

SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter, Spring Edition
XXXX; Sierra Leone “Salone”-2023



To: Kim, our homeschool ally and inspiration. You have been an incredible, irreplaceable, and integral part of our portable homeschool. Thank you for the homeschool library that proudly sits in our home in Sierra Leone. You are a role model to me: as an educator, and as a phenomenal mother. Thank you for being part of our world; we are honored to know you. We Love you!

“Sadness gives depth. Happiness gives height. Sadness gives roots. Happiness gives branches. Happiness is like a tree going into the sky, and sadness is like the roots going down into the womb of the earth. Both are needed, and the higher a tree goes, the deeper it goes, simultaneously. The bigger the tree, the bigger will be its roots. In fact, it is always in proportion. That’s its balance.”

— *Osho Rajneesh, Everyday Osho: 365 Daily Meditations for the Here and Now*



Sweet Salone

So innocently She rests upon the shores of the Atlantic, flirting with the furthest tip of West Africa, juttied out into the sea. A part of Africa not so well-known, but She isn’t a secret, nor is she silent. She appears calm, and gentle; this is all part of Her persona. Deep within, She is tumultuous, tempestuous, passionate. But She is the best kind of rage: the fire that cannot be put out, which acts as fuel to generate light, warmth, and best of all: human connection.





I always say that I will never lie or romanticize to our SSAAP supporters about Africa ~ it's just how much of the Truth people can handle! I am ready to be as open and as honest as people will allow me to be. Thank you for seeking the reality of Africa!

What I have discovered over the years is that two pictures of Africa are typically painted to the Western audience: silhouettes of African acacia trees against the backdrop of an exotic rainbow sunset, with giraffes grazing in the distance beneath a safari vehicle's awning, – or – half-naked children with mucous coming out of the corners of their eyes and nose while flies land on their faces and their disheveled mother looks like she has one foot already in the grave in her twenty-four years of life and already the mother of five. While neither of these scenarios is false, neither of them presents the whole Truth. Africa is more or less a land for the resilient: we who can cope with plans breaking or changing, disappointment and death sometimes even on a daily basis, and the pressure of having to remain in a constant state of patience. Africa is the beauty of raw Nature: a star-soaked sky, a roaring river, a healthy mango tree sprouting so much fruit that it seems gravity might topple it over. Africa is a fresh, organic meal, grown from the field less than a kilometer from the open fire which prepared it: grains and greens galore. Africa is child abuse, no law enforcement, corrupt and/or incompetent police officers, lawless leaders; Africa is the continent where chiefs sold their own people to become our slaves in the West and the Middle East. There is a lot of fear in U.S.A. associated with Africa, and I am convinced that Europeans have a much more user-friendly attitude towards this mighty continent because of its relationship with it during the Colonial Era, also as a result of its close geographic proximity.

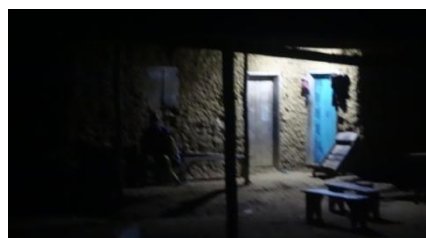
There is great difficulty just in everyday life here, but we face obstacles and challenges by dealing with them, one by one, as they come our way. I am more enthused about the project than ever before: seeing its true value is a light that shines through the density of darkness. The lack of infrastructure in all systems: law enforcement, legal, medical/healthcare (or lack thereof), and

education makes life richly challenging. Sometimes I feel I am banging my head against a wall, and getting nowhere, and then some subtle Divine sign comes my way to remind me of the deeper Truth in my mission: much more powerful than I alone am. Giving clean water through water wells is not only a medical solution to a scientific problem, but is also a way of showing the people of Africa – through our actions which are much more powerful than our words – that they deserve more. That they don't need to live at this low standard any longer, whereby a water well is the only thing differentiating them from the animals they are sharing this filthy water with.



The villages where SSAAP operates are specifically and intentionally off-the-beaten-path, where the poverty is most abhorrent and rampant: the roads are poor, the people are hungry and drinking bad water, therefore are sometimes disgruntled, and hopeless. SSAAP has a 25% community contribution standard policy for all of its projects. This is a commitment by the community to give one-fourth the cost of whatever service or resource they receive (water well / school sponsorship / agriculture project / school toilet); the 25% must go back to the project itself (SSAAP). The communities typically want a water well, but sometimes do not want to do anything to contribute to it, or for the changes. SSAAP requires for each of its projects a mandatory 25% Community Contribution to ensure partnership, sustainability, and responsibility in its relationships with the local people.

This model has always worked well for SSAAP, because it serves as a guide as to which communities are truly serious and committed to working together and in-partnership with SSAAP, versus communities that just want a hand-out, which never serves them in the long run. What I have learned on the job (in the field☺), is that every community is different – just as every human being is – and in the end is impossible to generalize or even categorize by tribe/region/language/location. Some communities have surprised me with their high levels of commitment and attitude of service to others, whereas other communities are not ready to change – though they are the first to claim they desire a better life – but won't take the actions to make the changes.



I am rapidly reaching this conclusion: Africa needs to take back Her power.

The Universe is beating me over the head with this until I see it for what it is: poverty is also the responsibility of the people living in it.

Africa, the Motherland and seed of us all, needs to regain consciousness, and say, once and for all: *Enough is enough.*

The way I see it: Africa doesn't have any more excuses, or any more time to waste on them.

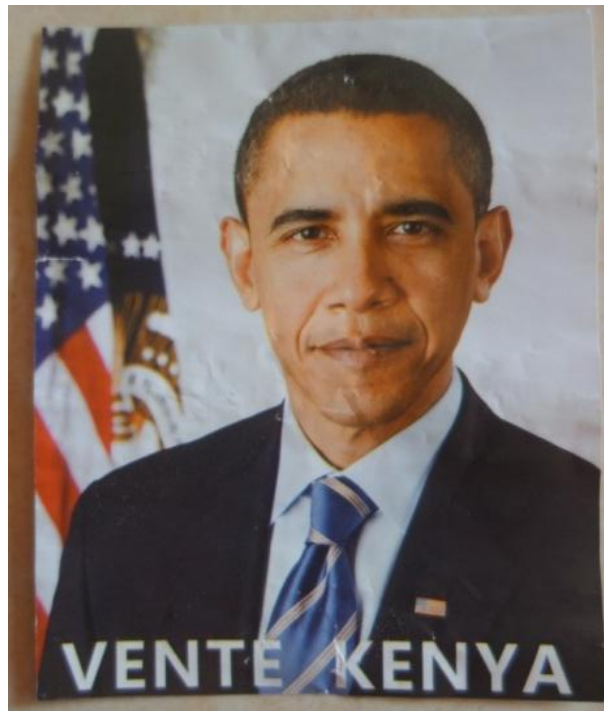
I say that She has exhausted all of her excuses: slavery, colonialism, FGM, poverty, corrupt leadership, Ebola (EBOV), Coronavirus (COVID), brutal war, enslavement through corrupt mining practices, and the leaders of the nation selling the resources of their nation to foreigners to line their own pockets; as well the current colonization, primarily by China, operating most of the large mines, and other countless corrupt industries here.

She is better than this. My Love of Her doesn't allow her to be victimized any longer, and it is time to take action, take control, take initiative, take heart.



It is time; She must take responsibility for the abhorrent governments that Her people have empowered; for false systems which do not enforce laws, constitutions, or any form of legality; systems or lack thereof which do not serve Her people: medical systems that do not practice before they perform surgery, resulting in a long line of botched surgeries permanently crippling vulnerable people; educational systems that do not teach people to read and comprehend what they are reading. I am not in favor of literacy being a system for the elite and the entitled – though this is what it has meant around the world and to the world in the name of masses of destitute people in Africa, Asia, and South America who are illiterate – but rather literacy being the passage into another world: the world of sharing secret through the written word. This is the value of literacy. Failed systems in Africa promote those who are wealthy enough to attend school, to pay for their accelerated marks, even perhaps to sleep with the teacher. Those without the funds to support their cosmetic education are left behind.

Enough is enough! We need a change here, and like everywhere else in the world: the change begins within. People have to decide that they are no longer going to settle for, or tolerate, the abuse. People have to want better for themselves than the toxic poverty that they currently reside in. Without them making that subtle, but radical change, then all the work outsiders do here will not be enough.



