major way, and so I try to stay put as long as possible in one location.

This is all not mentioning that *we are happy here*, which is also what I explained to Gibson. I Love living in the village and I know Radiance does, too. We enjoy cooking on our charcoal brazier, sweeping out our cement floor every day, taking care of our 10 (!!!) cats [I know this may sound excessive, but the cats are the gateway for ridding the compound of unwanted snakes and mice/rats. I haven't seen snakes or rats anywhere near my house since 2017], listening to the sound of the wind against the grass roof every morning when we oversleep 3-4 hours past the rest of the village who wake up at 05:00 a.m., watching the stars twinkle in the sky at night and having various debates

with my daughter over constellations: that they don't look like or look like whatever they are named after. Simply stated: the village is the jewel of both SSAAP and of our hearts. Wherever I find myself on this vast continent, I always seek the village. I hunt the village. I always have to get back to the village, as for me, it is the safest place in the world – and the place I trust most with my child. The village always has stars, simple life, kind people. When I get back to the village, I have found my way Home.

To add to this, I believe in the village, and in the people of Africa, and in the mission of our work so wholeheartedly I have raised my daughter in all of this. She will be eleven years old on 17 December 2020. She has grown up in this village context, and I do believe she is all the more independent, strong, and self-sufficient as a result of it. I don't feel anything in her life is lacking ~ and whatever is lacking I believe would be some shortcoming of my own within, not through an absence of something in the material world. That being said: she has the world – and the Universe! – and she has me! ☺ She has me in all my undying, infinite Love for her.



The Community Contribution piece for the SSAAP-Zambia Microloan Project is its beneficiaries bringing us water. The daily or every-other-day water supply to our home has been uplifting on so many levels. People are *grateful* to give back to the project through something as simple as donating 2 hours one day every 4-8 months (depending on our Microloan cycle) to bring water to our home. In fact they do it with joy. And this is *not* too much to ask of them, either; it is a falsity that these people are too poor and weak and vulnerable to be able to manage any kind of contribution back to anything. The antithesis is rather true: these people shine their highest Light when given an opportunity to share in the foundation of building this long-term project, which in the end, is owned by *them*.



A very old man, one recipient of the Microloan program, had just received a loan for K1600 (approximately \$160) when I gave him his little card which stated his name and the date for him to bring water for SSAAP. He told me he is an old man, which I chuckled and said I knew that. ☺ Then he told me that men don't fetch water in their culture, that they are 'too high' to do this and that it was 'women's work'. *Ouch*. I told him that after staying here for 17 years, I also knew this aspect of their culture. So he told me he couldn't fetch water for SSAAP. I told him that any member(s) of his family could assist him in this contribution, such as his wife or his children or grandchildren. He once again insisted that men do not fetch water in their culture ~ which is not entirely true. Men fetch water using bicycles and ox carts, but not on their heads as they have not been raised to carry water on their heads as the women have been and so their muscles haven't been strengthened like the women's have in order to do so. I once again insisted that if men cannot fetch water then men cannot receive Microloans, as SSAAP is a gender-equality organization, and the community contribution for the Microloan project is bringing water. You can bring it any way you want! The women in

your family can bring it, or you can bring it on a bicycle or an ox cart, but that this is the community contribution piece for the Microloan project. I explained that I understand the rules of their culture but that I don't necessarily follow them or agree with them, and that to me being culturally-sensitive also requires being sensitive to the violence in a culture: i.e. restrictions that are based on tradition that not only no longer serve the society but instead impose fierce limitations on it.

I explained that SSAAP serves all. Or, better to put it frankly: we are a gender-less organization. SSAAP Loves all. Everyone is served through SSAAP and no bias or preference is given to one gender over the other. This is not to ignore the cultural rules of their society such as a man not taking water, but rather to abandon them. SSAAP works within the structural and cultural matrix of Africa while also still maintaining the gender-equality base of U.S.A.



This man, pictured above, brought his entire family to help on his Water Day (he is the recipient of a K800 loan or approximately \$80 USD) via ox cart.

*

So very important to SSAAP is the concept of Community Contribution that some of our partner organizations have asked us questions regarding it. To follow is an excerpt from an email I wrote a project partner organization in U.S.A. in August 2020. Their organization operates out of U.S.A. and they wanted my advice on how to pay a salary to some of their workers here on the ground:

On Sat, Aug 22, 2020 at 1:10 PM Heather Cumming <heatherflower6@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi! I am so sorry for my delay and am about to leave town and the internet connection!

I am very bad with the thought of paying people salaries in Africa - simply because theirs is more of a barter system and money introduced into their system usually does more damage than good. People - the more remote areas you go and the deeper you go into those remote areas - have not been taught to

handle money or organise it or manage it. It will be squandered quickly. Money distributed in the village context always needs a plan surrounding it, a program – a project! Our Microloan recipients must have a plan for their loan in order even to receive one. I tend to work with people in-kind; transport costs are a must, however, because there is no one that can give that service so they have no choice other than to pay for public transport, but in terms of a wage couldn't it be in the form of more resources your organisation has to offer? The reason I say this is because paying people salaries is never going to be sustainable, and most donors don't want to pay salaries for people. Someone with your organisation will have to be fundraising indefinitely or infinitely to pay people to go to help others - and that isn't the essence of the work they are doing. We are all here to help each other.

The more that cash currency is used the more ego is, too. I would recommend paying people's transport and then rather than a salary, give people a project. Something sustainable. Just my ideas. Also when people are paid to help, their help generally does not come from the heart the same way it does when people are helping because the need is there and the currency is instead Love rather than cash. What I would do is this: pay for the 4 people's transport costs. Have the communities receiving your organisation's services help out too with the in-cash or in-kind payment of the 4 men. Why? Because they are benefitting so they also must take responsibility for the services being gifted to them. All of these people have something to offer, and the more we Western folks with the capitalistic mindsets and upbringing take a step back the more we can let the people on the ground, the local Zambians, take control of their own projects. That is empowerment. Otherwise you and your organisation have your hands tied and are shackled, stuck fundraising for people's salaries indefinitely. Then you have put your organisation in a position whereby you cannot keep helping your communities if you don't get funding, and well, these projects are worth a lot more than funding. A project should be able to be done even without money - if it is done right. Money plays a role but the true spine of development is letting people figure out how to manage things on their own and giving them the independence and empowerment to do so (a royal form of Love), and the NGO/nonprofit/service organisation should just be a nudge or a push. It shouldn't be the Sugar Daddy of the project because then people are attracted to the project for the wrong reasons, and if the money is gone hence so is the project.

No! Not the way forward!

I think you need to think of transport costs, then in terms of payment for these people - make the communities that are benefiting from the services of your project also contribute to your project. A community contribution is not people supporting something that just goes back to them: i.e. having them bring gravel for their own water filter. It's like saying that a person's contribution to his own meal is bringing himself a spoon in which to eat it with. A true contribution is the people giving back to the project as an entity so that the project doesn't die and is sustainable over time, too. I would fix an amount per filter that they do ~ say it is K 800 per filter, that is ~ \$44, then divide that by 4 or by 5 and give the manager 2x and the other 3 workers each 1x. For every filter that your project funds the payment on, then the community funds the other. Their 'bank' is in their goats, their cattle, their animals. Make them help too. They will get a lot more out of it in the end if they have had to contribute to their own well-being than if it was just handed to them. I failed my first year at University. I was immature and vain and selfish and had no idea of what I wanted in my life. Additionally, I had no concept of what my parents were doing for me by their handout towards my

education. They cut me off after year #1 and I had to fund the rest of my college by myself. When I had to pay for it on my own it meant the world of difference from when my parents were handing it out to me. Don't make your beneficiaries fail first and have to learn the hard way as I did - make them start paying in to their own future before they have a chance to fail first.

Does this help?? But transport is a definite cost. I have no idea what that would be but there is no getting out of transport and it cannot be paid in-kind, either.

Thanks so much!

Heather

*

On Mon, Aug 24, 2020 at 10:38 PM Heather Cumming <heatherflower6@gmail.com> wrote:

Oooohhhh, I just realised yesterday when I was sitting in Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park that maybe my email was too harsh or had a hard tone to it! Not my intention whatsoever! I just think that paying people in rural Africa is a fine idea - but it has to be done in a creative manner ~ more so than just handing them money. They won't respect the work we are trying to do and won't understand the 'payment' as we do. It is good to pay part of it in-cash (such as the mentioned transport idea) and some of it in-kind, perhaps another project that your organisation offers or that the community served will fund in-kind.

