

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter:
Spring Edition XXIV, March 2018
India to U.S.A.



This Edition is dedicated to my Father.

To Daddy: you're everything.

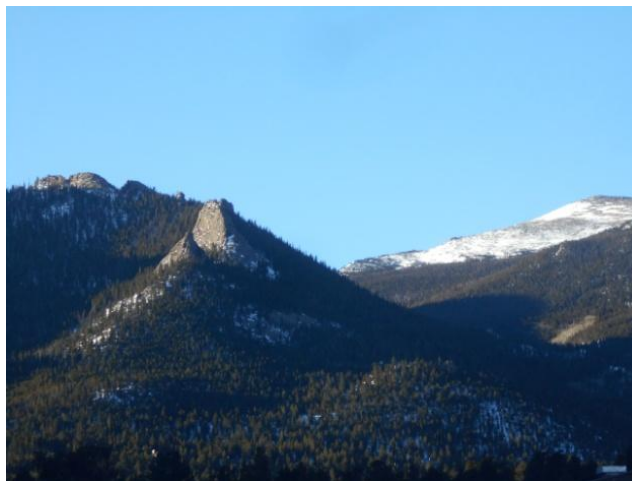
“If no one heeds your call, walk alone.” – Tagore

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Welcome Home!



Happy Spring! And thank you for having us Home again.



We will be staying in Colorado with my mother, Gail, until early July 2018 and then stay with my father, John, in Ohio until early November 2018. We will return to Zambia in January or February 2019 and spend the holidays with both parents.

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SSAAP's Visit to India: October 2017-March 2018

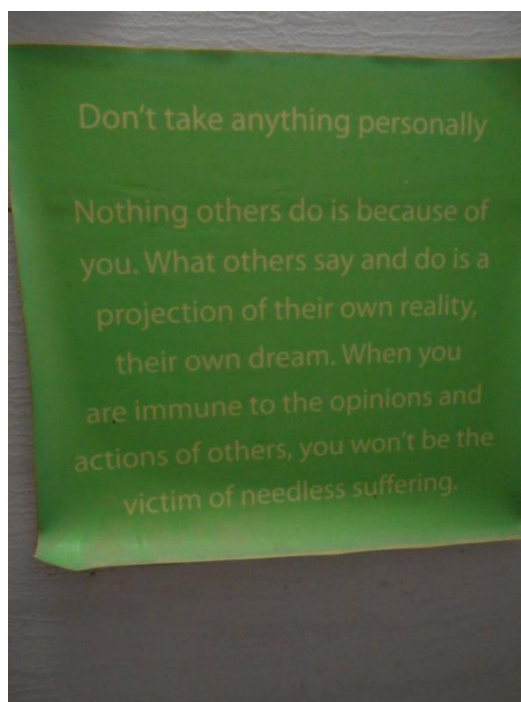


SSAAP, represented by Heather and Radiance Cumming, was fortunate to have the experience of participating in a four-month intensive course at Gandhi's University in Western India, Gujarat State. His University, *Gujarat Vidyapith*, was founded by Gandhi in 1920 in an effort to encourage alternative education at the higher levels of learning. A believer in education as both academic and practical thus ultimately an experiment in self-realization, he advocated a form of teaching in which every lesson and discussion held its roots in a practical use. Gandhi home-schooled his children and fought for a new educational system that would not cause violence in the society but rather would promote deeper justice systems and higher wisdom for the learner – not through intellectualization but through self-realization (introspection and dialogue with one's inner self).

The course was an exponential awareness-opener for me. I had intended to attend the course to learn more about Gandhianism and to gain an understanding of nonviolence. But what I found, very soon into the course, was that I had come not only to learn about how to improve our home-school (called *Love, Light & Literacy Academy*) as well as how to be a better mother. Instead, I realized all the work I

still needed to do in the field in order to do justice to SSAAP and everything SSAAP stands for: i.e. its mission and intention.

I also remembered how much I love being a student; I love learning and I love being taught. Gandhi said we should all humble ourselves to dust. Well, one way I believe in doing this is to be a lifelong student: to clear the mind and to always leave it open for learning.



Sign in the Male bathroom, Seva Café, Ahmedabad, India (left, above); sign in the Female bathroom, Seva Café, Ahmedabad, India (right, above).

Please note that the course at Gujarat University on *Ahimsa* (*Ahimsa* = the art of Nonviolence practiced in everyday living, painted upon the backdrop of Unconditional Love) was free: three meals a day were free, our room was free, and the course itself was free. Radiance and I needed money only for our toiletries and for incidental expenses, or any travel we did outside the course. We spent less than \$350 USD of our personal savings in the five months we lived in India, which I think is a testament to how cheap India can be if you travel around it like a local person (and don't mind suffering a little bit ☺).

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Nutshell Gandhi:

How does Gandhi relate to SSAAP?



My daughter Radiance meditating in Gandhi's first ashram, Kochrab Ashram, 1915-1917; Ahmedabad, India.

One of the great treasures in studying about Gandhi is that in doing so, one automatically learns about a vast array of topics: Naturopathy, Indian culture, Indian history, the history of colonization in the world, alternative education, home-school, world history, Indian politics, world politics 1885-1955, spinning, weaving, agriculture, cooking, nutrition, and a wisdom of overall everyday living that is what I Love most about Gandhi. Additionally, he is a fabulous writer and was an extensive reader in his day.

Because I did not learn what I ought to have learned in school as a child due to my own shortcomings and blockages, and am only now as an adult trying to teach myself what I think is important- through academia as well as hands-on experience, and learning from those around me- the course in India appealed to me on a personal level. And what I learned from it is that the world is a school and everyone in it – our Teachers. We may not like this system of learning – because it is hard, and it hurts, at times is brutal – but we learn from those we encounter, both pleasant and unpleasant experiences. Talking to people about their culture, their history, their politics both personal and within the country they represent is a good source of education – just as powerful as a well-written book or well-directed film. The potential to learn from someone seated across from you on the train or next to you on the airplane is vast – even if you don't agree with his/her perspective. In fact, what

I have gathered is that most of learning involves the self-realization that the less we agree on things the more we learn about them.

I wish to summarize Gandhi's principles on health, education, working in rural communities and nonviolent activism in a nutshell, and how the teachings I received in India can be – and will be! – applied in Africa in relationship to SSAAP and its mission. Therefore, I invite all my colleagues whom I studied with in India, as well as all the friends I made in India, and the Gandhian scholars on this newsletter list who have received this SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter, to disagree with me, debate with me, or correct me where I am misunderstanding or paraphrasing Gandhi incorrectly.



Gandhi on Health:

Healing comes from an inner motivation for balance. Through self-healing our bodies, our minds and therefore our hearts, experience tranquility that transfuses into concentrated wisdom. Nature can be used to heal minor illness or chronic issues, such as a mud poultice pack on the head for headaches or on the stomach for menstrual cramps, digestion aid, and intestinal tract issues. Note that clean soil, not infected with pesticides or manure, is optimal for this earthen healing mode. Also through using the nature outside of us, we are harmonizing with the nature inside of us.