What I am learning is that without my sense of humor, there is no hope of getting through life in Africa. ☺ Radiance and I are constantly laughing at just the simple, everyday things that are so random: driving through the jungle at night after a meeting at one of our sites, and some random guy pops out of a corner of the forest selling groundnuts and Radiance and I laugh so hard that we almost fall off the motorbike; Radiance always laughs at me when I am talking strongly to people; she thinks it is hysterical because I use hyperbolic examples to give people an idea of what I am saying, just to make my point. That is something I have learned over the years from living in cultures where people don't speak [much] English and I don't speak their language [well]: I talk with my hands and use hyperbolic language. It makes Radiance laugh for hours. One of the [many] things I Love most about Africa is the directness in which people communicate here; I have adopted this communication style. I like the forthrightness of being very straight about what is in my heart, and as they say in Africa: *"Speak the Truth, cool your heart, and then release it. Anger, pain, sadness goes away very quickly if you release it, but the longer it stays in your heart the harder it is to release it and the more you hurt yourself – and others – the longer it lingers."*

SSAAP has a 0% tolerance for theft policy, and 100% success rate in reclaiming debt. I have had 100% success rate for reclaiming SSAAP's debt, when it has been subject to loss, because I always put the loss back on the project beneficiaries: our local communities, versus a loss to the project. In other words, I explain to them that none of SSAAP's funding is mine or Radiance's, and that all funds belong to the project itself – which is theirs – and so if they want the project to progress and sustainably continue serving them, versus to retrogress, then everyone collectively is responsible for either getting the properties/resources/funds back from the thief, or there will be no future funding nor continuation of the project. Giving people responsibility and accountability here is fundamental to the overall sustainability of the project. They must take ownership of the project; SSAAP cannot do it alone.



Human beings' greatest weakness has always resided in his ability to relate to others – or if he can even relate to them at all. Man tends towards narcissism, and has a tendency to compare the deeds of others to his own. He is even likely to treat another as less, if perhaps deep in his innermost heart, he perceives him as being more. When in truth, Nature has endowed all Her creations with equal and opposite strengths. Is a tabby cat, which can live in harmony with human being, of any greater strength or weakness than a mountain lion, who could rip him to shreds? It is within our best interests, as a human collective, not to compare ourselves to others; we will always fall short, unless we somehow feel ourselves above another, and then we are simply living in our ego space which is ultimately a detriment to the self. A wise man has consciousness, and that is all that separates him from an ordinary man; he knows himself, he knows his blind spots, thus will be the first to point them out to anyone inquisitive enough to ask. He doesn't fear his weaknesses, as he realizes they are simply portals back to his deeper Self. Should we all be conscious enough not only to know our individual blind spots but also brave enough to stand inside of them, we will have created a human collective whereby our weaknesses are inevitably our strengths.



Our hard-to-reach, off-the-beaten-path SSAAP villages. Above, the road to Madee Village: where we are beginning our second SSAAP Fisheries Project, and had a well dug in 2019/2020, which we are finishing in 2023. We recently learned that many of the local fish breeds are becoming extinct, due to corrupt fishing practices; therefore, the SSAAP-Sierra Leone Fisheries Project is temporarily suspended until further information is processed on this issue.



Madee Village is located on the Little Scarcies River, which is a perfect point to target for fishing initiatives. The Little Scarcies flows through West Africa: the river begins in Guinea and flows into Sierra Leone; She eventually flows into the Atlantic Ocean, and Sierra Leone is Her last stop before merging with the sea.



The person responsible for introducing FGM (*Female Genital Mutilation*) to Sierra Leone was no one other than a woman herself, a female chief from Moyamba (one of our SSAAP districts): *Madame Yoko* (above). She believed that initiation into womanhood was achieved appropriately through circumcision, in a secret society known as the Bondo Bush whereby this initiation was done, as well as training girls / young women how to take care of their husbands and teaching girls / young women how to cook and clean, do domestic chores, and all things related to domestic life/nesting. The Bondo Bush is well and alive today, and is a money-making industry here in rural Sierra Leone. Yoko is a well-Loved icon in Sierra Leonean history, and a very controversial character to me (Heather). FGM was started by a woman, not a man, here in Sierra Leone. Many of the men here are more opposed to its practice than the women, which is a topic I frequently bring up to anyone willing to discuss it with me.



Above, Radiance (my daughter) pictured with her friend, who sells traditional local art, named Baby Musa.

As FGM has long since become a trend in this country, approximately 87-94% of women have been circumcised, according to which report or study is generated. According to Statistics-Sierra Leone (<https://www.statistics.sl>): *90.9 percent of females aged 15 to 49 years were circumcised.*



Freetown, Sierra Leone: our capital city



The city has become infested with cockroaches, bedbugs, mosquitoes, and rats. It is toxically overpopulated, and there is a surplus of *kush*, a powder drug that many of the youth are purchasing cheaply on the streets: highly controversial in the society, and has become politicized.

Sierra Leone is scorpion territory, and there are just as many scorpions as there are spiders and snakes here. We have removed many scorpions from the walls and floorboards of our house.



How we make our local roads in Africa, shown below. The valleys in the roads are both dangerous and treacherous. They are fixed, typically, by hand: through the hard work and incredible local muscle.



But let me never tell you a one-sided story; my daughter hates it when I do this: paint a picture of Sierra Leone that doesn't tell both sides. Let me never tell only the *bad* parts of this story while omitting the *good*. I Love stories, and I have learned they are always better when you hear as many sides to them as possible, to discern your own truth. They intensify and become both richer and more complex in the more multi-sided they become.

Sierra Leone is one of the most beautiful nations in the world, and one of Radiance's and my absolute favorite countries in all the world. We have traversed this continent greatly, and of course we have great bias, but we think that Sierra Leone has a magnetism, a unique quality that makes it rare and special; people always ask us if we like Sierra Leone or Zambia better. Comparing Sierra Leone and Zambia is like choosing which child you like better; how could you ever choose?



Gorgeous fabric and textiles



Raw, organic food: beautiful and tasty, also healthy



Some of the most incredible and strong people on the planet I have the honor of knowing; the wisdom that comes from their strength and experience touches my heart every day of my life.

Cleaning Out the Dross

I left Sierra Leone on March 19, 2020: during the Coronavirus Outbreak, whereby Radiance (my daughter) and I stayed in Zambia until October 13, 2021, before returning to our homeland: U.S.A., where we stayed for 10 months before going overseas again. At the time of SSAAP's departure from Sierra Leone in March 2020, I left 14 water wells unfinished, the 3 contractors SSAAP hired insisting that the wells had to be finished at the heart of the rainy season, just before the rains would come at the end of April 2020. I paid all 3 contractors 90% of what SSAAP owed them. I made many mistakes, and I take responsibility for all of them! In Africa, just because you have money, write and sign a contract, and give someone a job, it does not mean the person will do the job.



I spent from November 2022 – February 2023 recovering all the debt to SSAAP-Sierra Leone, which exceeded \$12,000 USD in 12 water wells, 20 bushels of rice seed stolen, 4 chickens thieved, our Fisheries boat we discovered was not kept well and had a hole in it, and then having to fund its repair; this trip back to Sierra Leone has been nothing short of one of the most trying times in the life of SSAAP.

Only one of the three contractors finished his 2 wells from 2020: Mr. Ndoko, wearing a striped shirt, above. On Christmas Eve 2022, I asked him to meet me so I could pay him the 10% balances of what I owed the other 2 contractors in an effort for him to help me get the 12 water wells for SSAAP finished.



We (Taylor and I) worked with Mr. Ndoko until we could come to a place of compromise and understanding on the job at task: in order to begin the 57 water wells we have for SSAAP-Sierra Leone in 2023, we must finish the 12 wells from 2019/2020.

Mr. James Ndoko is responsible for the only 2 completed water wells for SSAAP 2019-2020; please view the following pages of our success story for SSAAP-Sierra Leone!

The other 12 wells will be complete before SSAAP leaves Sierra Leone in 2023. Our airplane tickets to return to Zambia for April 5, 2023 have been extended to leave on August 2, 2023 instead.

Radiance and I put our heads together and figured there was no way we could recover the SSAAP debt and dig 57 new water wells by April 5, 2023, and so we have more time to complete our water wells now, and hopefully: some time to breathe as well!

Success Story Well Site #1: Rochain-Thallah Village

Rochain-Thallah; Kambia District, Sierra Leone

We visited the site on Thursday, January 26, 2023.

With everything we have been through with the 14 water wells from 2019/2020, the site of this water well – glowing! – from the little dirt path, brought tears to my eyes!



The headman of Rochain-Thallah Village was elated, as is the whole community! I wept when I saw the well, I was so relieved, touched, and joyous: simultaneously. Crying should not be reserved just for times of sadness! Sometimes when I am most happy, certainly I may cry with joy!



The dedication plaque has been cemented on the side of the well, difficult to read from the photos, but it shines nonetheless.