An example of this is an EWB- Boston University Project working with SSAAP in 2016. They needed some of my counterparts in the village to monitor their work in a village some 100km from Simwatachela. They suggested payment and I told them to give transport money and daily allowances (food, water, etc.) stipend for the workers, but that the real 'salary' for the job we would put into a cattle project. I had a meeting with my counterparts first to see if they would agree to this. They agreed wholeheartedly and even said: "It is better this way as if you give the cash to us we will squander it. We trust you to save it for us like a bank." So, after the transport and daily expense (we call it 'per diem' here) was given out, I put the money for the salary towards cattle ~ it came to 3 cows, about \$1500 USD! They were thrilled and now the cows have reproduced to 7, shared among 4 people - that's a lot in the village!



This is just one example of a creative way to invest in people that is far better than handing them cash. Help them manage their money, their finances or their resources and they will get so much more out of it that way. I don't know how remote your community is or how they are in terms of where they stay and their level of education, but in my area where people are very very far from town and have completed a basic level of education (versus a high one) and this model I present to you now is quite preferable to them. Handing them cash means at the end of the day they won't have anything to show for their work, but if SSAAP works with them on an additional project (such as the cattle) they have an investment and something to show for their work,

*The more rural you go the *easier* it is to work with people as their grasp is less on ego/money and more on simplicity; they are not focused on how to get rich !!! as I have noted many people are in cities and towns in Africa (following the capitalism model), but rather just having enough to survive (food and water) and I think it is much easier to work with people who have this kind of a mindset. I would prefer to work in a rural setting in Africa any day as I think it is more rewarding and easier in many contexts. Again, I have no idea how rural your people are or their mindset or how organised your group will be from where you are in U.S.A. and how much you have already worked with them up to this point. You will fill in the blanks; these two emails serve only as SSAAP's Community Contribution model. It works for us but it doesn't mean it will work for anyone else or any other project. I hope any bit of this will help you and please let me know if any part of it fails to make sense.*

Please send this along to whomever you sent my previous email to on Saturday 08/22 as a follow-up. Thank you once more!

Heather



Dr. Dennis, our professor/ doctor/ engineering expert who came here five years in a row to study the terrain, drilling sites, conduct assessments for wells, etc. with Mississippi State University's Engineers Without Borders (MSU-EWB) once told Chief Simwatachela that the most valuable resource Zambia has are the people themselves.



I know no other group of people on the planet like Zambians. They practice and preach peace and Nonviolence. And they truly are Nonviolent. One of only two African nations never having had a war, the innocence and heart-centeredness is evident in the people themselves. They mean no ill-will ~ not ever; and if by chance they hurt you, it was unintentional. They are kind to the core of their hearts. This has been my Truth working with them.



The Gift of Art



Physical and mental cleansing and strengthening is one of yoga's most important achievements. What makes it so powerful and effective is the fact that it works on the holistic principles of harmony and unification. According to medical scientists, yoga therapy is successful because of the balance created in the nervous and endocrine systems which directly influences all the other systems and organs of the body.

For most people in the 20th century, yoga was simply a means of maintaining health and wellbeing in an increasingly stressful society. Asanas (postures) do remove the physical discomfort accumulated during a day at the office sitting in a chair, hunched over a desk. Relaxation techniques help to maximize the effectiveness of ever-diminishing time off. In an age of mobile phones, internet and twenty-four hour shopping, yogic practices make great personal and even business sense.

At a time when the world seems to be at a loss, rejecting past values without being able to establish new ones, yoga provides a means for people to find their own way of connecting with their true selves. Through this connection with their real selves, it is possible for people to manifest harmony in the current age, and for compassion to emerge where hitherto there has been none.

In this respect, yoga is far from simply being physical exercises. It is an aid to establishing a new perception of what is real, what is necessary, and how to become established in a way of life which embraces both inner and outer realities. This way of life is an experience which cannot be understood intellectually and will only become living knowledge through practice and experience. However, the renaissance has begun.

~ From "The Relevance of Yoga Today", an excerpt from Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Women's Crafting: Holiday Ornaments



Radiance's first SSAAP project is the Holiday Ornament Project.

I am someone who believes wholeheartedly in the power of rest, of not overworking oneself and burning out. The strength of our ability to work hard directly correlates with our ability to rest. And that balance is imperative. Being worked to the marrow of my bones in the last quarter with the 12 Zambian wells and their corresponding Community Contribution – which translates into the re-building of our SSAAP compound – my daughter, very concerned I will get sick, offered to take the Holiday Ornament Project this year. She was very nervous, insisting that her mathematics weren't good enough to calculate how much each ornament should cost and how much to give the women upfront to stitch the ornaments after I told her our SSAAP budget for the project; I told her I could help her with any part of it, but I wanted it to be her project.

An additional impetus for her to work on this project is her relationship to its correlating supporting family in the U.S.A.: her beloved friends who she says she will do anything for, now she has her opportunity ☺



She took the project extremely seriously, meeting with her group of women often to explain fully the product she had in mind as well their responsibilities in this endeavor.



She cut out patterns for them to follow of holiday ornaments: bells, stars, hearts, gingerbread men/women, Santa Claus, doves, diamonds, gifts.



It took Radiance and I both some time to realize, after they brought their first 'practice' ornaments to our compound, that they had no context for our order. They had never seen a Christmas tree, and evergreen trees grow nowhere in Africa that I am aware of. They don't know what snow or snowmen are, and don't understand the idea of hanging something from the branches of a tree or putting gifts underneath a tree – not to mention the fact that they have no material gifts to give one another, simply the gift of themselves. The people we stay with are cash-poor; they generally don't have a single *ngwee* ('cent') to their names, and it is difficult for them to purchase soap, cooking oil, salt, or vegetables to eat alongside their staple dish '*n'shima*'.



I had an old advent calendar, and alongside some of our Christmas decorations we have here in a suitcase under our bed (!), we were able to show the women and introduce them to the idea of 'Christmas in the West' with the snowy tree, decorated with ornaments and gifts beneath it so that they would have a more complete picture of their project with Radiance. They were so excited to have their minds opened to such a broader picture than they had been used to in their village context – as well to be part of such a project with our family in the States that is funding this endeavor. The connection for them to international friends is extremely powerful.



They returned the following day fully-energized with incredible samples of their work to show Radiance. Not wanting to 'helicopter' her project, I tried to remain silent and simply, secretly just take photos of her interactions with the women from the door of our house. 😊



Radiance and I were mutually impressed by their craft – especially the little doves that they made separate wings for so that they can ‘fly’ on the Christmas trees in the U.S.A.!



I taught her to count the items they had brought so as to total the amount she had ordered, then after doing so to check for quality control. She discovered some of the gingerbread men/women’s feet looked as though they had been amputated, or that people in the States wouldn’t like a four-and-a-half pointed star, and sent about 23 of the 120 ornaments back for ‘edits’.



She made her own receipt for the women to sign and paid them their balance. One of the women, she knew, didn't know how to write thus sign her name, so she brought the receipt alongside our stamp pad for her fingerprint in lieu of her signature.

The ornaments will most-likely not arrive in the U.S.A. until 2021 due to SSAAP's lack of visitors in 2020 from the COVID-19 epidemic. Our visitors typically take SSAAP art back to the U.S.A. for us to avoid excessive postage costs, and so I anticipate the ornaments reaching the U.S. by 2021.

SSAAP is beginning a new section on its website called 'SSAAP Art Market', which will show many of our art products available for sale at our SSAAP fundraisers, which we will begin again in 2023/2024 when Heather and Radiance are back in the U.S.A. and can work together with Gail on the fundraisers once more; many thanks to Cecilia and Laura: engineers, artists, friends, and partners to SSAAP. *Thank you so so much for putting our website back together, Cecilia and Laura.* Cecilia worked on the majority of the website, her heart invested in this project since coming here with the Mississippi State University's Engineers Without Borders (MSU-EWB). Laura has been to the SSAAP-Zambia site for five consecutive years, also with MSU-EWB from 2013-2017. She anticipated visiting Zambia again in 2020 but was unable to due to COVID-19, so we are still hoping for her to come back here in 2021. We have two guest houses now on the compound, Laura! So you don't have to sleep in a sleeping bag in a tent anymore! I hope Cecilia too will join you when you come here.

Cecilia is re-designing the entirety of the SSAAP website, while Laura is working on the art portion of the site, adding photos of SSAAP art to the website; if any pieces interest you please contact either Gail or Laura, or contact me and I will put you in touch with either of them. Here is a link to SSAAP's updated website:

www.ssaap.org

Local SSAAP-Zambia Art



SSAAP enjoys *wholeheartedly* its opportunity to work with local crafters for the 'Art' part of SSAAP: *Simwatachela Sustainable Agricultural and Arts Program*. The Art sect of SSAAP, always overshadowed by its Agricultural counterpart (water, food, nutrition and farming), is going to get ample attention in this newsletter edition, as most of the month of August 2020 Radiance and I were near the Zambezi River, working with local carvers and women making art near *Mosi-oo-Tunya*, 'the Smoke that Thunders' or Victoria Falls.