As a class, we spent six days at Vinoba Ashram and Naturopathy Center in Vadodara, Gujarat State, India. We fasted and ate healthy food and learned how much more we eat on a daily basis than what our bodies actually need. Most of us became ill from ridding our bodies from the toxins they were carrying. I had a migraine for three days and many of my classmates were so sick they were bedridden, had diarrhea, or vomited. This is known as cleansing that the body needs in order to detoxify and begin to purify again.



Our visit to Vinoba Ashram Naturopathy Center, November 2017.



Above left, the fruit plate dinner – minus a bowl of soup – served every night in the naturopathy center. Above right, our beloved Dr. Shah from the Vinoba Ashram, who taught me about naturopathy, inner healing and Gandhi's Nature Cure.

Many of the Nature Cure techniques taught to us in the ashram will be significantly useful to the people SSAAP works with in Africa (specifically in rural Zambia and Sierra Leone) as African traditional healing methods already use the earth to cure moderate to serious illnesses, yet the African people have not yet bridged the philosophy of why it is that the earth works so well to heal us. They have not connected that earth heals us because we are part of earth, and so I believe that teaching them this philosophy – even though they are already using the technique itself – will aid them greatly, and will be free, simple, easy solutions to things like healing a headache with a mud pack on the forehead.



Gandhi on Education:

Painfully shy in his youth and an average-to-poor student in his primary and secondary school years, Gandhi wrote specifically in his autobiography about the importance of education being both practical as well as academic. Academic knowledge without a practical use usually fosters arrogance; intellectual arrogance that most of us are guilty of (myself included! – I am working to better this weaker part of me) then breeds both structural and cultural violence. Education becomes vanity when there is no specific intention behind it, i.e. what is the meaning of what we are learning? This should be a constant question in our schools for adults and for children. Will the information be useful or is it merely another aspect of the ego: gathering information so that we can feel we are above someone else because we have this information and he/she does not?



What I have learned – from living, from my daughter’s home-school, and from the last four months we have been in India studying this course – is that education should reflect the cultural framework of a society. One vast failure of the current formal educational system in Africa is that it is attempting to adopt the educational structure of the West, but without focusing on the child learning his/her Mother Tongue. I have seen this too in India. And so the child ends up not being literate in any one language – but can speak five to ten languages – and is confused because all of his academic workbooks are not in any consistent one language. He ends up struggling with an English-medium textbook and learning subjects we value in the West but are of no use to him in his village, or his country.

In short, the African educational system is lacking more than many other places in the world because Africa is trying to keep up with a system it doesn't use or understand. It has not adapted its culture into its educational system.

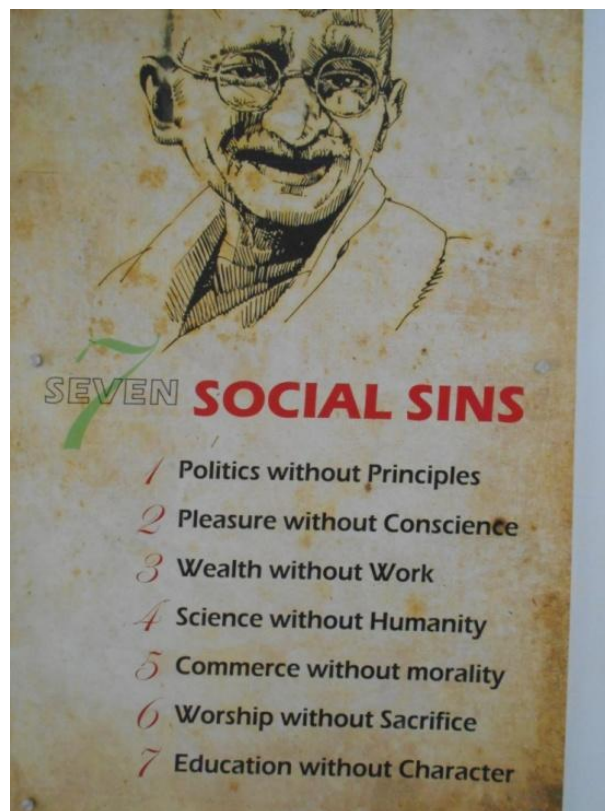
Gandhi says: education should reflect the culture, the needs of the culture, and the strengths of the culture in which the educational system is found. Adopting the formal, multi-subjected educational model of the West throughout the world does a disservice to remote rural areas of Africa where informal education is being practiced on a daily basis; this lack of educational foundation can even hinder the society at-large.

For example, what use does a sixth grader living in a remote African village have for chemistry, without the crucibles, equipment, and tools we have in the West for a proper chemistry lab for experimentation? Why learn chemistry from a book when this child has seen and explored the profound effects of burning a water bucket with a hole in it over a fire, in order to melt and soften the plastic and then used a needle and thread to sew the hole back together again while the plastic is still pliable? And why should those using these informal systems of hands-on learning be faulted that their educational system is inferior? Where is the reference point for intelligence and why is intellectual intelligence the only kind of intelligence that seems to be respected and represented globally?



Further bullet points on Gandhian Education:

- Alternative education can take place through combining disciplines.
- Working with the hands through agriculture (gardening, seeding, plowing, planting, harvesting), cooking, cleaning, washing are an integral part of education. No one should be above working with his/her hands – this includes gender and social status. These disciplines encourage humility, strength of body and of mind, and induce meditation.
- Unconditional Love and Nonviolence are the keenest teaching and learning tools of all.





Gandhi's Constructive Program:

Please note that the India we see today is not Gandhi's India, to quote my professor for the course and the Head of the Gandhian *Ahimsa* Department at Gujarat Vidyapith. Plagued with disease, selfishness breeding mass poverty, and an inability to practice as it preaches in terms of ancient spiritual yogic traditions, it mirrors every other country in the world in the sense that present-day turmoil serves as a cause for ceasing and reflecting. If the ancient philosophy of the U.S.A. is freedom and democracy, and the ancient philosophy of India is yoga, and the ancient philosophy of Africa is strength of spirit and survivalism, why are we crumbling – no matter where in the world we are, no matter which nation we belong to, no matter who we are?

Are the human beings themselves to blame? Possibly, but more importantly, the social structures and systems in place are responsible for the suffering of the masses, and for the abuse done to the individual people. Systems that lack integrity; systems that live only for themselves must be eradicated. How to begin?



Heather presenting her dissertation ('Internal Evaluation') to the professors and colleagues at the university in India: Gujarat Vidyapith.

Gandhi's Constructive Program was two-fold. The first part, in which SSAAP is currently active, and in which Gandhi worked tirelessly throughout his life, is to promote the remote areas in terms of agriculture, water, local crafting/arts/creativity, and to utilize resources already present but ultimately unrealized, in order to teach the people to be self-reliant as well as confident in their abilities. This is SSAAP's definition of *Empowerment*. However, the second part of Gandhi's Constructive Program SSAAP has yet to touch. This is the sect of working at the governmental level of the society to eradicate the root of the violence in the society. Usually, in most traditional societies, i.e. Africa, that root is embedded so deeply that it will take decades, if not centuries, to fracture. But we must start somewhere, and we must start now, because the work must encompass both the lowest levels of the society: the poorest individual without water, without a home or without food whose children are dying of disease – as well touch the highest levels of the society where the power is because the money is there, and the greed is festering and corrupting on all levels, creating structural and cultural violence.