We visited the site on Taylor's, our SSAAP-NW Field Coordinator, 45th birthday. He said that having a finished water well was one of the best gifts he could ever have had.





My standard – on all things SSAAP-related – is very high, and I don't intend to ever lower it. And a SSAAP water well isn't done until I say it is complete, and mark it with my gold star of approval!

The well is perfect; I only have two issues with it. One, the four legs that hold the pulley down need an additional cement block, as daily heavy usage of the water well will slowly erode the pulley from its cement foundation unless reinforced with a heavy cement block (on all four legs). My only other issue with the water well is that it needs a tether and a bucket. Otherwise, flawless! Perfect!

Facts on Rochain-Thallah Water Well

- Cement inside 1 foot deep (at the ground level of the well)
- 10-11 meters deep



Donor gift from the people of Rochain-Thallah Village, as a thank you for the donor's generosity! Carrie, thank you! We Love you, hon! We are 2/3 done with your water wells from 2019. Thank you for being patient with me. Even in terms of African time, this has taken forever and a day. I apologize!

Well Site #2

Konta-Thenkel Village; Kambia District, Sierra Leone



We visited this site on Saturday, November 10, 2022 when Mike Edwards was still with us in Sierra Leone. I was so happy that he got to see an “Ndoko well” as I call them. It was the best well SSAAP has ever done in Sierra Leone!



The deepest gift of the water wells is that they separate human beings from animals. Animals are not less than humans, nor are human beings less than animals: we have equal potential in entirely different ways. Animals have a tough digestive tract and tolerance for drinking dirty water; human beings have much more sensitive systems. When I go to the villages, I tell them that the water wells from SSAAP are symbolic: they symbolize that the people deserve better than to drink water that is slowly killing them, and that they are not animals. I reiterate something that is common-sensical to me: animals are no less than humans, but they are wired differently, and should NOT be sharing the same water source. The water wells epitomize that the people of rural Africa deserve better than what they have tolerated, and that they should raise the bar and heighten their standard. I tell them that human rights are not optional, and that something as simple as water is actually the most profound gift SSAAP could ever support them with. It helps them embrace their truest Nature: raw strength, endurance, magnetism, and beauty. To me, this is what the people of Africa are in their truest, most candid state.





Mike Edwards, pictured below, brought so much Love and inspiration to the project, at a time that it was at its lowest. Mike, we Love you. Please come back and visit us again; you are always welcome.





The community is eager and active. This is far and away our greatest SSAAP Success Story well!

We took water samples from all 9 SSAAP wells that we visited during Mike Edwards's visit in order to have them scientifically tested in U.S.A. at a laboratory for verification that the water is indeed clean, clear, free of contaminants, and healthy for all of us drinking it! I mailed the samples back to Colorado, U.S.A. on the 2nd day of February 2023. It took me four hours at the post office in Freetown to mail them back home. Liam, let me know when they arrive!



Facts on Konta-Thenkel Water Well

- GPS points: N 08 degrees 57.054'; W 012 degrees 56.632'
- Cement inside 1 foot deep (at the ground level of the well)
- 14-15 meters deep

Land: Fields of Food, Agricultural Abundance

My salary as the Executive Director for SSAAP is \$0; for a few years, when Radiance was young, I was able to pay myself \$5500/year, but when Donald Trump changed the tax laws on self-employment, and I discovered that \$1750 of my salary (almost 2 SSAAP-Sierra Leone water wells) would be handed to the U.S. government through self-employment taxes, I decided it was a sign and to not pay myself again, such that all of us working with SSAAP (our Board of Directors, Volunteers, Field Coordinators, etc.) would be volunteers. The exception to this is contracted employees, such as our well-driller in Zambia, Abedneco Likumbi, and our contractors for the water wells in Sierra Leone, as well as the artisans we commission; in 2023, for the first time, SSAAP was able to give a percentage of each water well to its two Field Coordinators: Taylor S. Kamara, NW Region Field Coordinator, and Musa T. Korpoi, SE Region Field Coordinator. Both men have been committed to SSAAP since 2014 and I was so happy that, 9 years later, I could find a way to reward them both through the water well contracts.

So, if I am not paid, then how do I benefit from SSAAP? This question is asked to me almost every day by the Africans.

Let me count the ways! They are vast, so I am only listing a few, below.

I get the opportunity to live in Africa, which for me is the best continent on planet Earth: because it isn't a concrete jungle – *yet*. And materialism hasn't ruined Her people – *yet*. Africa is raw Nature, and raw human beings: no pretention in the villages of Africa! The urban areas are quite different, and let me say that some of the most superficial, arrogant, and materially-bound people I have ever met in my life I have met in urban Africa, so let me always remain in the village, as the village people are pure of heart, and it is where I belong.

I get the privilege of spending every minute of my time with my child. For me, this has always been what I want; 18 years go by quickly, and 13 of them have already passed. Radiance is the most precious part of my life, and one day when she goes to university and leaves me in Africa, I will have to relearn how to live without her all over again. I am dreading this with every bone in my body. It will be more difficult than potty-training her and teaching her how to read. But I am strong! And I will face whatever the Universe asks me to rise to the occasion to meet. Her separation from me is precisely the very thing I have been training her all her life to do; such is the irony of maternal and paternal Love.

I get the time and space to read and write [poetry, prose]: my two passions. I spend time in the depths of myself. This has had painfully adverse affects, in terms of many of my deepest Loves: dear friends and family slipping away; they cannot or choose not to relate to me, but if this is the price I must pay for being my true, pure self: I will take it. That which is not yours can never be robbed from you, and that which is truly yours can never be taken from you, so I prefer to flow with Nature: it always has my best interests at heart. I trust in the Divine, and that is all.

I get the honor of doing work in this world that I know is real. I suffer for it, I lose sleep for it, I cry over it, I talk to people in harsh ways I never would want to talk to anyone over it, and in the end, I

get to jump with the joy of the local people for the water well that is a monument in their village: a testament to the unconditional Love that people across the Atlantic Ocean who will probably never even meet them have done to ensure their future, the health of their grandchildren, and to provide them with the most fundamental element of development in the rural world: *water*.

So Africa has indeed given me plenty.

I am an indigent citizen when I go home now; I have no house in U.S.A., no vehicle, and I am eligible for every low-income program through domestic nonprofits and the United States government offered. I eat food from food banks, ride the RTD bus with homeless people, wear the same clothes I have had since seventh grade, and find it a necessity in my work in Africa that at home, in abundant U.S.A., I am one of the *poor* people in the society. I was born and raised in an incredibly privileged suburb of Dayton, Ohio, and spent my childhood, teenage years, and early twenties surrounded by other people of privilege not only in Ohio, but also in Boulder, Colorado where I received my degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder. This was all part of a Divine plan: I was meant to be part of both worlds, to understand that extreme wealth is the same as extreme poverty unless we learn the fundamental Truth that nothing we ever have is really ours, and we sure don't take anything with us when we depart from this dimension; in our death, we take nothing with us but Love.

But Africa is giving back to SSAAP now, and we have had donation offers for five pieces of land throughout the northwest region of Sierra Leone, and three pieces of land in the southeast region of Sierra Leone. Land has been donated by African chiefs, traditional communities, and individuals.

The four pieces of land gift deeded to SSAAP in NW-Sierra Leone vary: next to a swamp, inside a forest, on the Little Scarcies River, and on the sea. Here are photos of the four sites:

Robompe Village, Maforki Chiefdom

Sacred Swampland





Christmas Eve 2022: The Universe gifted SSAAP with the best present imaginable: a gorgeous piece of land in the heart of Sierra Leone: fertile, rich soil just waiting for me to get my hands – and heart – into it.



I couldn't seem to wipe the smile off my face the entire day we did the official land survey.

The Paramount Chief of Maforki Chiefdom, pictured below left, with *Bom Posseh*: his Queen, and the community which donated the land, below right. The Paramount Chief and his wife are two of the best African leaders I have ever known. When the Paramount Chief signed the land document, he said that the land was for Radiance's grandchildren, because he wanted her to settle in Sierra Leone and have a house here forever.

Radiance is currently designing her dream house. In the meantime, 10 of our 57 SSAAP-Sierra Leone 2023 water wells have already been promised to Maforki Chiefdom, as a token of the Chief and his Queen's generosity.

Radiance and I decided that the Robompe house will be our house for hosting visitors, and where we will stay most of the time we are in Sierra Leone.

The 10 town lots/1 acre of land that was given to SSAAP as a gift cost SSAAP \$0. It was a Deed of Gift, so SSAAP paid only for the official documents from the Ministry of Lands.



The Paramount Chief and his Queen are U.S. citizens; both of their children were born in the States, and therefore they have a very progressive view of what African development should look like: it should incorporate human rights, and animal rights. I adore them both; I believe what attracted them to both me and SSAAP was our U.S.A. connection. It is an honor to work with like-minded people.