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SSAAP Art Program with Artisans on the Zambezi



We bought over 700 pieces of art for future SSAAP fundraisers in 2023/2024 (when Heather and Radiance are back in U.S.A.: Colorado and Ohio, and post-COVID as I

prefer in-person events to virtual ones, so that I can make food and people can come and eat!, and so that we may allow one another to connect and pour; we need that in the world again, I believe; we need to try to feel each other's energy once more. Virtual is okay but it is not a substitute for the real encounter of two persons). Therefore, bearing the future SSAAP fundraisers in mind, Radi and I tried to spread our orders for as many people as possible, helping as many [literally] starving artists as we could, as COVID-19 has hit them very, very hard. Those selling crafts near Victoria Falls (Zambian side) survive 100% on tourism, and as the Zambian borders are currently closed to tourists, they have no means of survival right now. We talked extensively about COVID-19 being a learning opportunity *for us all* but that specifically for them, perhaps Mother Nature is giving them a lesson in diversification and learning how to keep animals and grow crops so that they are not cash-dependent and even worse: tourist-dependent.



Like with the Holiday Ornament Project, I now begin to give Radiance more responsibility in counting money for art items and distributing it to artisans.



Most of the people we are working with cannot even conceal their gratefulness for SSAAP purchasing their art in-bulk. It is breathtaking. They tell me that we have been their only source of employment since COVID hit Africa in March/ April 2020. But their art is exceptional, and they are so skilled in their trade; it is they doing SSAAP the favor for the opportunity at purchasing their local goods, and not the other way around – I tell them ;)



We also work heavily with womyn artisans, as with our partner organization *We'Moon* from Wolf Creek, Oregon, sending them annual art orders. *We'Moon* only purchases goods crafted by womyn artisans, as shown below. We are infinitely thankful to you, *We'Moon*! We Love you, Barb, as well the entire *We'Moon* Staff!





We found ourselves working around-the-clock while in Livingstone, commissioning local artisans to make specialty products: gifts for donors, or for our art fundraisers for SSAAP. One art seller (we call ourselves 'art traders' here) even followed Radi and I to town to purchase our supper and waited for us outside the 'Spar' Superstore with his goods (above, right) while we were inside buying our meal!

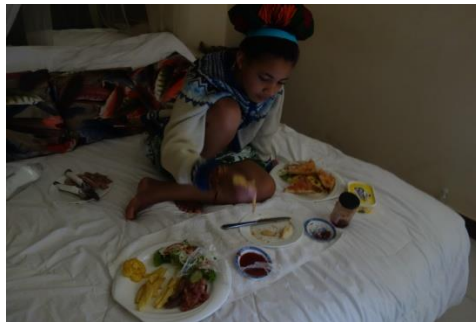
Word spread between the artisans that we were buying art in-bulk and soon we had people calling us we didn't even know, asking if they could show us their art.

Chief Mukuni of Mukuni Chieftdom, which encompasses both Livingstone town and Victoria Falls, honored our assistance in his chieftdom by putting us in a very nice, very expensive Chinese-owned hotel, called *Oriental Swan*.



To be put up in such a nice hotel for 2 weeks is more than generous of Chief Mukuni, and is something we appreciate daily: the warm, soft bed, television (!), a hot shower (!!)

and a delicious hot breakfast every morning: served either in their restaurant or in our room.



I consider myself as a typical African: I am controlled by food, emotionally-respond to food; the gateway into my heart is opened through food. My father, incidentally, is the same way; perhaps this is my genetic makeup ;) then.

Now, as if this were not enough, we were spoiled further in Livingstone through redemption of two pizzas through our water well contract with Likumbi. Written into the 2020 contract was an *mpasela*, or a gift as thanks for giving Likumbi our well contract. The *mpasela* for the well contract was Radiance's two pizzas. By the second pizza, we were offered motorbike delivery to the hotel, and the owner of the pizza shop was so impressed by Radi's *ciTonga* that he threw a mini-pizza into the order as a gift.

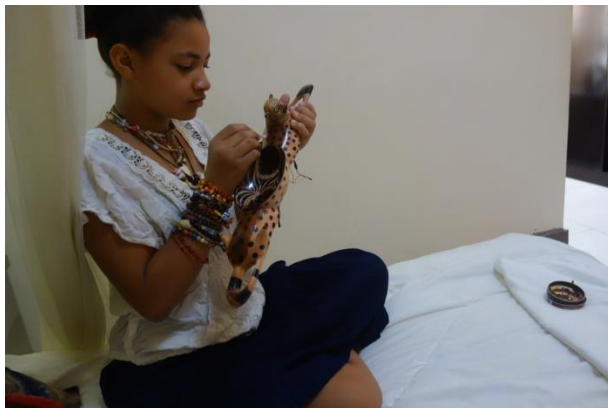




Staying at the Chinese-owned *Oriental Swan Hotel* has gotten Radiance very interested in Chinese culture. While at the hotel, she was engrossed in watching [translated into English] Chinese soap operas while we were there (!) which actually do show some tidbits of culture, and she Loves the Chinese art on the walls. She asked me if we could ever visit China, and I told her that when she graduates from grade 12, before she enters university, she can choose wherever she wants to visit in the world and we will go there as her graduation gift. Her top three choices, as of now (she is 10 and in class 5) are: China; Salzburg, Austria (she adores the film *The Sound of Music*); Ullapool, Scotland (she is interested in seeing where her root lies through my father's side of the family).

An update on Radi's home-school: aside from helping me with SSAAP projects, she is studying units on European monarchies (primarily England and France) from 1500-1800s; early African history of Southern Africa (from Uganda south to the cape of Africa) and tribal migration; the history of Antarctica and various philosophies on whether it was frozen over before 1500; Atlantis: the mysterious sunken continent.

But staying at *Oriental Swan Hotel* we have also been hard-working: every morning after breakfast, Radi does the laundry and then either polishes some of the crafts we have purchased or wraps them up – either for shipping or for storage in our home until our visitors arrive (hopefully in 2021) to take the crafts back to U.S.A.





We have this ongoing joke that we are our own maid service: wash our own floor, change our own bed linens, as we do not want anyone working at the hotel to see our room! There are hundreds of wooden handcrafts lying all around the floor, and the only person permitted entry is Clifftone Sitali: Chief Mukuni's Secretary and one of our best friends in Zambia. On a daily basis he enters our hotel room: dropping off more art for us to go through, collecting art we don't wish to purchase, helping Radiance wrap the art we need shipped or that needs to be stored at our home in the village.



Radi, Clifftone (who we affectionately call 'Cliffy') and I have a joke: you enter our hotel room, and you step on an elephant's tusk. You get out of bed and you land on a lion or a cheetah. You walk to the toilet and find a hippo outside your shower door ;)



But all-in-all we just have so much fun working with Cliffy and all the artisans that taking a beautiful hotel as a gift sometimes just feels guilty. We have *so much fun*.



Meeting with Chief Mukuni, or *The Lion King* as those in his Kingdom call him, standing with me outside *Oriental Swan Hotel*.



Radi and Cliffy are our professional art-wrappers ☺ in Zambia while Laura and Gail are our art-traders in U.S.A. Please let me know if you are interested in any pieces of art and wish to be put in touch with Laura or Gail - if you are not already in touch with Gail. Even she has been known to carry around elephant tusks in her change purse ;)



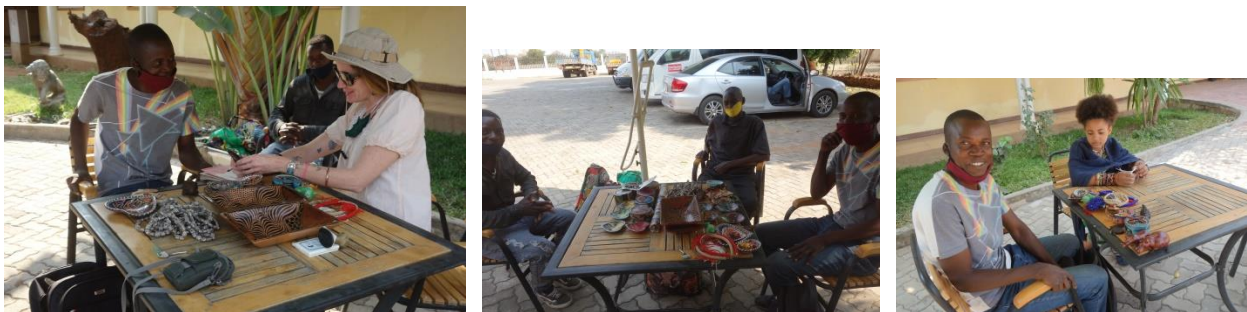
Here is one of the many lessons parenthood has gifted me: the challenges will always be there regardless of the ages of our children, but the truly hard work of a child's childhood pays off for the parent. This is an eventuality, an inevitability. Radi is sssss000000 helpful to me now, not to mention she is my best friend. Some of my favorite times are at breakfast together in the restaurant of this hotel, talking over tea and coffee, gaining insights from one another. I have always treated her as my equal, having a very

unconventional and somewhat unpopular parenting model that makes many people quite uncomfortable no matter where we are in the world – but it works for us, and we are happy. And we are two: just her and I. We are wild and free and we can roam more easily this way, the spirits that we are. I simply believe that as parents we should be our greatest allies to our children because when the outside world gets sticky – it always does – our parents are there for us, rooting us on from the sidelines, believing us and believing in us unconditionally.