So, through the Gandhian course, I realized that SSAAP has thus far been doing only half of its job – a very humbling experience to learn that no matter how hard SSAAP works on all of its community-based endeavors, the sustainability piece will never be present as it should without deep changes occurring within the structure of the society, untangling and unbraiding the fibers of structural violence which need addressed most immediately.



Our graduation ('Convocation') from Gujarat Vidyapith ('place of learning' or wisdom tree) in Gujarat, West India. Our closest friends on the course were five ladies from Mexico and one lady from Indonesia who became family to us during the four month intensive course. As most of my deepest friendships in the U.S.A. and in Africa are with men, I truly enjoyed the intimacy Radiance and I shared with these six women and feel it contributed largely to the quality of our course study.

How will SSAAP work with the structural violence within the society, at the governmental level?

The quick answer to this is that, directly, we will not. This is not our role, and we cannot nor should do it. We are outsiders, and in order for this kind of movement to be sustainable, it must be done only by the people of Africa.

SSAAP's role is only to guide them – through education, through philosophy, and through empowerment infused with Love.

Thus, indirectly, SSAAP plans to do three things:

- 1) To set up libraries in rural settings and the villages where it serves that provide books on nonviolent activist movements throughout the world. Nonviolent activist movements, or nonviolent resistance, led by Martin Luther King, Jr., by Nelson Mandela, and by Mohandas Gandhi are most-widely known, but there are many less-known and less publicized. SSAAP would like to provide information on these movements through books at local libraries (libraries constructed by local people with local materials: thatched grass roof and mud walls, made of bricks with mud cement and mud plaster) whereby the people can read/share/take the books.

Navajivan Trust, located in Ahmedabad, India (Gujarat state) was founded by Gandhi in 1929 and is in the process of documenting an agreement with SSAAP (MOU: Memorandum of Understanding) to provide through donation of Gandhian literature to SSAAP libraries as well as other non-Gandhian literature printed in English donated to the SSAAP nonviolent activist movement in Zambia and Sierra Leone. *Navajivan Trust* and publishing house has published more than eight-hundred titles in English, Gujarati, Hindi and other languages to date. We are currently in the process of creating an MOU between their Board of Trustees and SSAAP.



Meeting on 31 January 2018 with SSAAP's counterparts at Navajivan Printing Press over the partnership piece of working together through imparting information about nonviolence to the people of Africa SSAAP works with.

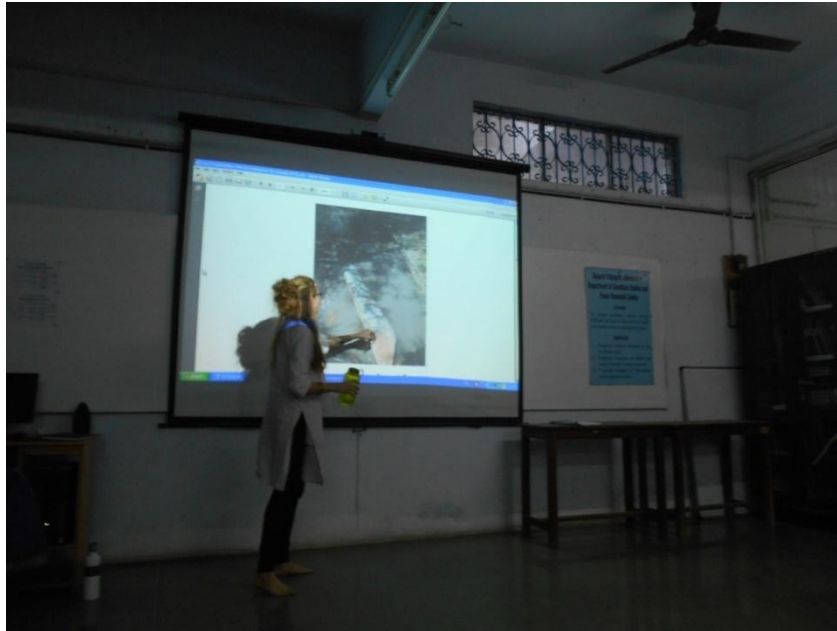


2. SSAAP already has an MOU with Gujarat Vidyapith, in an effort to build a sustainable relationship in which SSAAP can visit the university at any time to conduct research, to meet with wisdom vessels of Gandhian information and insight at any time, as well to send African counterparts SSAAP works with in Sierra Leone, Zambia and Ethiopia to the course to learn about nonviolence and how to apply theories of nonviolence to their personal African contexts.



The best friend I made in India was from Africa, ironically. This beautiful man from Cameroon has lived in India for five years and was the vessel of wisdom and genuine, unconditional Love that I needed to get through the course: the most difficult academic experience I have ever been challenged with in my lifetime. He gave me a source of energy and strength by reminding me to tap into my African root, no matter where I am in the world, and to let Africa feed me with passion energetically even when not present upon African soil physically.

3. Taylor S. Kamara of Grace Children's Foundation, Sierra Leone, with whom SSAAP works extensively on all its Sierra Leonean projects, will be attending the Gandhian Nonviolence Course in India in 2018-2019! I am so proud of him. He was accepted in 2017-2018, so that he could have studied alongside Radiance and I, but due to limitations in finances for an air ticket, he had to decline the offer and accept it for the next year (2018-2019) instead. If Taylor is educated in Nonviolent Activism, then he will be able to better impart these teachings upon his people much better than SSAAP can.



Heather presenting to her classmates and professors at Gujarat Vidyapith about the water situation in rural Africa. Anywhere in the world I can teach barefoot is a place I need to be !!!

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Water: The Centerpiece of SSAAP

I am proud to announce that currently, before even fundraising in the U.S.A., SSAAP has enough resources for 8 ½ hand-dug wells in Sierra Leone (\$1000 USD/well): two wells funded by the Denver Rotary's World Community Service (WCS) club, and the other six and a half wells gifted to the people of rural Sierra Leone by three generous friends in the States who have been committed to serving this mission through the years. **Thank you.**

SSAAP's goal is to have ten wells for the people of both rural Moyamba as well rural Port Loko, Sierra Leone, before we return to Africa in January or February 2019.

How does having a water source, such as a well, affect life in remote villages of Africa?

- Attendance at school increases if children have clean water in which to bathe. Out of self-respect, they will not travel to school unwashed. Bathing in dirty water, mudded through silt or fecal matter, will cause them not to attend school.

- Spread of water-borne diseases decays exponentially. Cooking done with clean water (i.e. washing pots/pans/bowls/eating utensils) will prove, in the long-run, to spread less sickness, disease, and death among the rural populations.
- Confidence increases in village areas. SSAAP has seen an upbeat demeanor in the villages that have a reliable, clean water source (such as a machine-drilled 'borehole' hand-pump water well, or a hand-dug bucket & pulley well) and a sense of hope from areas maintaining a water well, in contrast to villages not yet with water coming to SSAAP to request assistance with a water source.
- Higher concentration of food in areas where a sustainable water source is present. Farmers are able to use overflow water from the water source to water small produce-bearing gardens, or even at times larger agricultural fields.
- More plentiful and healthier livestock in villages where water wells are present. Humans are not the only beings benefitting from year-round water sources in SSAAP villages! Animal projects, specifically with cattle and goats (Zambia) and sheep, pigs and goats (Sierra Leone) have grown exponentially in villages where water is present versus areas that remain more or less dry or with silt/mud water.