Rosint Village, Bakeh-Loko Chiefdom

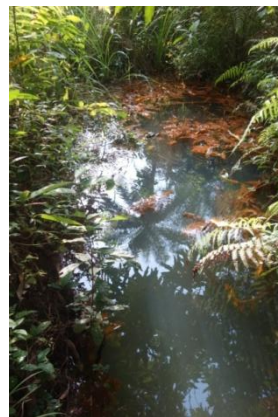
Feathery Forest

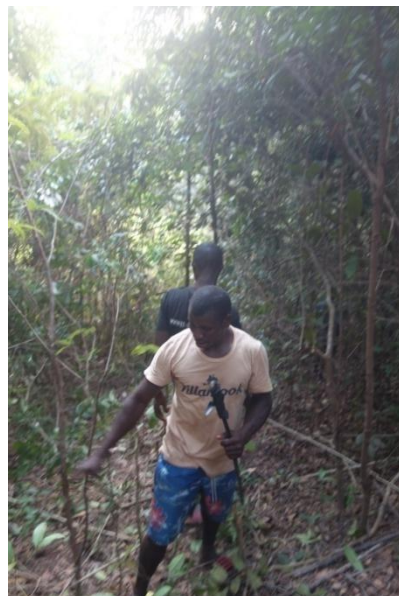


This land was donated as a traditional deed of gift by a large community, and we had a series of meetings to discuss the land and SSAAP's projects before the land was officially surveyed.



Taylor (SSAAP's NW Field Coordinator), Radiance, and I decided that the Rosint Land (over 2 acres) will be the site of our Nonviolence Library, and eventually our Nonviolence Institute/Technical-Vocational Training Center, and our SSAAP Agricultural Headquarters-NW. There is year-round water on the land (pictured below), which is very promising for agricultural purposes.





The day we surveyed the land, we were bitten by ants: in Africa, a sign of good luck, and fertile land.



Rochain-Thallah Village, Thallah-Munu Chieftom

Raging River



Rochain-Thallah Village, as a gift to SSAAP for their water well (pages 13-17 of this newsletter), gifted to SSAAP almost 1 acre of land right on the Little Scarcies River.



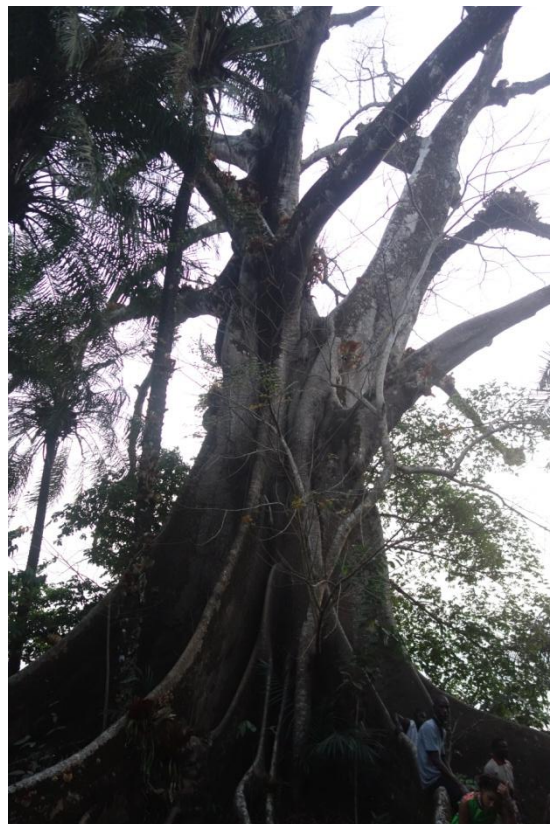
The view from the highest point on the land is stunning. At this point in my life, I need to be with Nature more than anything else, and this is what Africa has given back to me; this is how Africa has paid me.

Bakeh-Lhimray Village, Chiefdom

Shimmering Sea



This land is particularly amazing because it is land surrounding a giant cotton tree, which I am having a house built beneath. I have waited my whole life to live in a tree house.





Behind the cotton tree are rice fields and then the sea, though a peninsula of land is in its backdrop. This land was gifted to SSAAP as SSAAP gave 2 water wells to Bakeh-Lhimray Village in 2019/2020, both of which will be finished in 2023.



Heather holding 2 of the 4 official Land Deed documents for Robompe and Rosint lands.

I have four sets of land to plot GPS points for now, if you are interested to look on Google Earth to see where the SSAAP land is located:

Robompe: “moving up to the head” (Temne); Rombompe Land: Fenkeh Section, Maforki Chiefdom, Situated off Port Loko-Gberay Junction Highway

- **Point 1: N-963244, E-749389**
- **Point 2: N-963186, E-749369**
- **Point 3: N-963165, E-749426**
- **Point 4: N-963217, E-749647**

Rosint: “the place with sand” (Temne); Rosint Land: Magbini Section, Bakeh-Loko Chiefdom, Situated off of Port Loko-Lungi Highway

- **Point A: N-972528, E-739678**

- **Point B: N-972596, E-739688**
- **Point C: N-972571, E-739699**
- **Point D: N-972492, E-729753**
- **Point E: N-972420, E-739703**

Rochain-Thallah Land: Thallah Section, Thallah-Munu Chiefdom, Kambia District

- **Point A: N-996737, E-746391**
- **Point B: N-996728, E-746353**
- **Point C: N-996770, E-746339**
- **Point D: N-996785, E-746381**

Bakeh-Lhimray: “orange tree” (Temne); Kambia District

- **Point A: N-978759, E-711622**
- **Point B: N-978782, E-711609**
- **Point C: N-978794, E-711627**
- **Point D: N-978784, E-711642**



SSAAP hopes to use the lands gifted to the project as a way of combating the excessive waste of resources here; in Sierra Leone, we have able-bodied young men and women, rich, healthy, fertile soil; 87-95% unemployment (according to local sources here in Sierra Leone), and rampant starvation. Why? Not enough emphasis on agriculture, and a false idea that urban life is somehow superior to rural, pastoral life. SSAAP’s success lies in emphasizing the deep abundance of the village, and that in the end, getting back to Nature, and to our Nature-bound, healthy and holy selves, as Nature is our source of good health and long life and the only place any of us truly belong.



“Each person comes into this world with a specific destiny--he has something to fulfill, some message has to be delivered, some work has to be completed. You are not here accidentally-- you are here meaningfully. There is a purpose behind you. The whole intends to do something through you.”

— Osho





Hiring a surveyor to survey both Rombompe and Rosint lands, Deed of Gifts, to SSAAP. The surveyor's name is Sahr Gandhi, pictured above, sitting in green chair. The informality of Africa is both its curse and its blessing: it is endearing and non-abrasive, as well raw and straightforward to live in a society with no pretenses. That being said, the informality makes legal contracts, any legal documents, as well law enforcement a challenge, not to mention the health and education sects of the society, as things are not taken seriously enough here, either.

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Child Abuse and Domestic Violence



Due to my irreverent streak, I always say that Sierra Leone is the child abuse capital of the world. It makes my daughter, who is Sierra Leonean, angry when I say this: but I always do. I have never