Radiance has been raised primarily in Africa, where children are taught to be seen and not heard at best and to be slaves to their parents and grandparents and extended families at worst, thus we have both experienced a lot of negativity from other Africans about how ‘spoiled’ Radiance is by my Love, or that I give her no boundaries and too many freedoms. This poses a very deep philosophical question: *Can we be spoiled by too much Love?* Or is spoiling only ever the result of material abundance? Something to think about...

I believe this, just she and I both face, is the fate of all who refuse boxes: to be categorized, to be labeled, to be put into something specific. Radiance doesn’t have a box, or a category; she is everything. She is the beautiful black man which is her father and the outspoken Sierra Leonean; she is the writer and the student of cultural anthropology of her mother and the independent American; she is the woman who Loves symphony and European architecture and theatre who comes from my mother, and the philosopher who wishes we owned every season of The History Channel’s *Ancient Aliens* like my father; she is the product of the village elders: the old woman pounding ground nuts into the pot of boiling cabbage over the fire and Nature’s apothecary as my mother’s mother was, and the old wacky wise woman who collected ancient wisdom from the stars and had moon rocks all over her house as well a chunk of the Berlin Wall as my father’s mother was.

There is always a heavy price we pay for refusing to be put into a box in a world society that favors boxes; one must weigh the discomfort of refusing the box against the sting of suffocating one’s spirit in order to fit into it. This is the path of one who doesn’t belong anywhere because s/he belongs *everywhere*.



And so the artists began just coming directly to our hotel, and we worked with them out of the hotel as though it was our office.



SSAAP is proud to work with Shadreck, our local painter, in Livingstone as well.





Our beloved friends who work around Victoria Falls, or with National Heritage. They have known me since before Radiance was born; whenever I am in Livingstone, I am put on Chief Mukuni's Guest List and therefore can enter the Falls at any time, free of charge.



I always tell Cliffy, half-jokingly, the Falls is mine and therefore I cannot pay to enter. He laughs and says that all the local people who have grown up there say the very same ;) – that it would be insulting for them to have to pay to enter the Falls.



And of course, no trip to Livingstone town would be complete without a diagnostic checkup from SSAAP's computer technician, Keegan, who Radi and I affectionately call 'Keegy', who deals with all our laptop issues ~ our laptop being our traveling office. He is well-skilled and even traveled to Poland to learn more about working with computers. Like all the Zambians we work with, he is comfortable and kind.



The breathtaking panorama of the Falls is my favorite in the evening, in the hour or two before the sun sets: 5 or 6 p.m. (17:00-18:00 – we use Military Time here in Zambia).

Zambians are pretty much the kindest, friendliest collective group of people you will ever meet. There is rarely an exception to this rule with them. This young lady, who was a complete stranger, asked me as we were hiking from Victoria Falls down to the waterfall below, in the gorge of the Falls called *The Boiling Pot*, if she could untie Radiance's braids in her hair. She saw that Radiance's hair was a mess and worked to untangle it as we were walking down the gorge!



I could count on more fingers than I have the number of African women who have told me they pity my half-black daughter as she has '*... a white mama who doesn't know how to do hair...*' The lack of political correctness in Africa and the candidness that comes alongside it is somehow refreshing to me. I always just laugh, agreeing with them: I don't know how to braid hair like an African woman, my own hair looks horrible most of the time, and were it left up to me I would just cut off both of our hair because I find it such a nuisance and a waste of time.



After swimming in the waterfall and sleeping on the rocks, this group of Zambian tourists asked for their photo with me (above, right).

Microloan Project: Gateway to Freedom

... SSAAP's Microloan Program: our beloved baby.



A Satyagrahi is one who practises Satyagraha. Satyagraha is a way of life. It not only includes the active direct action against oppression or injustice, but also the whole lifestyle of the person who practises Satyagraha.

A Satyagrahi has a creed, has a value-system, has certain methods of working. But these he/she uses like an artist, not in a set way, but according to the need of situation. Each act of a Satyagrahi, therefore, becomes an independent act of art.

~ from Handbook for Satyagrahis by Narayan Desai





What the Microloan Program has taught me is that a non-profit organization, such as SSAAP, if managed correctly, becomes a for-profit project for its African beneficiaries.



SSAAP gave out 30 new loans in September 2020. This was mid-cycle, as we gave out over 100+ loans in June 2020 and those loans are not due until January 2021. The September 2020 mid-cycle was for people in emergency situations. The number I promised to help started at 4, then grew to 20, and when it reached 30 I cut it off; still

there are people at my door asking for a loan, and I told them to wait until January 2021! And to fill out an application form for a loan! The Microloan Program is SSAAP-Zambia's most popular program, sharing that position with the water wells.





The women pictured above, a group of six widows, left SSAAP's compound rejoicing, after having received a loan from SSAAP.



I tell each and every Microloan recipient to read the document pertaining to the Terms and Conditions of the Loan before signing the document – and if they cannot read, then I read it to them. I write out the Terms and Conditions in *ciTonga*, not in English.



I do this because there should not be any room for falsity, for corruption, for impurities within the framework of SSAAP. It should remain transparent for all who are involved.



10/09/20

Dear Sir/Madam

I am here by giving a report on how I used the K400=00 given by your organisation, I and my family managed to purchase 'Lifa sifa' light for @U which will enable my children to study on their school academic

Lastly but not the least would like to thank your project for the recognition

We therefore ask SSAPP and it partners to continue helping us

Yours Faithfully
Siakambola Emmanuel



The Microloan Project has an off-shoot benefit to it, also; with the 500+ applicants to the program, our host family (who SSAAP stays behind) is unable to put a face with a name to many of the program's applicants. In other words, my African father, Gibson, and my African mother, Selena, know most people facially but they do not know their names. When people come to ask for a loan, our rule is that if we don't know who you are or we have never seen you before you don't get a loan - because we have no reassurance you will return. Many of our loan applicants have been rejected simply because Gibson and/or Selena didn't know the name of the person on the application - yet they knew the person by his/her face.

Gibson, pictured above standing, came up with the idea that each Microloan applicant ought to have his/her photo affixed to her/his application. This way, we will know who each person is, and if s/he does not return the loan we have more proof with a passport-sized photo stapled to that individual's Microloan application. Gibson, a photographer by profession, takes photos for people - including passport-sized photos - hence this will provide him with a sustainable employment opportunity, as people are coming now in masses for this very important project.



Gardens

...with my hands in the soil, somehow I am able to connect with something so much deeper and more powerful than just my small self. And with the tender soil beneath my fingertips, the gravity of this world and all it means to be a part of it humbly reduces me back to the dust that I am. When I am feeling disconnected to this world, sometimes I lay on the soil of Mother Earth and feel Her heartbeat... my presence on the planet feels more rooted this way, through this kind of connection to dirt.



Crystals are the earth's DNA, a chemical imprint for evolution. They are minature storehouses, containing the records of the development of the earth over millions of years, and bearing the indelible memory of the powerful forces that shaped it. Some have been subjected to enormous pressure, others grew in chambers deep underground, some were laid down in layers, others dripped into being – all of which affects their properties and the way they function. Whatever form they take, their crystalline structure can absorb, conserve, focus and emit energy, especially on the electromagnetic waveband.

~ From The Crystal Bible by Judy Hall



For SSAAP, we have two large gardening endeavors. One is a personal gardening project for Radiance and I, so that we may have our own fresh produce: mint, basil, leafy greens, wild berries growing. This will mean less trips to town and more time in the village, thus a higher level of concentration on our project – not to mention healthier food for us both! Above, Radiance with our seedling garden in front of our house. A larger garden is being constructed behind our house – with a door on it as well! Below left, leafy greens grown in our garden that we eat most nights for dinner; below right, our morning tea: lemons, oranges, ginger, and mint. This powerful concoction not only tastes magnificent, but I believe it is the reason neither of us have been sick at all since we got back to Zambia at the end of April 2020.



Below left and right, members of the community are assisting us to transplant the seedlings from in front of our house to the new garden behind the house they made us.



Plantation Project

Divorce between intelligence and labour has resulted in criminal negligence of the villages.