SSAAP hopes to be able to provide at least one water well in Simwatachela, Zambia (\$5000 USD/machine-drilled well with hand-pump) and two and a half more water wells in Sierra Leone (\$1000 USD/hand-dug well with a bucket and pulley), by the time we go back to Africa in January or February 2019. Additionally, a long-term goal for Ethiopia is to work with communities in possession of water well rights (water wells are significantly more difficult in terms of red tape in Ethiopia than in Sierra Leone or Zambia) to hand-dig water wells and then cap them with a hand-pump in remote areas, specifically the South of Ethiopia, by the years 2020-2025.

Water is a life-saver: physically, psychologically, and intrinsically...



Simple and Supreme Impacts of Water's Presence to our Existence



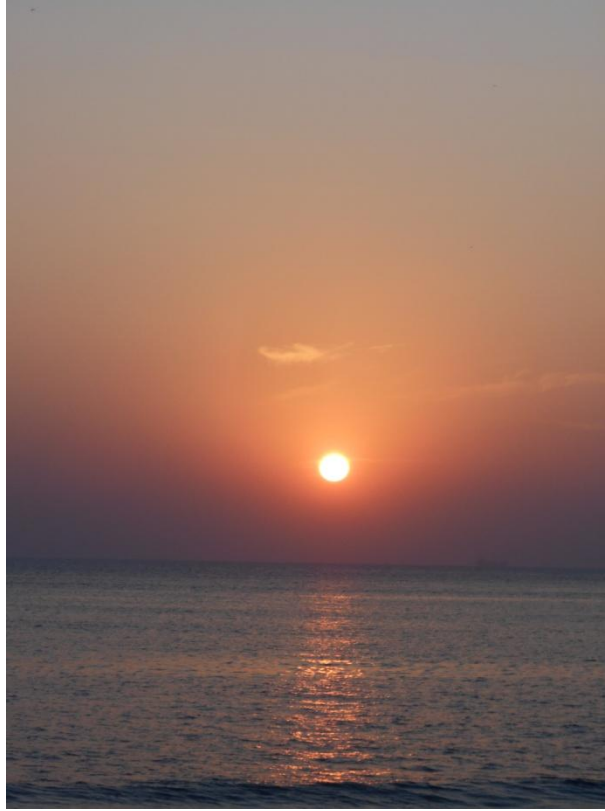
Against my daughter's wishes, and probably my better judgment, upon visiting Chennai (formerly Madras), Tamil Nadu, South India state, I barreled into the water: glorious Indian Ocean, unable to control myself. It wasn't until a day or so later she and I discovered that the local fishermen use the beach as their toilet, and in the early hours of the morning they can be found digging little holes in the sand along the shoreline, defecating into them without covering them and then allowing the waves to swallow their sewage. All the 'mini-toilets' the waves don't wash away, left uncovered, attract flies as the early morning heat picks up. By midday the beach is sweltering hot, and the flies are all over the feces and it is easy to contract disease. Little things, seemingly simple but in truth profoundly and blatantly disrespectful of Mother Nature and inherently selfish (such as ruining the beach for all who have come from near and far to enjoy it), cause me to realize that Mother Earth is far less respected than she ought to be. All the apparent details compiled with large-scale pollution: in the air, on the land, and through the great waters, add up to a breaking point that one day, probably in my great-grandchildren or great-great grandchildren's time, should we all choose to participate and continue in the exponential growth model of unconcern for the earth, the planet will undoubtedly become unlivable.



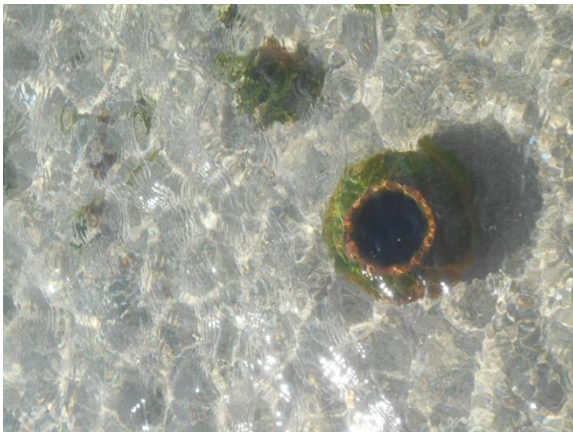
Water, in all its natural forms, is a great source of strength, peace, passion and stillness within me.

Like Gandhi, I feel I know myself more deeply near the sea, and use water as a device for self-reflection and healing. I have noticed that through immersing the body in water – be it snowfall, rainfall, river, sea, pond, bathtub or domestic shower – the mind unconsciously unravels things it has been processing that the brain hasn't yet made sense of. The external water must be merging with the 85% internal water within the human body that forms a river of consciousness for which the physical body serves as its bridge.





I live only for what I call Oceanic Love and I wish for it to trickle into the molecules of my deepest self and every fiber of every work I do. I wish to maintain, sustain, and nurture Oceanic Love in my lifetime. This means I will Love you even if it's for a blinking in time and I never see you again after that. Or I love you for a lifetime and then after that, an infinity. I will Love you even if you take from me and don't give me back what I thought I wanted or needed from you. It means you can come to my Office Hours in Simwatachela, Zambia and ask me for everything under the sun you need to improve your life and I will try my hardest to give whatever that is back to you. I will ask for help for you where I think I can find it with humility and without shame or guilt. I will do my best; this is the promise I maintain to SSAAP.



Oceanic Love means I will keep trying even if you disappointed me, or I disappointed you – or for a moment we thought that understanding each other was more important than loving each other and in that moment, we both failed the other.

Oceanic Love means I Love you even if I extract nothing out of it: no personal gain, nothing for show, no tangible anything.



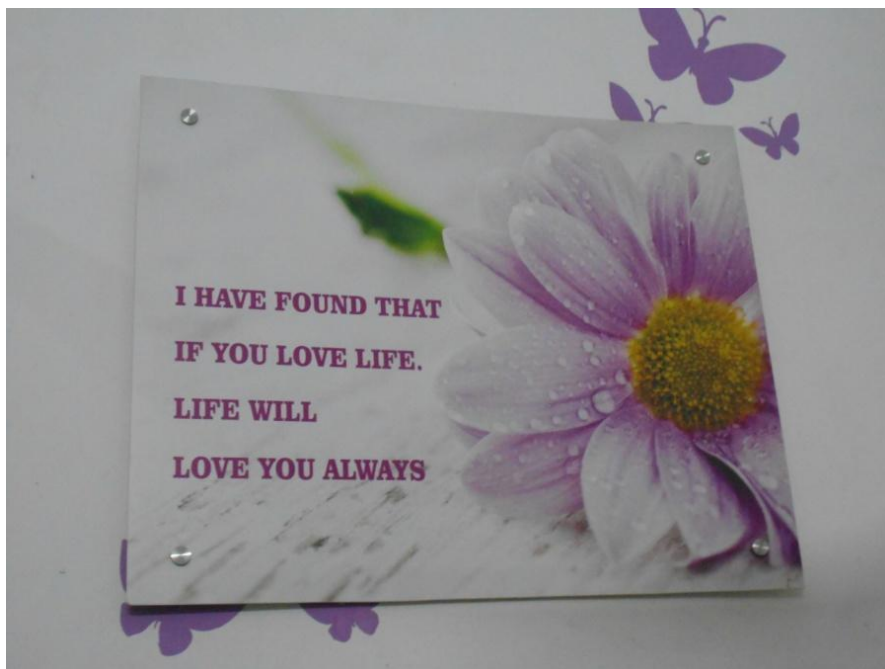
On an even vaster and more profound scale, it means I Love even if I 'lose'.