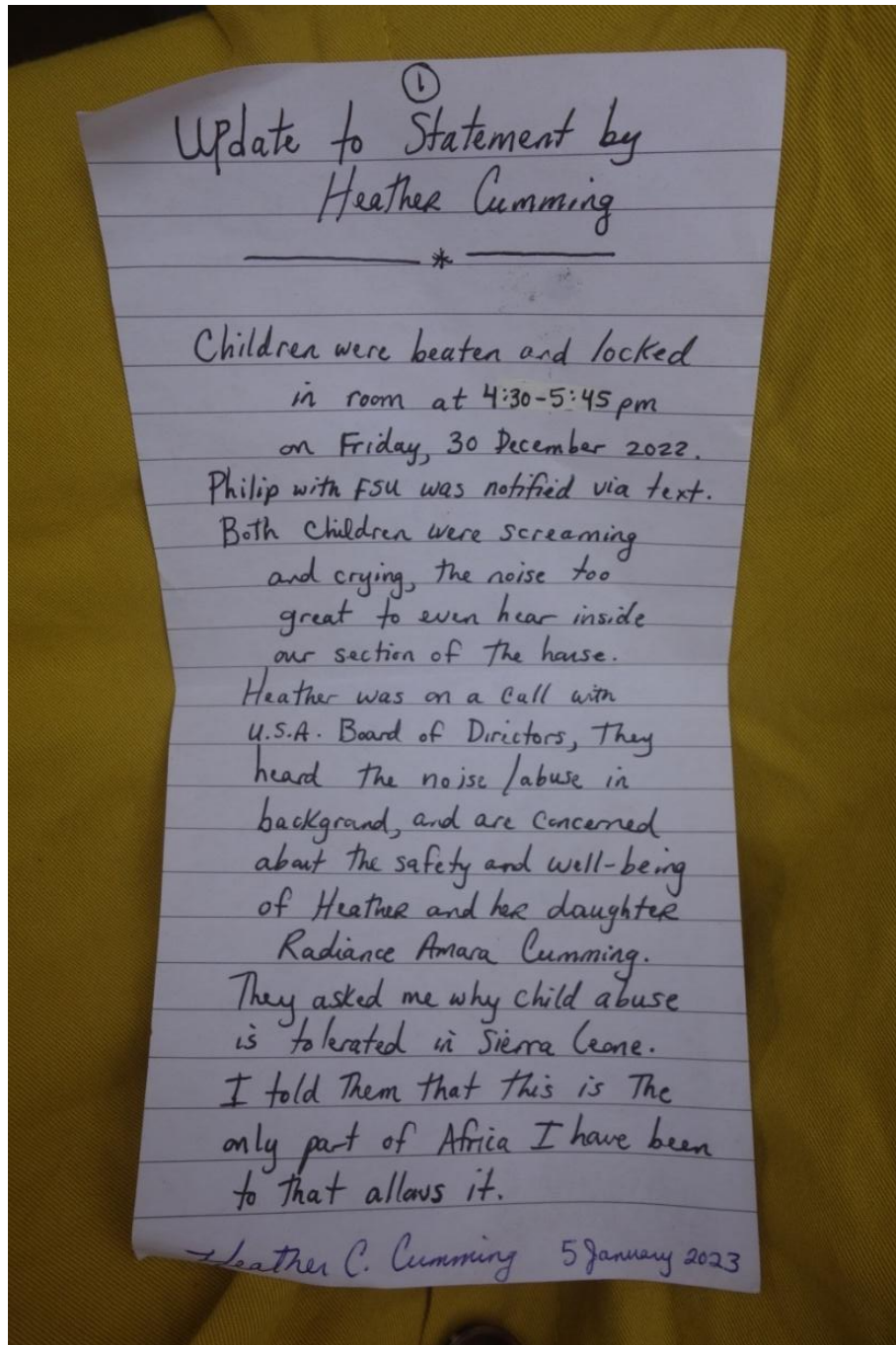
traveled, lived, or visited any part of the world – even any other part of Africa – that cares as little about the daily abuse to their children as here in Sierra Leone.

This trip to Sierra Leone, I have spent more time in the police station than in the field ~ and I don't know if that is something I should be proud of, or ashamed of. Probably both?! The goodness in me is that I don't tolerate injustice: whether it is an act of injustice to myself or to my child (where it hits home the hardest in my heart), or to others. I am also incredibly stubborn, which I have come to see has a certain value in this part of the world! I have a very sharp, photographic memory which has recall of facts, dates, times, etc. I have made many enemies here! But I figure that this is a small price to pay in the Nonviolent war against injustice.

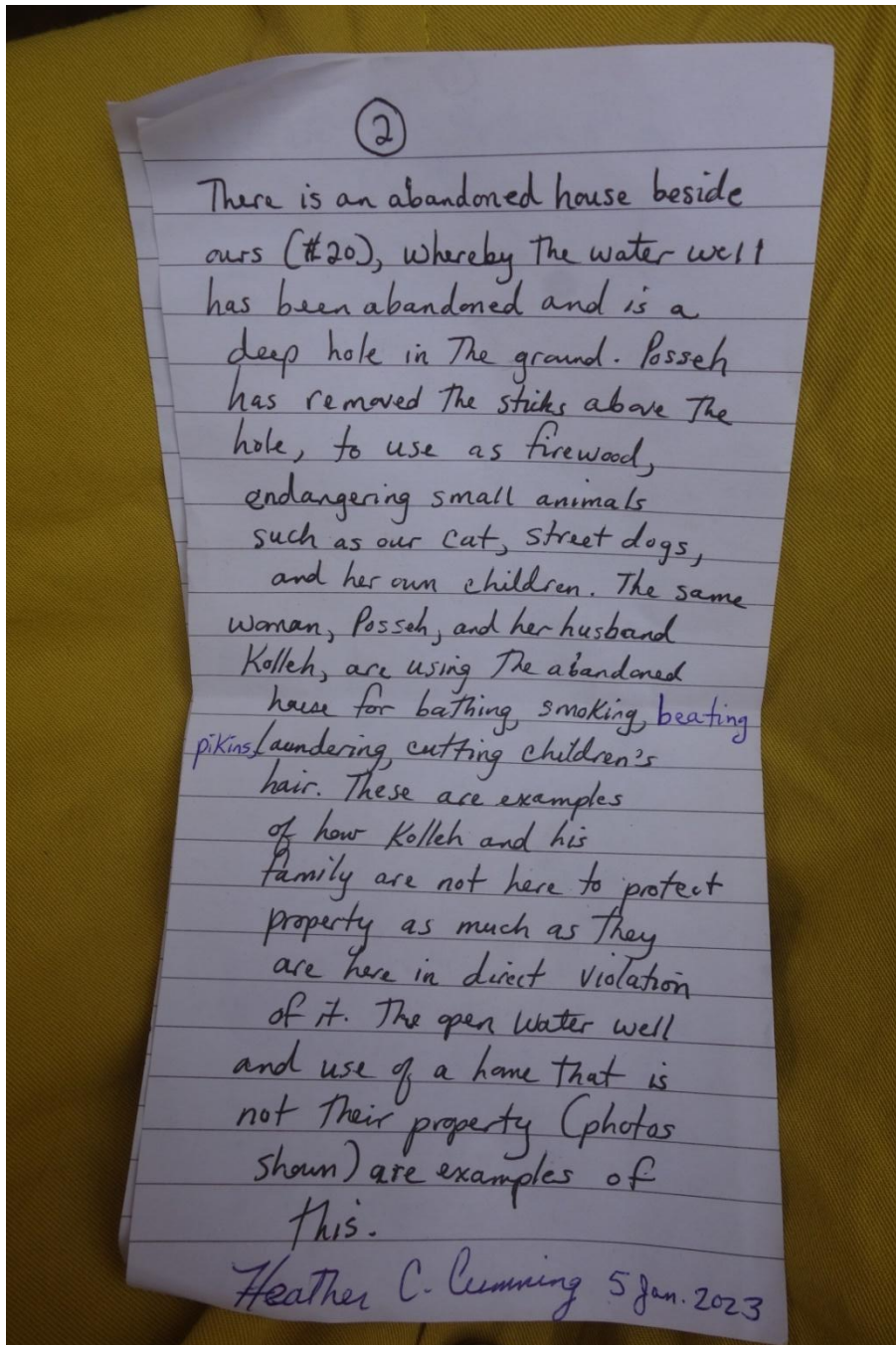
I have come to the hard-won Truth that it matters less to me that people *like* me than it does that I do the right thing, which for me means standing for Truth and justice in all scenarios, without compromise and without exception. Therefore, I have had issues with various people here (specifically our neighbors) for (a) standing up for their children, (b) following and reminding them of their own Constitution, (c) explaining to them that my viewpoint has less to do with me being a Westerner/American than it does me respecting universal human rights. I carry a copy of the Sierra Leonean Constitution-2007 with me in my purse. The old Constitution was written in 1990, the same year of the civil war's onset. The Constitution was rewritten in 2007 with the help of England.; the Bill entitled The Child Rights Act, 2007, Part III, #33: Protection from torture and degrading treatment; (1) *No person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including any cultural practice which dehumanizes or is injurious to the physical and mental welfare of a child.* (2) *No correction of a child is justifiable which is unreasonable in kind or in degree according to the age, physical and mental condition of the child and no correction is justifiable if the child by reason of tender age or otherwise is incapable of understanding the purpose of the correction.* (3) *The Corporal Punishment Act is repealed.*



These two precious little boys, who live beside us, are beaten by their parents (specifically their mother) every day of their lives. I made a very long formal statement against this abuse, then followed up with a few amendments with points I had neglected to mention in my first report. This child abuse case has been on-going, since roughly mid-November, until present, and is one of four child abuse cases that I am currently engaged in. Please see my formal police report/statement on the following two pages of this newsletter.



If I could just get Africa to Love itself as much as I Love it, it would stop selling itself short and empower itself in a much better way than I will ever be able to do it, as an outsider. Basically my work on this continent is reminding people, every day in every way, to own their own beauty, power, strength. Centuries of degradation, slavery, colonialization, etc. has wiped this out of them, leaving them with the false impression that the West is superior to them. I think not! The West has its deep strengths, yes, but very deep weaknesses as well.