~ From Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place by Mohandas K. Gandhi



The children, pictured above, push a large blue drum to the garden behind their home in an effort to water it by hand. The drums are huge and require a community of children to push it, or a pair of cattle (*'n'gombe'* in our local language). In order to do large-scale gardening, we need first a borehole (water well) then in the future: irrigation methods. For now, a borehole is better than anything else as to avoid lugging heavy drums of water for 5-10 kilometers and slave-laboring children, as shown above.

On a large-scale, SSAAP is initiating its own Garden Project (named "Plantation Project") so that members of the community can eat more, have a more well-rounded source of nutrients, and an income-generation project as our long-term mission is to create a roadside market. One of our SSAAP-Zambia 2020 boreholes, drilled on the SSAAP land, will be used primarily for irrigation purposes for this large-scale community garden. The center of the entire "Plantation Project" will be this borehole.

The "Plantation Project", as I call it, will specifically target three groups of highest vulnerability in our chiefdom. The first group will work with citrus trees (grapefruit, lemons, limes, oranges) and will target local youths, helping to pay college tuition for many students who have finished grade 12 but have no source of education to further their education. They can work on the garden, watering and weeding and planting, as well cultivating the soil, then in-turn sell the produce at the local market on the Mapatizya Road we are constructing. With proceeds, many of these youths who have finished grade 12 can afford to go to college or university here in Zambia!

The second vulnerability group: people who have special needs or special-case circumstances. This group will be in charge of the large-scale gardens. The group includes those women whose husbands have many wives and are suffering heavily from the violence of polygamy; women whose husbands are drunkards and drink up the food and school money for the family; disabled persons; persons with extenuating circumstances, such as Radiance Sinan' gombe, my daughter Radiance's namesake (pictured below, left). I call her 'Radiance Senior'. ☺



Radiance Sr., age 38, is two years younger than I and is already a grandmother; her oldest daughter Cawleen has a child called Lweendo (pictured above, right). Radiance has seven children, the oldest (*Cawleen*) age 18, the youngest (*Jail*) age 2 ½. Her last-born son, Jail, was named as such as he was conceived between her husband Eugene's two prison terms. He was incarcerated from 2012-2017 for stealing a cow, then again in 2019 for stealing another cow; he now faces another 5-year sentence for the exact same crime.

Radiance Sr. was in fact my inspiration for the "Plantation Project". I began to contemplate this project half a decade ago, when attempting to fuse together the notion of a project that would provide significant food, nutrition and perhaps even income to the masses, as well touch those eliminated from the society: those with disorders or special circumstances as described above. Radiance Senior and I have always had a heart-to-heart connection; she is the second-born in her family, as I am, and she has always been my favorite of all Gibson's (my African father) seven children. She is always in my heart. So this project will be too for her.

The third target group is anyone industrious and hard-working who wants to work on this endeavor. No gender, age or any other requirement. This group will focus of one of the orchards, perhaps banana trees.

The challenge in such a project lies in its organization; it must be organized properly if it is to be successful.

Fertilizer: SSAAP will work with the *Bokashi Fertilizer* methodology, meaning no pesticides or chemicals (SSAAP will not purchase chemical fertilizers) and will rather work with an organic system of farming. Bokashi fertilizer is comprised largely of dried manure and soil. Dried manure comes from the cattle, sheep, goats, chickens, etc. already found in the community; Bokashi also uses soil, and a carbohydrate source for beneficial microorganisms, sugar, yeast, and charcoal, then will undergo a fermentation process. More updates to come on this as I am still learning about it myself! But the bottom line is that SSAAP will promote environmentally-friendly and health-conscious methodologies of farming, rather than sponsoring chemical fertilizers which are harmful to the human body as well as Mother Earth.

Seeds: The seed aspect of the “Plantation Project” will work similarly to the Art Projects with SSAAP. All art sold by SSAAP in the States is recycled back into SSAAP, so that we can sustainably and continuously purchase artifacts and artworks from our dedicated artisans in both Zambia and Sierra Leone. This concept of ‘recycling funds’ back into the project will be used for the seeds for the “Plantation Project”, in an effort to avoid hand-outs to people in the village. SSAAP will purchase the initial seeds for the project, and then after a year will be expected to refund the cost of the seeds once they have sold enough produce to cover the cost of the seeds. With this money, we will buy *more* seeds. Simply handing the people seeds without expecting anything in return will lead to disaster and fighting amongst community members; if people begin the project with the expectation that they are required to return the cost of the seeds within a year, it will put them in a position of taking the project more seriously. With the money they return to the project, we will buy more seeds – so their return on the seeds ensures *lifetime sustainability* of the project.

The same concept will apply with SSAAP purchasing tree seedlings for the project (banana trees; grapefruit, lemon, orange, lime citrus trees) to begin our orchards. SSAAP will fund the initial seedling costs, and then after 5 years will be expected to return this money (trees take much longer to cultivate and to produce fruit than the return produce on the garden produce) so as to purchase more tree seedlings.

The land piece of the “Plantation Project” is vital; please see the land documents in the pages to follow. Ownership of land in Zambia is quite straightforward: if land is for personal use, such as growing coffee, tobacco, sugar, etc., then the person or entity absorbing the income-generation from such ventures must purchase the land. However, if the project will benefit local people especially in remote, undeveloped areas of Zambia, then land is provided free-of-cost by the Chief. The expectation is that the land will be used for development of local people and local resources, and that the project will give as much back as it receives from the land.

Bwasanu 17 July 2020

Kamwamba Mwamii!

Muli bayumu?

Tuli kabotu loko!

Ciindi cilamfu!

Ndasika mu 24 May mu miinzi.



I am very serious about the land you offered me in May 2019 for my project at the Friendly Water meeting at your Palace: the land near Cinkoyo. What I wanted for my project, called SSAAP: Simwatachela Sustainable Agriculture and Arts Program, was a large area of land (maybe 100 hectares?) to develop with orchard trees (lemons, oranges, grapefruit, bananas), bee-keeping, large community gardens to grow uncommon vegetables that are only found in town and create a market near Cinkoyo, on the main road, for selling honey, lemons, oranges, grapefruit, bananas, green beans, potatoes, carrots, tomatoes, onions...

so many things. If we can develop the remote areas, there will be less congestion in town and more emphasis on the opportunities in the rural areas. Therefore, people will have more respect for our villages here in Africa!, and those of us living here will have better nutrition through food variety, income through a market, and less hunger. This idea of mine I have been thinking of for a long time, and would also like to grow trees on the land that will bring more rainfall to the area, due to deforestation caused by malasha na nkuni.

Ndalumba loko! Ndapanga programme kusiya cikujū camwe ku nyika ya SSAAP, in a centralised area of the land, I wish to sink one borehole this year (October 2020) to use for watering the orchards and gardens. The community contribution (25%) will be to build a protective fence around the seedlings and eventually to find a watch man at night. Please fill out the attached paper regarding the SSAAP land. I am so grateful to you! Thank you! He Zeh

SSAAP Land

Location:

THIS LAND IS JUST BY CHINKOYO SHED IN THE WESTERN DIRECTION

Size:

APPROXIMATELY 45 HECTARES

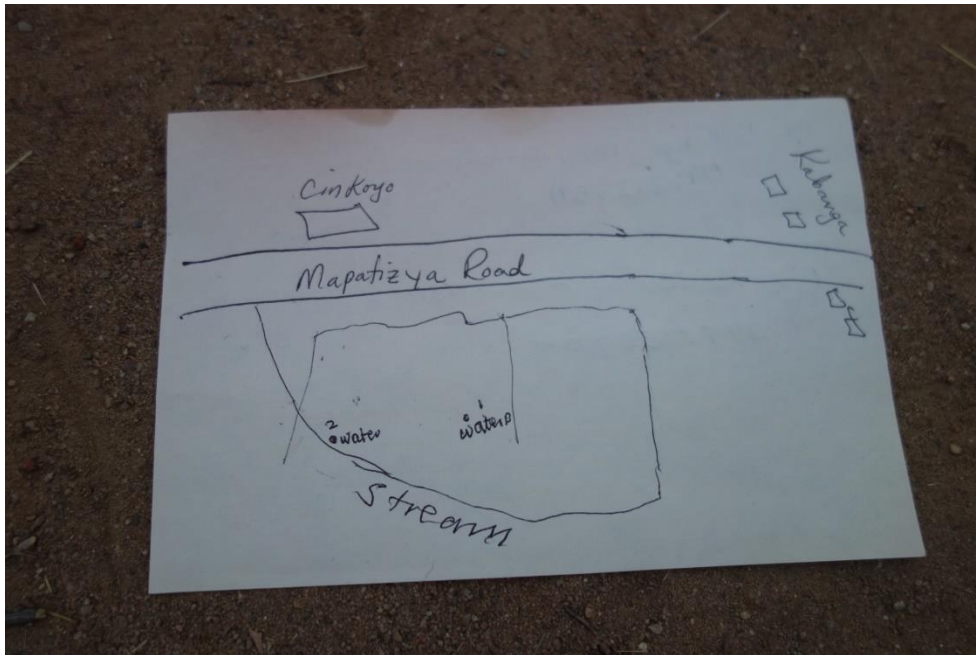
Headmen / Villages Surrounding Land:

- SIMUKARE VILLAGE
- STULIKWA VILLAGE
- SIMODHO VILLAGE
- SIBOOLI VILLAGE

Approval Agreement that this land has been donated to SSAAP for the purpose of rural community development and to provide services to local people of Simwatachela Chiefdom, Zambia.