I intend to drench the project, and every aspect of it, with Love – to the best of my abilities.



And then wring it out to its fullest potential.

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Sustainability Piece of SSAAP:

It is the dream of every service charity organization that the project continues through the hands of the local people rather than the external service organization.

SSAAP has been absent from Sierra Leone since March 1, 2017, and yet SSAAP's partner Grace Children's Foundation (GCF) continues to conduct meetings for all of the projects under SSAAP/GCF partnership: water-based, animal-based, or artisan/craft-based – a testament to the longevity of any project SSAAP has begun in Sierra Leone. All of SSAAP's work in Sierra Leone has, thus far, proven to be incredibly sustainable: water wells, animal-rearing projects (chickens, ducks, goats, sheep, pig, fish) and all of the success is owed to the hard-working and ingenious minds of those SSAAP works with, specifically Joseph Sawyer and Taylor Sorie Kamara of GCF-Port Loko, who work so fast I can barely keep up with them. ☺



GCF continues to host meetings and workshops (above) and work with the Poultry Project in partnership with SSAAP (below). SSAAP/GCF's Poultry Project began during the Ebola Era 2014 with less than 50 birds. Today, March 2018, the project has 798+ birds. Taylor S. Kamara of GCF-Port Loko is an Agricultural Officer and thus has a deep understanding of how to take care of the birds.



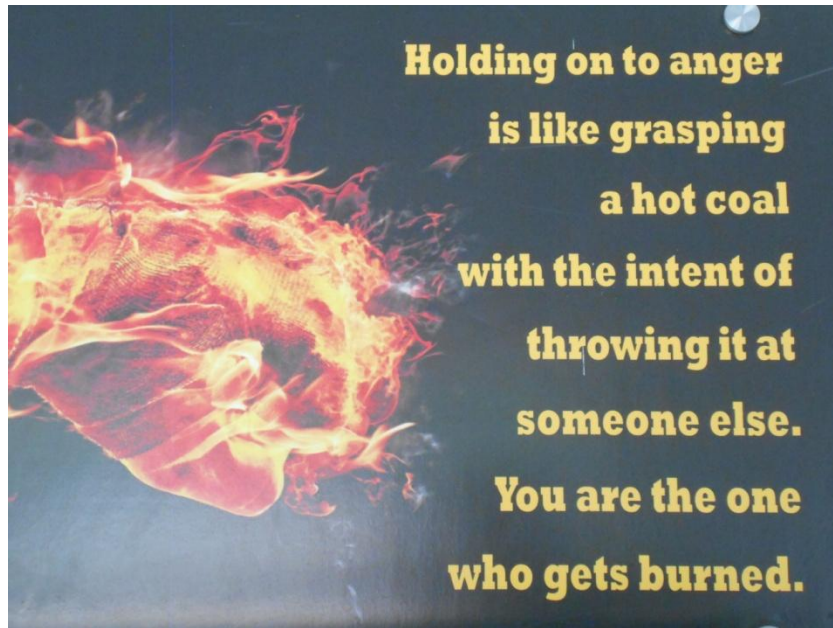


Volunteer with SSAAP

Come alone; come with your family. Fulfill a longing that has been deep inside of you that you may not have been able to prod previously. What Africa promises is that you will not return home the same person, because Africa has a way of both directly and indirectly pulling out of you the part of you that aches the deepest, Loves the hardest, and suffers the most – the part that in the end, you would never really want to live without. I always claim that Africa has the potential to be the best part of us, if we open the heart to that possibility. ☺

Sects of SSAAP to volunteer in when you come/areas SSAAP needs service:

- Education
 - Health
- Counseling services for trauma (Sierra Leone)
 - Art
- Women's Endeavors: education, crafting, inspiration
 - Building libraries (from local, free materials)
 - Animal-rearing
 - Water wells
 - School sponsorship program
- Anything else you would like to do or can think of doing to improve the quality of SSAAP's work in Africa. 'Make-Your-Own-Project'; come visit the SSAAP space and determine what you would like to do to help the beautiful people we work with – in all three countries.

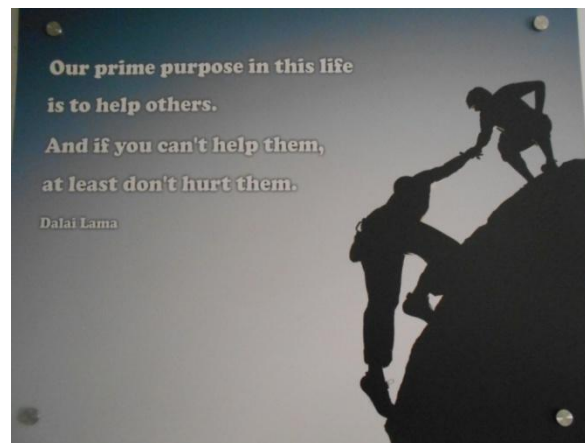


Become a Guardian of Africa

What aspect of Africa do you hold dearest or rawest to your heart?

SSAAP's Board of Directors-U.S.A. would like to introduce our newest membership for annual giving. It is called the African Guardian Tribe. Membership into this tribe will promote:

- A higher level of giving: through time, talent, or treasure
 - Intention of working with Africa sustainability
- Dedication to SSAAP's cause by monthly, annual, or half-decade support



Upcoming SSAAP Fundraiser

SSAAP is pleased to announce its upcoming fundraiser in Denver, Colorado! Details are stated below, as well will be included on a flier which I will send out in a week or so, when SSAAP's incredible flier artist completes it.

At this time, however, just to nail down the details on your calendar:

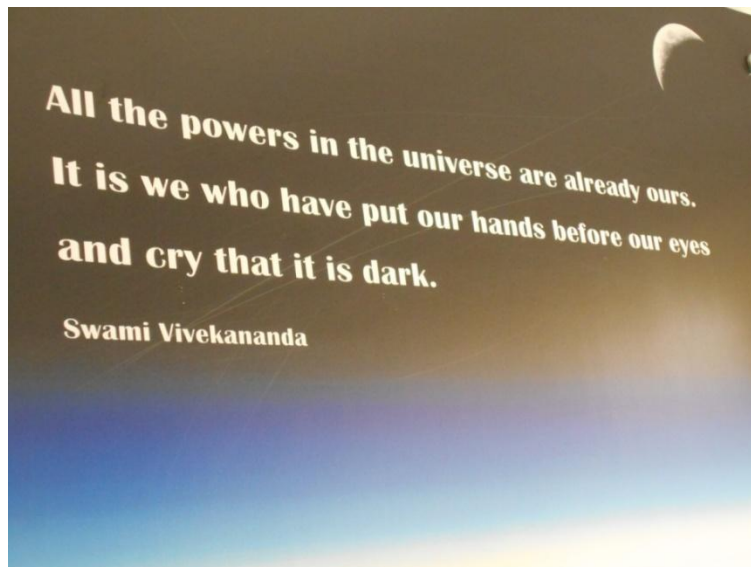
- **Name of Fundraiser:** African Fun Day – Fun for the whole family
 - **Date of Fundraiser:** Saturday, May 5, 2018
 - **Location of Fundraiser:** Mountain Phoenix Community School
A Jefferson County Public Charter School
Member of the Alliance for Public Waldorf Education
 - **Time of Fundraiser:** 1 p.m. to 6 p.m.
- **List of Activities:** Food and drink (non-alcoholic) crafts for children, learning circles about Africa, African art for sale (Zambia, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone)
- **Suggested donation:** \$10 at the door, if you have the means. Come even if you don't.