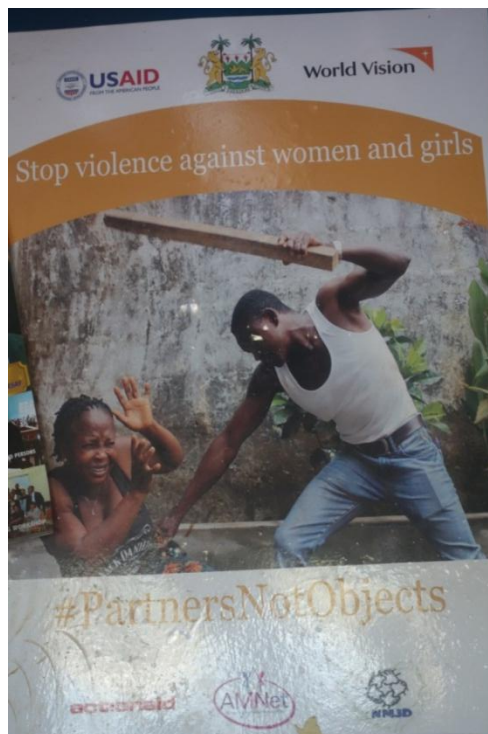


Most of my heroes are, coincidentally, lawyers: my father, my paternal grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, one of my dearest friends named Adam in Chicago, Barack Obama, our late SSAAP lawyer John Stewart. Lawyers tend to make good leaders, as they typically not only understand and are well-versed in knowing the law, but they generally have a passion for standing up for it, for giving it a voice, for activating its power from the written word onto action.

I didn't stumble into law enforcement, Sierra Leone's Constitution, and all the rampant violence in Sierra Leone by accident. The pulse of the Universe is mystifying; this all happened for a reason.

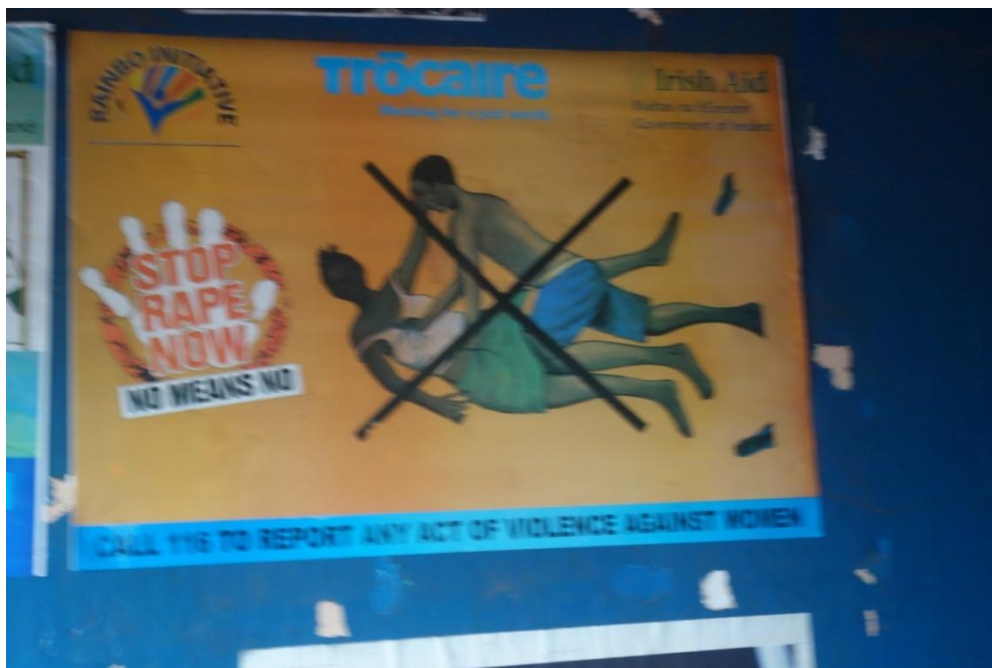


Posters from the walls of the FSU (Family Support Unit) branch of the Sierra Leone Police Force. I have been to their office so many times that we have a joke: I am going to buy a cot, and a toothbrush, and just set up shop there – even live there! Most people here don't understand my sense of humor. Like most of the rest of my personality, it too is an acquired taste.





Sexual, domestic, and child abuse are rampant in this country due to both a lack of reporting and normalization through the local citizens. The combination of these factors makes reporting child abuse quite uncommon, as people think that beating a child is how a child should be raised.



One contributor to child abuse is child marriage/child pregnancy in this part of the world. When children become pregnant, they don't have the skill set for being parents, and tend to take anger and frustration out on the most vulnerable scapegoat: their children. I have also observed that in parts of the world where people live with Nature, i.e. local homes and close to Mother Earth, they become

pregnant without much effort, strain, or difficulty. In many cases, their pregnancies are unwanted or unappreciated. Therefore, many of the African children are taken for granted and are thus beaten.

I have come to know very well the Line Manager (Head) of the F.S.U. (Family Support Unit), pictured below, in Port Loko, Sierra Leone. He is very supportive of our project, and wants to ensure not only its sustainability but also its success. He has applied for assistance in his rural village where he comes from for a water well! There are so few projects working in Sierra Leone that many people value SSAAP for its continued efforts in this country.



Together with SSAAP’s Northwest Region (NW) Field Coordinator, Taylor S. Kamara, we have decided to create in our Nonviolence Institute (its seed being the Nonviolence Library) a Technical-Vocational Program (“*Tech-Voc*”) to train people in practical and much-needed skills: carpentry, tailoring, electrical, construction, as well as provide a platform for human rights issues and activism. We want to have a branch of our Nonviolence Institute that works in prisons and with the prisoners, to try to help them have access to the law, as so many of them are falsely imprisoned here, and give them rights to a fair trial. We also want to work with law enforcement/police with an outreach program, as they are highly understaffed, to help seek highly evolving systems of justice and human rights in the communities – both urban and rural. Working with legislative issues can also be the work of SSAAP in the years to come. As well, we hope to seek more appropriate and humane ways of caring for the amputees in Sierra Leone: thousands if not hundreds of thousands of people are living without hands, arms, feet, or legs as a result of one of the most brutal civil wars recorded in human history: the Sierra Leonean Civil War (1990-2001).

In most cases, as what happened with the child abuse case for our neighbors, the police call the people who have been reported to the station. They state their case; SSAAP states its case. A docket is opened. The people who have been reported are warned. If the behavior continues, and they are re-reported; they are warned for the second and final time, before getting locked behind bars. If there is a third complaint, they are sent to a correctional center. This is the current law enforcement system in Sierra Leone.

Just some weeks ago, I was sitting on the floor of our sitting room, reading a *National Geographic* book called Our Universe; Radiance was frying plantains on the fire and told me she would be inside in five minutes so we could grade her math lesson together. I heard her call to me: “Mom? Do you hear a child screaming in the distance?” I paused for a moment. In the far distance, I heard the screams of a terrorized child. I went into the bedroom, found my sunhat and sunglasses; I followed the crying. On the path, I met a motorbike rider who I knew, who offered to give me a ride. “No,” I

told him, “it will be easier for me to find the *pikin* (child, in Krio) who is crying without the noise of the motor on your motorbike; I will walk.” He drove away; I continued walking. I was shocked by the distance I had traversed from our house; I wove through compounds, in and out, until I came closer to the screaming: a little girl, probably 4 or 5 years old, crying against the side of a house, crying so hard she was shaking. A few minutes later, a woman riding a motorbike disembarked at the same compound. I asked her who the parent of this child was. I told her that from a very far distance, I could hear the sounds of the child screaming. She inquired in *Temne*, our local language here. The child had been beaten by her fellow friend (“*padi*” in Krio) and I asked to speak to that child. When the child came out from behind the house, I asked for a translator, and told the child: “How do you play with your friends by beating them? This isn’t the way we play together!” She started laughing. The children around her started laughing. So I looked at the woman who had disembarked from the motorbike, and I said to her: “These children all learned how to beat each other because their parents beat them.”

“Yes,” she said, “that is our custom here.”

“No, it isn’t a custom. Not in any culture. And you shouldn’t accept it in yours. Beating living beings is a direct violation of your Constitution. It’s also against Nature. Have you ever seen an animal mother in Nature hurt her own babies? It is unheard of. It defies Nature, but for some reason, Sierra Leoneans don’t understand this. Human beings have too much confusion, and their chaos hurts them. Where is this child’s mother?”