Official Stamp from Chief Simwatachela's Palace:





Pictured above is a small-scale drawing of the land, and 'Cinkoyo' is an agricultural shed. The two water points mentioned above are the two points that Likumbi found on his water-siting venture to the land, prior to drilling the borehole in October 2020 on the land.

*





The Gift of Love



*Love is Love when it makes exceptions to its own rule;
when it exceptionally keeps trying;
when it does all things in its name
not in the name of another
but solely for Love itself.
This is Love:
You.*





What I have learned through the adventure of this life: its only purpose is to learn to be ourselves. This world can only truly benefit from you when you are honest with yourself and committed to being your true **you** – no matter how difficult it is, and without exception. Without you, there is a void in the Universe; Nature hasn't designed anything that is less than perfect. It would never waste its time in doing so. Strive to always be true to being *you* and in doing so you will have served all of humanity as well the Universe.

There is only one you, and no one can ever do as good a job of being you but you. And no one can ever replace you.



***Luyando lwini** (ciTonga): genuine Love. Love shown externally as it is internally; Love felt internally as it is shown externally. Love should be equal to the outside as it is on the inside; the balance is mandatory and scientific, even metaphysical. As with all things, the Zen, the Chi, the flow, the Light is in the middle way: the balanced way. What is inside should be outside; what is outside should be inside. The inside should be equal to the outside, and in that balance, you have found your raw, core Nature ~ thus you have discovered Source.*

The Gift of Nature

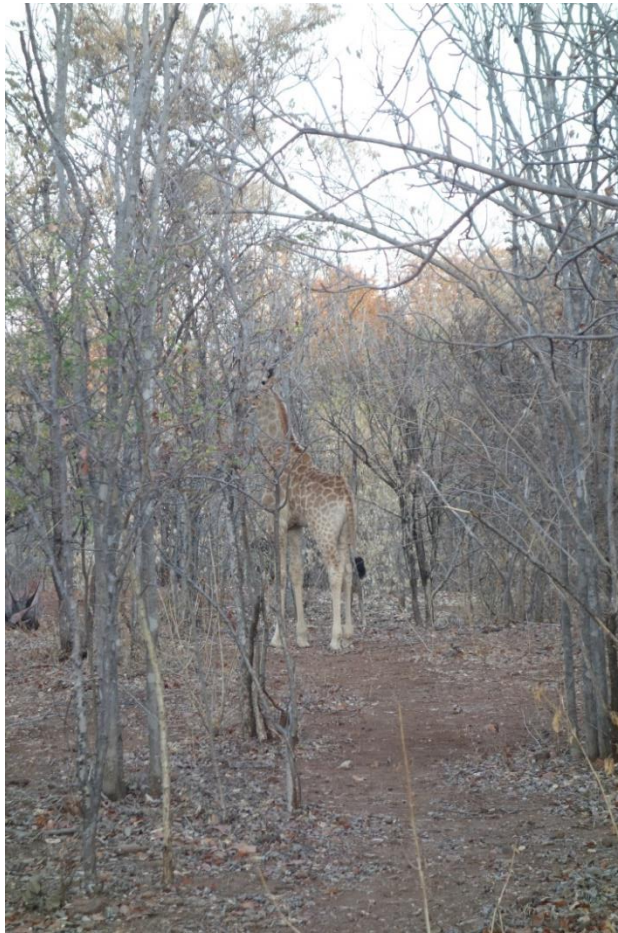


Every area in Nature is like a sacred temple, each with its own unique energies, reminding us that there are a myriad of ways to worship and celebrate. Even those areas of erosion remind us of neglected things we have allowed to run off or slowly disappear, sacred and mundane parts of our life. Finding or creating places in Nature to meditate, pray or just do 'quiet sitting' is one of the most empowering things you can do in Nature to open to her heart and soul language.

Sacred spaces create powerful magical intersections in our life. They are places and times where the inner and outer worlds meet. They are intersections where the physical and spiritual can come together. They are where psychic perceptions become stronger and more normal. Through sacred spaces the veils that separate worlds and creative wonders become thinnest.

~ From Nature-Speak by Ted Andrews

The Gift of Trees

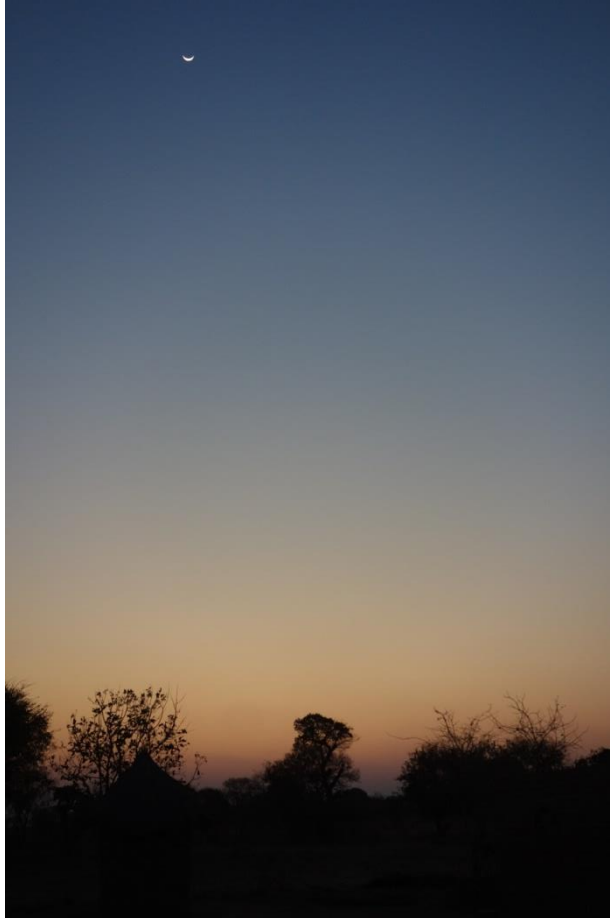


I became totally absorbed into this forest existence. It was an unparalleled period when aloneness was a way of life; a perfect opportunity, it might seem, for meditating on the meaning of existence and my role in it all. All the time I was getting closer to animals and nature, and as a result, closer to myself and more and more in tune with the spiritual power that I felt all around. For those who have experienced the joy of being alone with nature there is really little need for me to say much more; for those who have not, no words of mine can ever describe the powerful, almost mystical knowledge of beauty and eternity that come, suddenly, and all unexpected. The beauty was always there, but moments of true awareness were rare. They would come, unannounced; perhaps when I was watching the pale flush preceding dawn; or looking up through the rustling leaves of some giant forest tree into the greens and browns and the black shadows and the occasionally ensnared bright fleck of blue sky; or when I stood, as darkness fell, with one hand on the still-warm trunk of a tree and looked at the sparkling of an early moon on the never still, softly sighing water of Lake Tanganyika.

The longer I spent on my own, the more I became one with the magic forest world that was now my home.

~ from "Solitude", an excerpt from Reason for Hope by Jane Goodall

The Gift of Stars



*Among the ancient civilizations that first named constellations were the Babylonian, Indian, Greek, Roman, Chinese, and Native American. These people dwelt in the Northern Hemisphere and were therefore able to name only groups of stars visible in northern latitudes, as the far southern constellations were not visible to them. The second-century Greco-Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy cataloged more than 1,000 stars and 48 constellations in his work the *Almagest*. These constellations that have been known since antiquity are called ancient constellations.*

Nicolas-Louis de Lacaille, after a trip to the southern tip of Africa, named 14 more and cataloged about 10,000 stars between 1750 and 1754. These new constellations are known as modern constellations.

Learning about the constellations and the stars and other objects within them will enrich your understanding of our place in the universe – and increase your appreciation of our ancestors of the ancient world, who knew how to read the skies.

~ From National Audubon Society Pocket Guide: Constellations by Dr. Gary Mechler and Dr. Mark Chartrand

The Gift of Time

With the light in your heart, death itself is transformed into a door, and you enter into the universal spirit; you become one with the ocean. And unless you know the oceanic experience, you have lived in vain.

Now is always the time, and the fruit is always ripe. You just need to gather courage to enter into your inner forest.

~ from "Ripeness", an excerpt from The Transcendental Game of Zen by Osho



One of our benefits of being here, one of our many 'salaries' I always say, is the vast time and space in which we are able to expand into Nature, and be part of it and to know its rhythms: both forcefully and subtly. To tell time during the day by the sun and at night by the moon and the stars.