More details to come on the flier! Look for it in your inboxes in the next week!

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SSAAP is also planning to have a Fall Fundraiser on Saturday, November 3, 2018 in the evening hours, at the Wayfinder Co-op, 525 Santa Fe Drive, Denver, CO 80204. Alcohol will be available for purchase at the SSAAP Fall Fundraiser through the Wayfinder Co-op.

More details to follow!



SSAAP in the News: Chennai, India



Kindly click on this link, or reference the attached PDF version of the newspaper article on SSAAP:

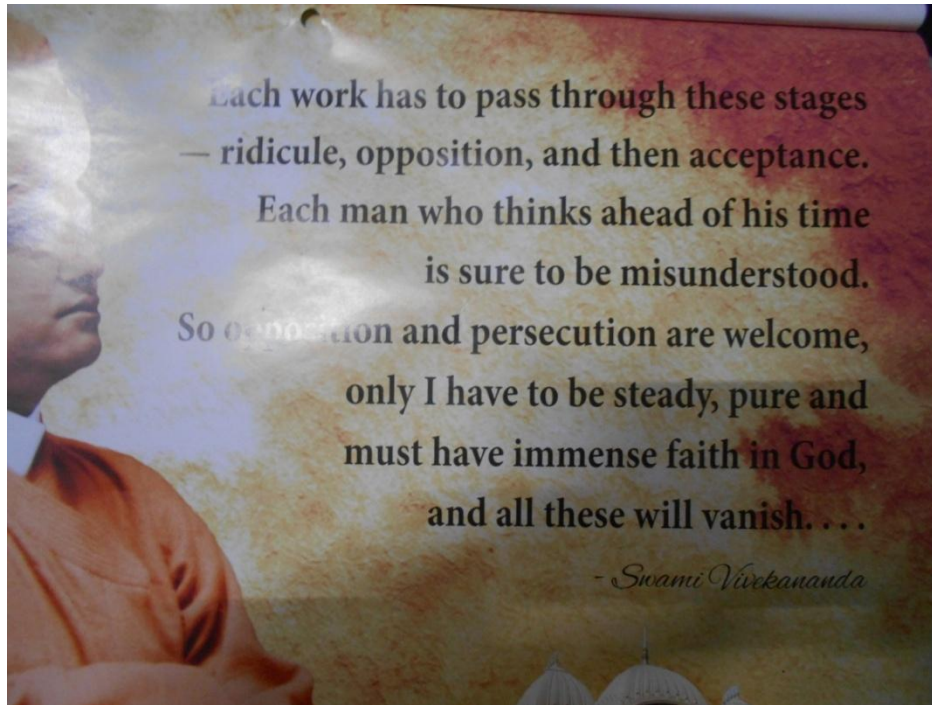
<https://www.dtnext.in/News/Citizen/2018/02/18013205/1062282/Taking-Gandhian-principles-teachings-to-Africa.vpf>

Apologies that my eyes are closed in the newspaper photo!

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Culture

The East and the West are two wings of the same bird, as my friend from Adelaide, Australia so eloquently taught me. We need the balance, the synthesis; for example, I always enjoy the most music and art that has Eastern and Western and African traditions all fused together. In a nutshell, we are learning that the world needs America and it needs Africa but not for the same things or for the same reasons. Like all things carrying an essence, what we extract from both philosophies has the potential to make us more sensitive as a collective humanity.



Culture Shock:

I have been studying this topic for some years now. What, exactly, is *culture shock*, why does it change in its meaning over time, and why are some people less-affected by this? In observing my daughter, I have noticed she seems almost unaffected by changes in water, food, language, energy of people. She just flows. Whereas I am fighting jetlag for weeks after changing time zones, and seem to lose time and misplace personal belongings (i.e. I tried to pay for food the other day with a Victoria Falls pass from Zambia in 2008!!!), I notice my daughter is exempt from this kind of ‘culture shock’ – dare I call it this.

Why?

I observe the more we get used to a place, name it our Home, feel it as our comfort zone, the harder it is to leave it – no matter where you are from in the world, or where you call Home. It is hard to leave the place you are familiar with.

My daughter and I always talk about trades. You cannot have everything everywhere you go. In U.S.A. we have Customer Service; the ‘Customer Service’ in Africa is laughable. In Africa you have abundantly sparkling stars and the night constellations – even in Lusaka or Freetown you can see the stars; in America, we trade the glittering night sky for a bedbug-free bed. We trade the hot bath in U.S.A. for a lukewarm bucket-bath at best in Africa, but in Africa we have more time just my daughter and I than in the U.S.A. My friends in Africa know my strongest survivalist self which fights for justice at all costs and my friends in U.S.A. know my deepest poetic self, the part which writes long letters and emails. One side isn’t more or ‘better’ than the other; they are both facets of

me. They are equally treasured. All of us have those sects of ourselves that lay dormant when we don't need them, the tools in our toolboxes. What I notice is that travel always brings forth the unexpected gifts within us.

And in the end, through this 'barter system' of trading between worlds my daughter and I have learned to play as a game that no matter what, we always win, and the whole world is her comfort zone, her Home; thus I believe she has escaped the Culture Shock I suffer from- she has no reference point; her Home is not a physical place, but rather a space within her.



Vinoba Ashram, Gujarat, India

Philosophy of SSAAP: (Nut-shelled):

Every service has to have a philosophy.

Here is the abridged (if I am capable) philosophy on SSAAP:

SSAAP does not work in Africa because we pity the “poor people” there. Conversely, the people in Africa are, in many ways, wealthier than we are in the West. The Africans enjoy living in the moment, and the majority of the Africans lead simple lives and don't worry about the future, about having money or making sure their children are accepted into a worthy university. They are wealthy in having many children, living with Nature, and not taking for granted every morsel of food that is put into their bodies. As well, their way of thinking fosters happiness – despite abject poverty. They think with brilliance and simplicity – not brilliance and complexity like so many of us tend to. Their

scope of Love without limitations of time and space has taught me more about Unconditional Love than anything else on the planet – other than my child – has.