She found the mother, and brought her to me. I introduced myself, explained that I am the director of a human and animal rights organization here in Sierra Leone, that I work closely with the police force of Sierra Leone, and that I would keep my eyes – and ears! – on the situation on their compound. And that given the far distance from her house to my house, I should never *ever* hear the sounds of a child crying ever again, and neither should my own *pikin* (child). She apologized to me; I gave her a hug and told her to tell her other children, and the children on the compound, to stop beating each other.

I left feeling defeated, disturbed, relieved, content, sad, and dumbfounded: a salad of emotions, – all at the same time. I didn’t know if my visit to their compound had served any purpose, but knew myself well enough to know I couldn’t leave it alone: the sounds of a child being beaten.



Because this is not the first time I have encountered child abuse, and it won’t be the last. My motto: *Report, report, report*. Even if not enough is done (nothing is ever done that is adequate for abuse):

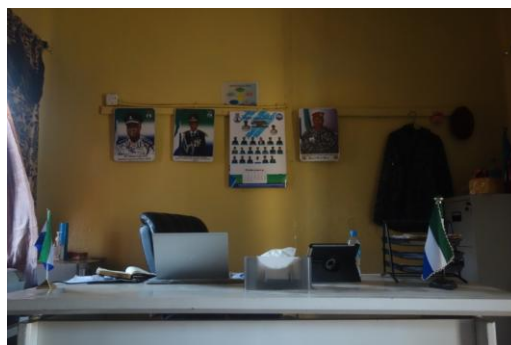
Report, report, report. Even if people are mean to you, and talk about you badly because you report them for abusing their child: *Report, report, report.*

Three of the people in our neighborhood are still our loyal friends, but no one else wants anything to do with me, and I am pretty sure they all talk badly about me in *Temne* (local language here in Port Loko), but the child abuse has basically come to a halt in my neck of the woods, so I suppose it is a tradeoff. 😊



Pictured above is the L.U.C., head of the Port Loko town police station. He adores Radiance, always gives her gifts when we have a meeting with him: plantains, candy, water, juice. He cannot believe that, as a child, she is so engaged in all affairs of the project. I tell him: “She also doesn’t want her fellow Sierra Leonean friends abused.” Whenever I leave his office, after very long and engaging discussions, he says to me: “I always learn so much from you.” And my response: “And I always learn so much from you. That is the way any healthy, happy partnership should be.”

Even the police, though feared by their own local people, are human beings, and they have children and lives and ideas and are also victims of an inept system. The way I have been working with them, and that I perceive SSAAP will continue working with the police force, is through open dialogue, partnership, respect, and mutual patience.



Holidays 2022

We spent our holiday on a site visit to Tonkalili District, to monitor our SSAAP water well at Madina Village, and also to investigate the School Toilets that we invested in their community in 2019.



The distance to Tonkalili District is approximately 2 hours 45 minutes from Port Loko town. We went with Taylor's family; his wife died on October 10, 2022, leaving him with a 4-month old son; his two daughters Tennehawa and Mamiseka went with us to Madina Village. It was a family trip, inclusive of both of our families.

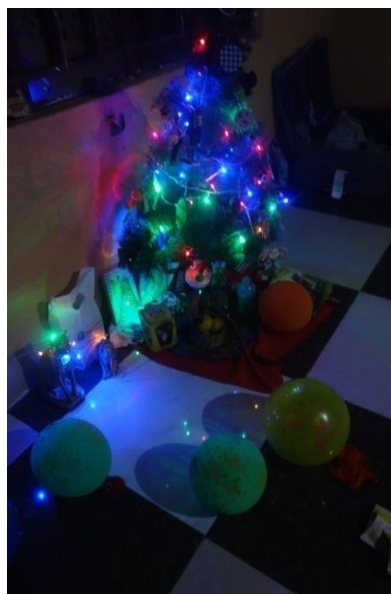




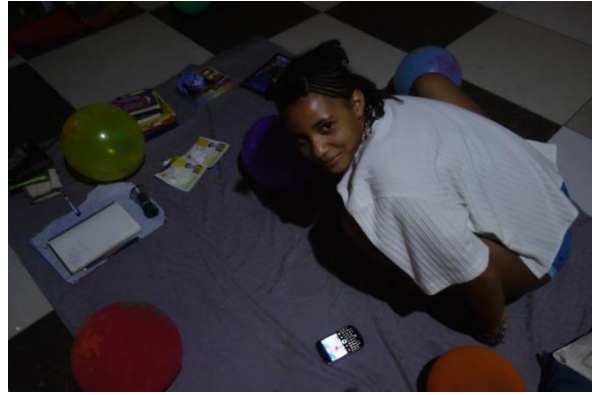
The School Toilets, above, were impressive, other than that they still need the walls plastered with cement.



Christmas Day, 2022. We spent the day with Nature and with one another, in the water most of the day.



New Year's Eve, 2022



New Year's Day, 2023



We watched the clothed *Devil* dance on the street, as is their New Year's custom in Sierra Leone.

Animal Rights Initiatives

Whereby SSAAP is concerned with Human Rights, the *Radiant Street Beasts Program*, headed by my daughter Radiance, focuses on the well-being of animals, their health and quality of life.

Radiance and a few of our SSAAP counterparts are hoping, within the next decade, and on one of the new lands gifted to SSAAP, to establish a Veterinary/ Animal Clinic: the first in Port Loko, Sierra Leone. Radiance wants to get her veterinary qualifications before opening the clinic, and hopes to run the clinic herself once she is qualified. Right now, she is talking about studying in Australia, England, or Kentucky, U.S.A.! So we will see as the years pass where she lands for her university experience.



Radiance is assisting SSAAP in restructuring many of its Animal-Rearing initiatives, forcing me to see the work we are doing here from a broader, and deeper, scope.

With the exception of cattle, which more or less are treated as highly as human beings in Africa, all other animals in Africa are sorely mistreated: camels, cats, donkeys, dogs, monkeys, snakes, goats, sheep, chicken, turkey, guinea fowls. She is helping me to restructure all of SSAAP's Animal Projects such that the animals are not reared simply to be sold and slaughtered, and teaching me how truly violent this concept is: taking care of a living being just to get money for it, or – worse – taking care of an animal (through implementation of vitamins/vaccines/feeding/housing) just to eventually slaughter it. Keeping animals only for humans to benefit at the expense of the animal suffering is animal cruelty; taking care of animals and using their products (milk, eggs, etc.) is entirely different, and so right now we are working with our colleagues in Sierra Leone, in an effort to explore the possibility of rearing animals through SSAAP for the sake of nurturing them and utilizing only their products, rather than rearing them for eventual sale and slaughter. Radiance deeply feels that if human beings realized their position (we are not at the top of the food chain) in Nature, then we wouldn't be facing our own extinction right now.

Radiance stopped eating meat in June 2022, stating that as she truly Loves animals she also cannot also eat them: *you cannot eat your friend, your companion, your ally, your equal*, she says. This was a heavy commitment for her, as meat is her favorite food. Meat is also my favorite food, and I hadn't planned to give it up either, until I realized how difficult it was to eat and prepare different food for myself than for Radiance. Eating meat in front of Radiance felt like drinking a gin and tonic in front of an alcoholic, and that: coupled with a bout of food poisoning after eating meat on the street, I took as a final sign to stop eating meat in September 2022.

I put off this decision since I was in my 20's. I should have stopped eating meat two decades ago, and I regret having fed meat to my child. I do not wish to support industries which promote humans making money and generating income over an animal's existence. What I eat now is grown from the Earth, and I can taste its nutrients. I cannot say it hasn't been difficult. But I have made up my mind: it was the third to follow suit: first was my Soul, second was my heart, and the last to surrender was my mind.

If there is an essential nutrient that my body will suffer for, a protein that meat provides that legumes, lentils, pulses, beans cannot provide, so be it. I hate the idea that in eating meat, I am literally eating, tasting, and digesting violence, pain, and suffering of a living being.

The Indians know how to pull off vegetarianism and veganism better than any other culture I have ever visited. You don't even miss the meat, as the dishes they prepare are so full of taste, spices, nutrients, and deliciousness.

I want to thank all my vegan and vegetarian friends in the States, and my two beautiful and progressive nieces who have also inspired this decision; all who have overcome so much hardship in being hungry, dining around a table where they were alienated, or had to eat light snacks while everyone else ate, because of their conviction to stop eating animals. I want to thank my daughter's veterinary mentor, Dr. Adam Coatney, for passing so much wisdom through my daughter and into me about what it deeply means to look after animals, and that in truly Loving them, there is absolutely no way to simultaneously eat them. Thank you for inspiring us to make personal changes to which may result in planetary changes.