To grasp the concept of time in Africa (and it is difficult to try to explain, so bear with me as I try) think of sitting by the ocean for the entirety of the day. Remember that you leave your watch behind as to prevent sand from getting inside of it, or your mobile phone you are also without as you want no distractions between you and the Source. You automatically are able to tell time perfectly by how the sun reflects upon the water, or when it burns your skin at the pinnacle of the day, or how it slowly casts off some of its glow as it drops down slowly into the horizon. The way we tell time in the village is essentially the same as this. Africans have their own system of time, just as relevant as we do in the West - only differently to our Western time scale. I will declare that time here in Africa is told here by the hours, or by chunks: 'early-early morning' (just after sunrise): *kuseeni-seeni*; 'morning' (9 am - 12 noon): *kuseeni*; 'after-noon' (from 12 noon

until 4 p.m.): *sikati*; 'as the sun is setting' (about 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.): *izuba yabila*; night (from 7 p.m.- onward): *masiku*.

Things get done here, but they get done on Nature's Time, rather than on a schedule or by minutes or watches. African Time is even difficult for me to adjust to, after all these years and the adaptations I have done within the fabric of my being in order to live here; I am still poor at relaxing and going with the flow. I speak from experience, recent experience!: I spent all of September 2020 and part of October 2020 on one of my 'Heather Schedules' where everything was planned down to the day: which village would complete which task of building on the SSAAP compound, who would bring what building materials and by what time of day. I drove myself crazy, bore almost a daily headache, cried out of frustration and people consistently telling me: '*Takwe sunu - juunza!*' which means in English: *Not today - tomorrow!*, and then the following day never showing up. I ended up sitting around and reading a lot, or working with Radiance on her home-school ~ not allowing others to waste my time. And what I learned - what the African people taught me - was that everything got done, but not at the pace I had planned/ordered/scheduled it. I always say that Western Time doesn't fit into African Time, but the converse applies too: African Time doesn't fit into the Western Time context. I have another story to explain this.

The most recent year I was home, 2018, was in Colorado, U.S.A. When I am back in the States I never, ever have enough time with my friends or family and everyone I Love when I am home and that has just become basically part of the DNA of our existence: *time always runs out too quickly*. I try to control it and I cannot; in the end I just throw up my hands and realize that death must be this way too: time always runs out before we are ready. I am also chronically late - ask my father or my little sister Jennie about this (!); I am always late, was 2 weeks late being born, and just cannot seem to grasp Western Time. And yet I always run by it, even here in Africa: by deadlines, by not wasting time, by using Time as the greatest gift of this lifetime. So back to my story: it was a beautiful sunny Saturday in June 2018, and at an outdoor pub somewhere in Denver; I had to catch the bus to go home to Northern Colorado where Mom was taking care of Radiance. There was only one bus that would be leaving Denver for Loveland that day, and so I couldn't miss the bus. My friend Aaron and I were meeting Rena and Ryan, our other friends, at the pub. It was Happy Hour, and quite frankly all of life ought to just be Happy Hour; the perfect time of day the perfect setting, and everything was just perfect all-around. We arrived at the pub and Rena and I were so excited to see each other; she is one of those friends of mine that I rarely get to see and Love so much and never have enough time with. She said she wanted to buy me a margarita - half-off: Happy Hour. Aaron raised his eyebrows: "Be careful. You have a bus to catch." I waved him off with my hand and Rena and I just dove right into our conversation, and only about 20 minutes after being there, Aaron - who is someone who is always early or right on time, just like my father and my little sister - said: "You have 23 minutes and 12 seconds until your bus leaves the station."

I rolled my eyes. “Aaaaawww, but Rena and I just started talking and she just bought me this gorgeous drink.”

“The bus isn’t going to wait for you, Heather.”

“Wait a minute! I just realized - I have enough time! I can tell time by the sun! That’s what we do in Africa! The bus leaves at 4:48, and it is 3-something right now, right? I think your watch is wrong. I think time is still there! I still have time - I’m not ready to go yet...”

Ryan began laughing, shaking his head and just laughing. Most of my oldest friends know me so well they can see through me by now.

“Sure,” said Aaron, “go ahead and tell time by the sun here the way you do in Africa - but then you have already missed your bus, girl.”

*

Thus what I have learned from Africa is just as near and as dear to me as what I have learned in U.S.A.: time is a gift, but it is also relative to context. Astrological time: how many galaxies are separated by the black holes between them; Geological time: how long it took to make the Andes mountains or the time it takes to make a crystal quartz; Light Years: the time it takes to travel from Aldebaran to Antares; Womb time: how long it took for my daughter to germinate in utero; Dinosaur time: how many millions of years ago the Erythrosuchus or Chasmatosaurus existed; Prehistoric time: when the Mammuthus Columbi or the Platybelodon walked the earth; Ice Age time: around 30,000 years ago at the height of the last glacial period. Human time is just one increment, one dimension of time ~ and all human beings, depending upon culture, climate, and history have a different way of interpreting time. Time is flexible; it has many ways.



The Gift of Animals



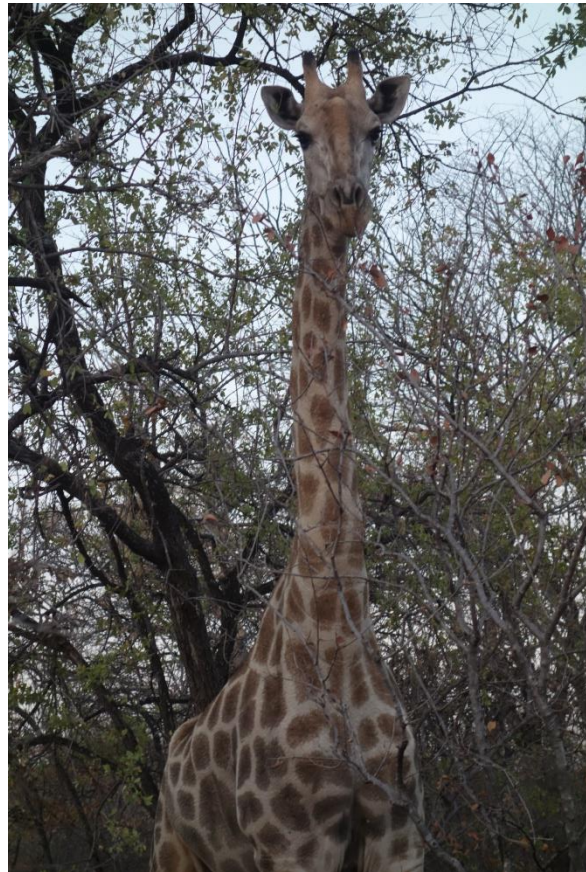
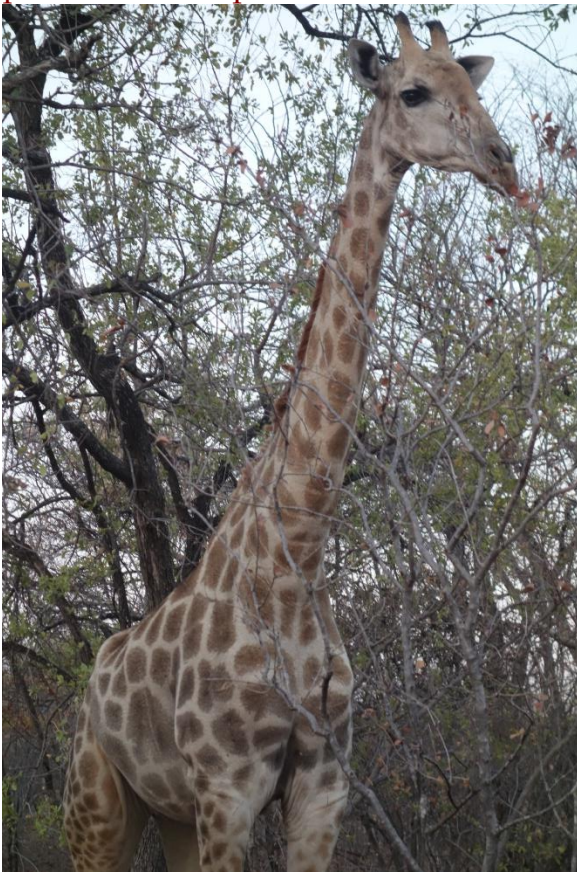
The extremely subtle body is called the indestructible drop; it is a tiny energy pattern existing normally only in the center of the heart wheel or complex. The extremely subtle mind that corresponds to it is the intuition of clear light, called transparency. At this extremely subtle level, the body-mind distinction is abandoned, as the two are virtually inseparable.