And so why does SSAAP work in Africa? Because we do not feel it is socially-acceptable, ethically-sound or Love-oriented that some people in the world should be without food and water – the fundamentals of existence. It plagues me, personally, that others can live, knowing this, and not be concerned. Deeply personal to me, I cannot live with this, as my existence and the quality of my life is individually tarnished and becomes less when I live with the knowledge that many tonight are going to bed famished, and don't know what they will feed their children tomorrow. For anyone who has felt the pangs of hunger in their core, it is not a pleasant bodily sensation. This core issue leaves me restless; it bleeds into all other aspects of my life: my daughter's upbringing, adaptability, and education. It bleeds into the way I think, the way I eat, the way I live. For me, this is a cause worthy of both my life and my death and anything in between. I won't rest until as many African villages as I set foot in receive a water well. I won't rest until I know I have done my best to help with the agricultural issues in rural Africa – with my limited knowledge – I am doing my best to educate myself on farming, specifically through India. This work is personal, political, and philosophical. I have a personal connection to Africa through my daughter, her father, and all our loved ones in Sierra Leone, as well a personal connection to the people in Zambia who taught me to live in Africa – as well as the rest of the world – and to whom I am forever indebted for tolerating me through this learning curve I have been traversing for the last fourteen years.



I am incredibly fortunate to have this child; I recognize this as such on a daily basis. She is the best traveling companion I have ever had and is far more adaptable than I am. Her dual-racism heritage has served her well by adding a level of complexity to her being, I believe, as it has always been to her advantage rather than to her disadvantage. I am unaware of any situation, context or country in which her being half-American and half-Sierra Leonean has caused her to endure racism, criticism or hostility, and for that I am infinitely grateful.

We had the great fortune to meet Gandhi's great-grandson, Tushar, who lives in Mumbai. He was yet another of many Indians to touch my heart deeply. I expressed to him how happy I was to meet him; he paid me one of the most unforgettable compliments of my life. He told me he was humbled to meet me and when I asked him why, he said it took tremendous courage to do the work I am doing. While I had never thought of SSAAP this way – because I am only doing what I love most in the world – he reflected my life's work back to me in a different light. He praised me for working in one of the darkest, most difficult war-torn countries of the world (Sierra Leone) and told me to be careful; then he praised me again for educating my daughter in Gandhian principles of Unconditional Love, in service, in self-realization. He told me she is the youngest scholar he has ever met at the University.



Tushar Gandhi with Radiance at Gujarat Vidyapith, November 2017.

It appears I value friendship as the primal foundation and interest of world peace. The UN, or any large-bodied organization disconnected through layers of perceived safety from its own cause, cannot bring peace and harmony from the outside looking in to anywhere in the world raging in turmoil: whether it is the Central African Republic, Yemen, the Sudan, Syria; the story remains historically the same everywhere in the world. The story doesn't change because we haven't yet learned how to change it – no blame, no guilt, no judgment: we simply haven't taught ourselves yet.

But the time is ripe now.

The change starts with me. If I cannot Love myself unconditionally, I cannot expect you to do the same.

If I cannot rise to the highest occasion of myself, how can I ask you to do the same? The change is within each and every one of us taking responsibility to become our highest selves, without discomfort being a factor in this responsibility. Gandhi taught that Fearlessness must be practiced in simple, everyday living, and his life was a steadfast example of this Fearlessness. I would take it a step farther: the pain and the churning feeling in the heart is the indicator that the internal alchemy is taking place. It reminds you that you are alive. 😊



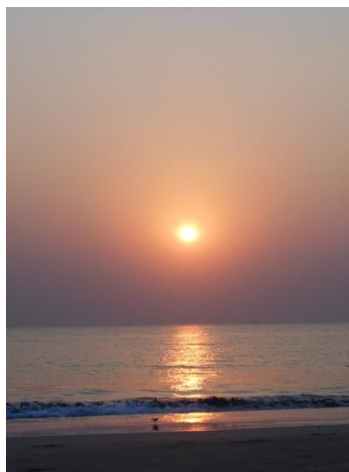
My version of happiness is in each moment. It exists only *now*. I love to plan ahead and thus have a long-term vision of what I want for my little girl, and what I want SSAAP to be, but for myself the vision of future is entirely seated in the soft, sweet palms of my child and the project in Africa.

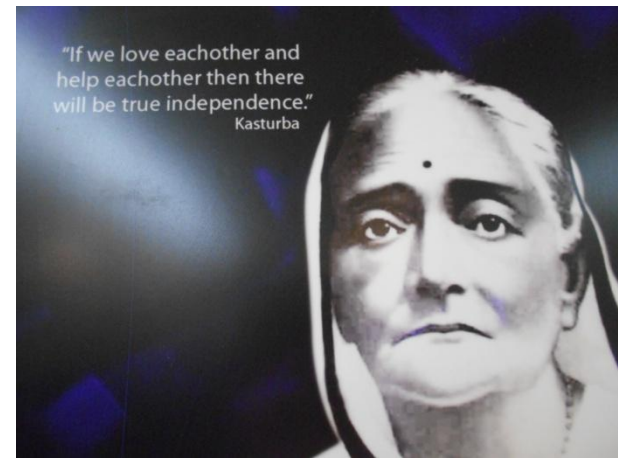
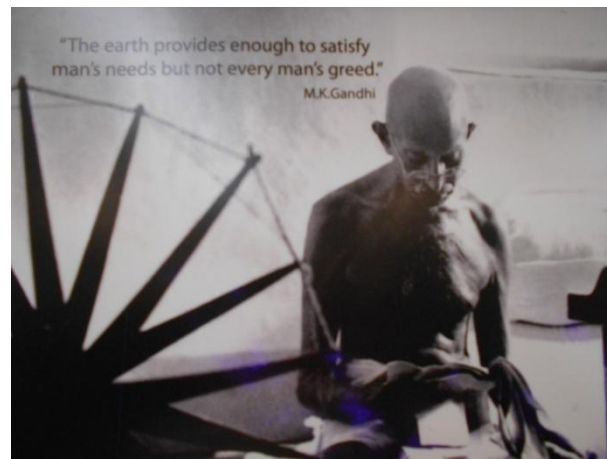
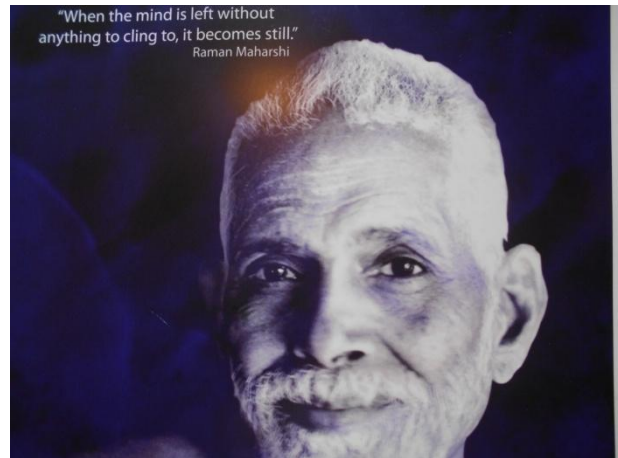
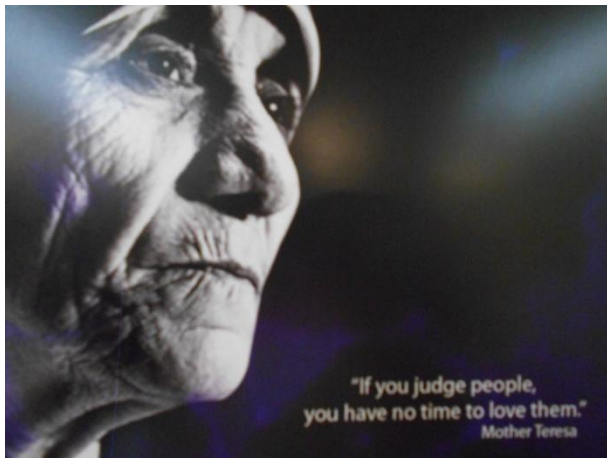
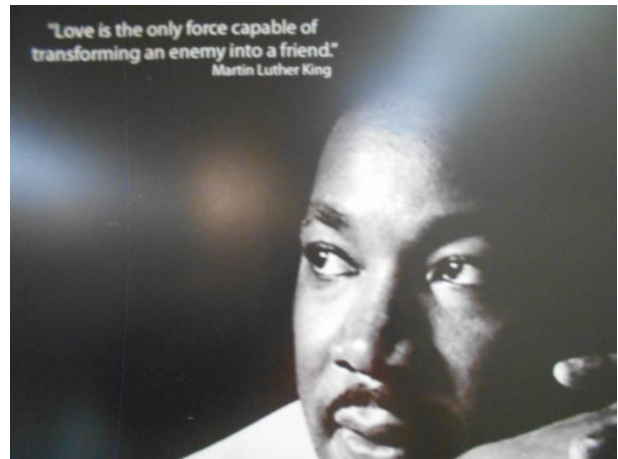
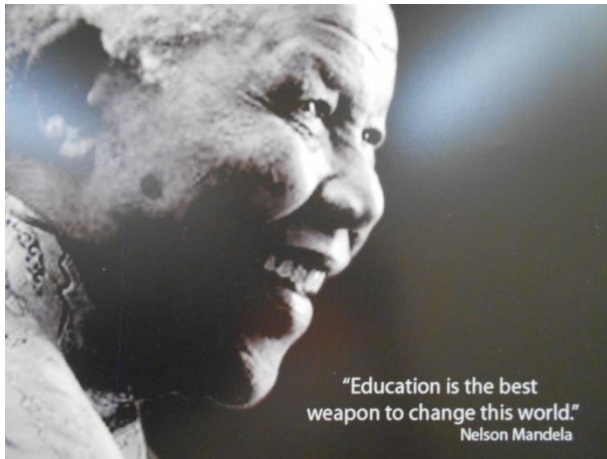