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Interview with SSAAP

If you are interested, please reference the following link to go to University of Kentucky's website, <https://kentuckyoralhistory.org>, and search *Simwatachela*: there is only one collection with that name in their archive! A more direct link (without searching) is the collection link:

<https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt75tz9k2crxd>

These are a series of intimate interviews on Peace Corps, SSAAP, and Africa done with Heather Cumming, directed by Doug Boyd, Ph.D., conducted over a series of months while Heather was in the U.S.A. in 2022. Dr. Boyd is the Director for the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, Special

Collections Research Center, University of Kentucky Libraries: Margaret I. King Library, Lexington, KY 40506-0039. Let me know if you wish to contact Dr. Boyd to learn more about the origins of this project. Also feel free to scan this QR code if it is easier for you.

Thank you!



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Start of Digging New Wells, 2023



A group of young men lined up on the veranda to go to the well site to dig one of our 2023 Sierra Leone-SSAAP water wells.

SSAAP has already contracted 4 wells in SE-Sierra Leone and 7 wells in NW-Sierra Leone, for 2023, to-date: February 2, 2023. Updates on these 11 wells, as well as the 57 wells for SSAAP-Sierra Leone in 2023, will be included in the Summer 2023 SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter, due out in June 2023.





The soil generated through digging the well will be used to make clay bricks for our SSAAP house in Robompe Village.

*

“Healing and forgiveness are not intellectual pursuits.”

~ Nicki Scully and Linda Star-Wolf, from Shamanic Mysteries of Egypt



It is imperative to leave our comfort zone: our habitat of safety. It is essential to branch out, so that after branching out from it, our comfort zone protects, nurtures, and supports us even more than it had in the first place.

Make friends with those who believe differently than you do. Love people who post political signs in their yard that you disagree with. Between all human beings: there are things we agree on, and things we disagree upon: each one of us between each other one of us. No two people are alike, and this is the gift of humanity; this should never be its decline. Decide to Love another person more *because* you disagree. Honor others who practice a form of spirituality you disagree with or cannot relate to. Ask them questions; ask them ‘why?’ If you are a Catholic, befriend a Muslim; find out more about Islam, its traditions, its rich history. Your faith in Catholicism will deepen exponentially if you do so. If you enjoy traveling, ask someone who does not why. If you don’t like cats but prefer

dogs, ask a cat-Lover why he doesn't want a dog instead. Learn, learn, *learn*. It is the only way to deepen our collective consciousness, and enhance the vibration of the planet Herself. Knowledge is the flour that eventually, with fruition and patience, becomes the wisdom of pie.

Our shadow selves: the parts of ourselves that we don't want to admit to, or hide from, or hide from others, are truly the portals to our deeper sense of being. Our beliefs are solidified and strengthened only when they are challenged, put to the test, questioned, reexamined, dissected, celebrated. When beliefs are resting comfortably in our comfort zones, and have nothing to challenge them, they inevitably weaken – they don't strengthen. If you eat meat, talk to a vegan or a vegetarian; ask her/him if s/he ever ate meat, and if so: why meat was given up. Ask someone who gave up meat two decades ago: *why*. Learn from others who are different, who think, write, learn, eat, speak, walk differently than you do. Learn from those who eat with their hands why their food tastes differently than when it is put in the mouth by a foreign, metal object. Whether in your own neighborhood or on foreign soil, we are all different; our differences are our oneness, our collective wholeness. Our greatest human strength comes in our ability to unify, not divide. Every leaf on a branch differs from its neighbor somehow, but there is just one tree that hosts each and every leaf. Nature's perfect design has welcomed the collective oneness that supports the infinity of our differences, our individualism. Our individualism adds layers of texture to the fabric of our oneness.

The divisions we see around the world – typically political, as politics are the realm of the material / fear world, the lower realms which are not the spirit world – and are nothing more than the result of our own schizophrenia: the bridge between the two sides of our mind, burned. When we cannot see the side of another, we fail to see our own fully. We do not have to agree with another's perspective – agreeing should never be the aim – but rather, we should take every opportunity to learn from our differences instead; divided humanity means we have missed this step. We have surrounded ourselves only by others who think like we do, look like we do, talk like we do, believe like we do; we sell ourselves short in this way, we lessen ourselves when we cater to our humanistic urges towards tribalism. Tribalism excludes; collectivism includes.

I Love most people; I have very few friends; I am like my daughter, my father, my daughter's father, and Mohandas K. Gandhi ("The Mahatma") in this way; we are introverts who Love human beings but need great distance from them in order to process and self-balance. We thrive on sacred alone time. The people I have grown closest with over time are those who I can be my authentic self with, that no part of me is dismissed, ignored, shunned, scorned, mocked, or removed. There are few people in this world who can accept themselves this way; as a consequence many people are also unable to accept others this way. In the end, I have learned the way we treat others is a direct reflection of how we feel about ourselves.

I am forever thankful – and indebted – to Africa for giving me the courage to know myself; I am an ambiguity which every day of my life, I work to unearth. The dark corners of the Soul, the parts of ourselves which we wish to dismiss, ignore, or remove are the patches with the most potential for growth. The people that I am closest to in my life are those that we have suffered through an issue, a conflict or disagreement between us, and either worked through it together or separately and came back together again. The result is a bottomless depth of potential. *This* is the magic spark of the human spirit, and this is our power as a humanity on this planet. It has become too easy, especially

in our Western culture, to let go of each other; human beings are treated as dispensable – like the *Starbucks* cup we use once and throw into an already-full landfill – in our technically-advanced society, which is becoming archaic and shockingly unprogressive in many other ways. As we advance in our technology, we retrogress in our humanity. We cannot afford, none of us, to dismiss others simply because we fear them, don't understand them, cannot relate to them, or wish they would go away forever! Humanity was not designed to be this way: to exclude. Humanity is, and has always been, an inclusive and intricate crystalline matrix forcing us to dive deeper and deeper into the oceanic realms of our infinite inner being: the Universe within ourselves. Everyone in our lives appears there for a reason, though we typically do not know that reason: these are our blind spots. We are each other's angels, who have come forth to teach each other Divine Truths, though some Truths are much harder to accept than others.

In short, what I have realized, is that it is no longer enough to be the change you wish to see in the world. What is being asked of us now, as a human collective, is to be the change you wish to see in the *Universe*. And I think Gandhi, were he still alive today, would agree with me 200% on that!

The people of Africa have a very direct, very strong way of communication with one another that I admire, that my daughter has grown up with, which is her deepest culture shock when we travel back home to U.S.A.: *communication styles*. In the West, much of our communication is between-the-lines, or implied: subtleties. Conversely, Africa gets straight to the point, to the heart of the matter. Africa *is* the heart of the matter; She holds humanity's seed in the palm of Her delicate, hard, soil-soaked hand.



“A certain degree of physical harmony and comfort is necessary, but above a certain level it becomes a hindrance instead of a help. Therefore the ideal of creating an unlimited number of wants and satisfying them seems to be a delusion and a snare.”

~ M.K. Gandhi, 1933

I have been kicked out of tribes my whole life; I have never belonged anywhere or to anyone.

This rejection has been the greatest tool in my toolbox for reform, and spiritual transformation.

It has likely served as the greatest gift of my life.

It has taken me 43 years of living to understand why.

I am a black sheep wearing white, chronically sunburned, skin. A black sheep is a rare and sacred gemstone: one in a million; I own this; now, it is my power.

No community, no society, no nation confines me.

Belonging nowhere also means I belong everywhere.

Belonging to no one, I somehow belong to everyone.

Tribalism – not limited to Africa, of course – endangers humanity; it threatens both our survival and our spiritual health; caring more about our tribe: ourselves, our family, our nation above every other self, family, tribe, or nation is tribalism; this provincial, limited mindset is our human failure to evolve, which is indeed the ruin of ourselves and our human collective on this rapidly-evolving planet.

And now I realize that I am not a tribes[wo]man; I am finally free.

I belong to no tribe, only to one Source.



SSAAP is a 501(c)3 organization, registered in the United States of America, also with the governments of Zambia and Sierra Leone. We are a human and animal rights organization and believe that profound change is possible in the world through simple and everyday measures: clean water, food, consciousness, and Love. Thank you for supporting our work and for your Love. It means everything to the project, to the people SSAAP serves, and to the cosmos.



“Being emotionally naked means being vulnerable enough for the real you to shine through. Vulnerability is a strength, not a weakness... Have the courage to feel and express your feelings without people-pleasing. Speak your truth. Share your story. Cultivate an appreciation for vulnerability in others. Become comfortable with feeling uncomfortable and making others uncomfortable.” ~ Abiola Abrams

[Goddess Mami Wata: Goddess of Emotional Nakedness; West African, Griot Temple]

~ by: Abiola Abrams, [African Goddess Rising Oracle](#)