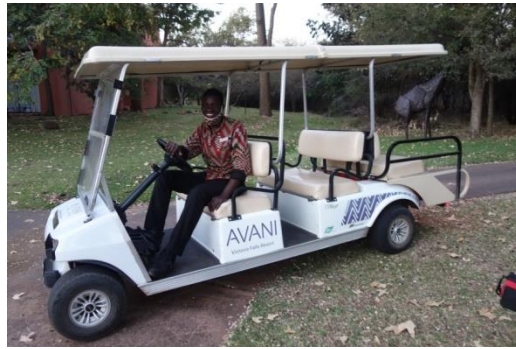
~ from The Tibetan Book of the Dead, Translated by Robert A. F. Thurman





Livingstone, nestled within *Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park*, has afforded us many opportunities to capture animals in their natural habitat.





One of our favorite things to do, when we are finished with our work, is visit our favorite four-star hotel, *Avani*, and swim in their pool (again, courtesy of Chief Mukuni and Cliffy), then take our 'safari cart' to the five-star hotel, *The Royal Livingstone*, at sunset to see the sun set over the Zambezi River and hear the hippos chatting with one another along the river.



We work hard, and then we play hard. For me, this is one of my many secrets to enjoying the gift of this life.



One of the communities working on our housing project, *Lusumpuko Village*, brought this 'bush cat' or *kitty ya musokwe* for their lunch one day, killed by a catepolt. They skinned it (below, right) and hung it in a tree to dry, and told me they would use the skin of this wild cat to make clothing for the cold season (below, left).

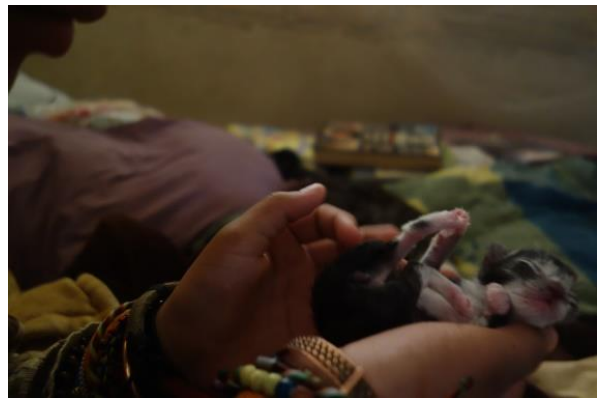


I was sick to my stomach that day and a great portion of the rest, unable to eat anything and only drank tea and water. ☹️

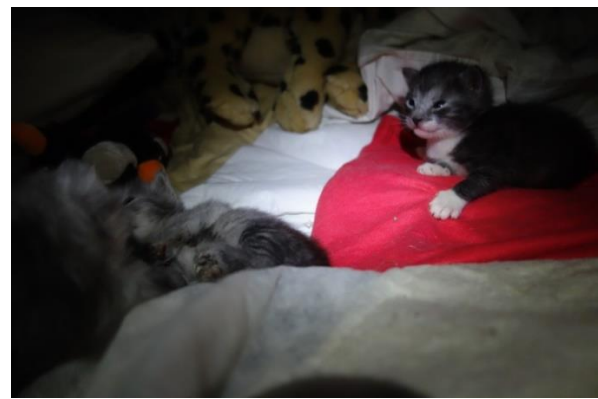


On a somewhat lighter note (!), one of our seven cats, named Strawberry, gave birth to three kittens in September 2020.





Strawberry gave birth on our bed and it was such an incredible experience to watch them all be born. They are healthy and Strawberry's breast milk is good ~ always a concern in Africa where so many animals and humans are malnourished and so after giving birth, their breastmilk is lacking in vital nutrients.



Around our garden fence... more critters. 😊



The Gift of Home

Dare to disobey anything and everything that is not divine.

~ From Sacred Rebels Guidebook by Alana Fairchild



It may not look like much, but here is our renovated Home in the village. ☺ Guest house #1, storage shed, toilet #1 (above, left); garden behind our house (above, right);



Guest house #2 (above, left); toilet and bathing shelter for guest house #2 (above, right);



SSAAP Headquarters and our home, left.



Excerpt from an email I wrote to one of SSAAP's partners:

*The community will build a small house for you or the others working in partnership with this (let's say in Sierra Leone or Zambia as these are the two countries I know best) and then you come to stay in your house and see how the water has impacted and transcended their lives. You could make art (in such a myriad of forms, I imagine!) of this change in their lives, and come here as often as you wanted to watch the dynamics shift and see how development happens naturally in a community when they are provided *water*. The simplicity of this is in fact profound. Your project then could be a study in how water provides social justice inevitably to a community - but it impacts each and every community and individual differently. And then to convey the changes and the transformation you use art as your medium.*

In this way we have woven social justice, art, community development, transformation and water together!

Just some ideas while I was swimming today! Water makes creativity flow through me, especially swimming.

With Love, Heather



And so lately I have noticed that all of life is a gift – little gifts, tied up in various bows: some invisible to the naked eye, some invisible even to the all-seeing eye ~ revealed to us only over the course of sacred time. Thus the theme of this newsletter is all the gifts that we receive *on a daily basis*: all of us – no one on this planet left out. ☺

Please do not ever think that we are suffering here. Not only have we chosen this life and all the hardships that have come with it alongside the intense joy that seems congruent to Africa itself, but we are happy here. If I have misled you into thinking that we are suffering ~ it couldn't be farther from the Truth. We do suffer for things, but they are material things; we ourselves do not suffer, at the core of our being. We can suffer for comforts like the internet, or electricity, or for fast food (!) or not having to cook every meal from scratch; we suffer for a hot shower or for the feeling of lying in a bathtub for hours (one of my favorite things to do which my daughter made me promise to stop doing is falling asleep in the bathtub, which I do whenever I get the chance: sit in a bath with water so hot it burns my skin and read and fall asleep in the warm water, my version of being in utero as an adult). We have a long list of things we will do when we come back to U.S.A. (in 2023) that Radiance and I began compiling on the airplane to go back to Africa when we left U.S.A. in February 2019. We just started the list and continuously add to it: go to the dentist to get our teeth cleaned, go to the library and check out a stack of videos and books, go visit my father, go on a roadtrip to one or ten National Parks with my mother, have a party with our friends until four in the morning (and no, I am still not getting too old for that!), eat *Pop-Tarts* and *Cheez-Its* and *Fig Newtons* and *Kraft Mac & Cheese* and frozen pizza. Then on the way back to U.S.A., on the plane ride home in 2023, we will make our list of all the things we will do when we get back to Africa: spoil our cats, sleep beside Victoria Falls, follow a giraffe in the bush, eat *n'shima* with *lepu antoomwe n'dongo*, learn eight new constellations.



This is the only way I have learned how to manage this life: of having only one body but a spirit that is always everywhere. At any given moment, I am swimming in a warm red river in Kambia District, Sierra Leone; sitting in Gandhi's University in Ahmedabad with my old professors debating over one of Gandhi's texts while sipping steaming *chai*; hunting the spot at one of the pyramids of Giza where the tourists haven't all collected: the silent space, hollowed out from the noise of the world; there is always one to be found. My spirit is in many places at all times: at my house in Zambia beside the fire; at Daddy's house where we grew up in Centerville, Ohio watching horrible television on the sofa together; at Mom's house in Northern Colorado lying in bed laughing and talking until 2 a.m. I have learned over time to just focus on Loving where I am while I am there, and when I leave I take all its essences with me, inside of me, as part of me. I am a river in Sierra Leone, a university in India, a pyramid in Egypt, a fire in Zambia; I am my mother's laughter and my father's soft comfortable couch.

Thus, there is no harder time to be away from home than the holidays. Christmas in Africa, Radiance and I concur, is depressing: due to the poverty, and the way that people 'celebrate' the holiday (they barely do); there is no snow here, and the white part of Christmas is one of the holiest parts for me: the calm, quiet, hushing white snow. But we have many gifts, and we are thankful for them each and every day. Even if we aren't home for Christmas!

The people in our villages where we live/stay/work here are suffering – but it is not in the way that we imagine. They suffer for simple things like water and food and transportation money to go to the town to buy soap, cooking oil, or salt. They suffer in material ways, I should say. But what Africa has taught me ~ over a long haul of living here and studying the people, is that the people here too have many gifts of abundance. Many children, many friends, many family members, many neighbors. They have the gift of Nature at their fingertips at all times, and can unlock the mysteries of the soil through cultivation of it, can tell time through looking up at the great orange disc floating through the sky, sleep for ten hours every night in pitch blackness and live with very little of the daily stressors that electricity, technology, and the need for advancement and success has brought to us in the West. I respect the village people of Africa more than I could ever convey through my words, because they have taught me that the profound meaning of this existence lies in its *simplicity*.





May all that you treasure be yours during this holiday season. May the beauty of Love surround you in all that you are and all that you do. Thank you for giving us this project in Africa. It is the heart of our lives. With Love, SSAAP