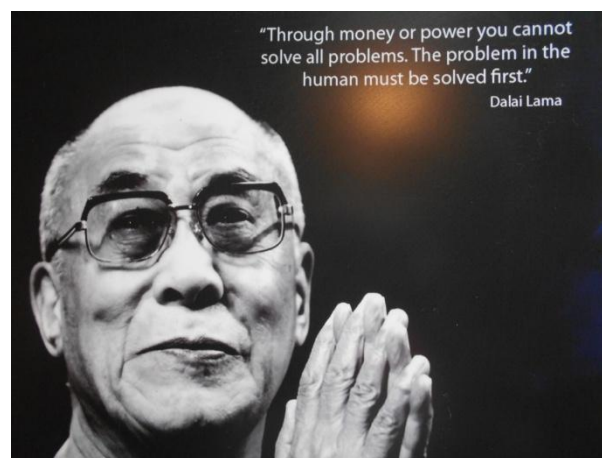
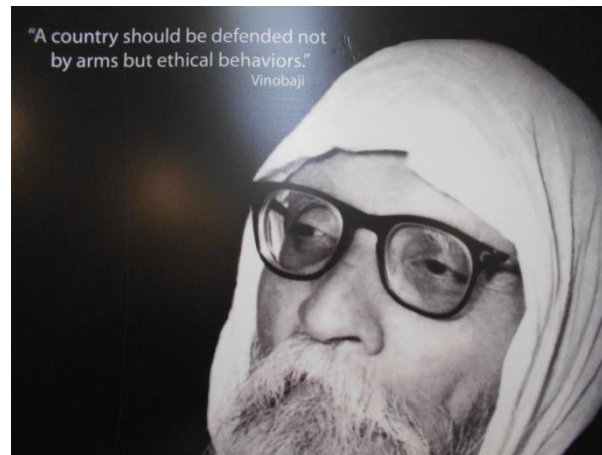
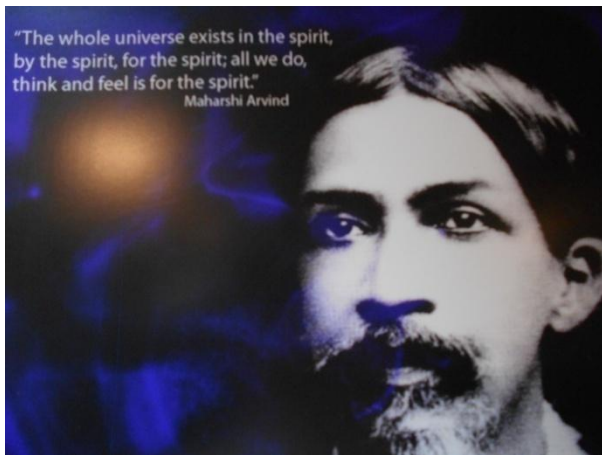


I always know I am on the right track when I see all the ways I am either failing or could be doing something so much more effectively. When things feel broken I find my wholeness in self-reflection. It's a surge through my heart like a tidal wave that all along, I realize the time I wasted in gathering the courage to fuel my vision. I promise to do better next time. Along this Gandhian course I believed in the transformation occurring that was meant to better me – all facets of me: to improve my work, to hone my strategy on living, to heighten my awareness to injustice. An additional aspect the India course taught me is that the agricultural sect of SSAAP-Zambia could be much, much stronger – and part of its failure is due to my own deep ignorance about farming. I will discuss this more thoroughly in the next newsletter.

SSAAP can do so much more; this is what India has shown me. We can expand our consciousness, and dig more deeply: what is the root cause of the starvation, the corruption, the lack of water in the villages we work in? And how can we work to address these issues of social justice nonviolently, through education, resourcefulness, perseverance, Soul force? And even if I don't live long enough to see these changes that must take place in order for sustainable peace in Africa, through SSAAP we can begin these processes now.









SSAAP is a small, locally-funded and supported 501(c)3, not-for-profit organization registered with the IRS (U.S.A.),

EIN #: 27-2033029.

We are committed, privileged and *honored* to serve the neglected sects of rural African societies in Zambia, Sierra Leone and Ethiopia; we do so with gratitude.

It is our life's work and therefore we take on this immense challenge with joy.

I look forward to seeing you, working with you, being with you, laughing, sharing and learning from you in 2018.

Love, Heather



“Service doesn’t start when you have something to give; it becomes naturally when you have nothing left to take.”

~ Seva Café wall; Ahmedabad, India



I’ve learned the hard way that the best thing to do with the mind is not to allow it to go haywire with worry, fear, regret, and self-doubt, but rather give it what it needs and desires most – fill it with study on all things the human being attached to the mind deems valuable. For me, these topics include cultural anthropology, history, art, world philosophy. I fill my mind with what I am drawn to unconsciously: affirmations on Love, Sadhana. Only when the mind is contented can it do what it values most: to serve at the level of its deepest potential, to do what it came to the planet to do. What I have learned is that all beings truly love to serve others. This potential is manifested within the human spirit. It is a natural part of what we innately are. A higher realm of consciousness that breathes, breeds and bleeds Love needs only to be tapped into; it is present in all of us, and omnipresent – accessible to all – in the Universe.